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ARA 411

INTRODUCTION TO ARABIC LEXICOGRAPHY



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Course code: ARA 411

Course title: Introduction to Arabic Lexicography

Course unit: 2 Units

Series 1 Historical Background of Arabic Lexicography

1.1 Early Development of Arabic Lexicography

- **1.1.1 Origins of Arabic Lexicography**
- **1.1.2 Early Scholars and their Contributions**
- **1.1.3 Motivations for Lexicographical Work**

1.2 Growth through Historical Periods

- **1.2.1 Lexicography in the Classical Period**
- **1.2.2 Lexicography in the Medieval Period**
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1.3 Challenges and Aspirations in Historical Lexicography

- **1.3.1 Defects of Early Dictionaries**
- **1.3.2 Efforts to Improve Lexicographical Methods**
- **1.3.3 Aspiration for a Comprehensive Historical Dictionary**



Introduction

Arabic Lexicography has played a vital role in preserving and transmitting the richness of the Arabic language across centuries. From the earliest attempts to record words and meanings, through the contributions of pioneering scholars, to the gradual refinement of dictionaries, the historical development of this field reflects both the intellectual curiosity and cultural needs of different eras. By studying this background, you will gain insight into how Arabic dictionaries evolved and why they remain central to linguistic scholarship today.

The aim of this Series is to guide you through the historical foundations of Arabic Lexicography, enabling you to explain its origins, trace its growth across different periods, and evaluate the challenges and aspirations that shaped its development.

We shall commence this Series by exploring the early development of Arabic Lexicography, focusing on its origins, the scholars who contributed to it, and the motivations behind their work. Next, we will examine how lexicography grew through the classical, medieval, and modern periods, highlighting the distinctive features of each stage. Finally, we will wrap up by considering the challenges faced by early dictionaries, the efforts made to improve them, and the aspiration to produce a comprehensive historical Arabic dictionary.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 1.1** define the origins of Arabic Lexicography and identify the early motivations behind its development,
- **SLO 1.2** explain the contributions of pioneering scholars to the early growth of Arabic Lexicography,
- **SLO 1.3** analyse the progression of Arabic Lexicography across the classical, medieval, and modern periods,



- **SLO 1.4** evaluate the major defects of early dictionaries and the efforts made to improve lexicographical methods, and
- **SLO 1.5** describe the aspiration for a comprehensive historical Arabic dictionary and its significance for future scholarship.

1.1 Early Development of Arabic Lexicography

1.1.1 Origins of Arabic Lexicography

The **lexicon** refers to the complete set of words in a language, and **lexicography** is the science and practice of compiling dictionaries. The origins of Arabic Lexicography can be traced to the early centuries of Islam, when scholars sought to preserve the meanings of words found in the Qur'an and early Arabic poetry. These texts were considered authoritative sources of the language, and their preservation required careful explanation of vocabulary. The need to safeguard the purity of Arabic, especially for non-native speakers, motivated the earliest attempts at dictionary compilation.

Fill in the blank: The earliest motivation for Arabic Lexicography was to preserve the meanings of words in the _____ and poetry.



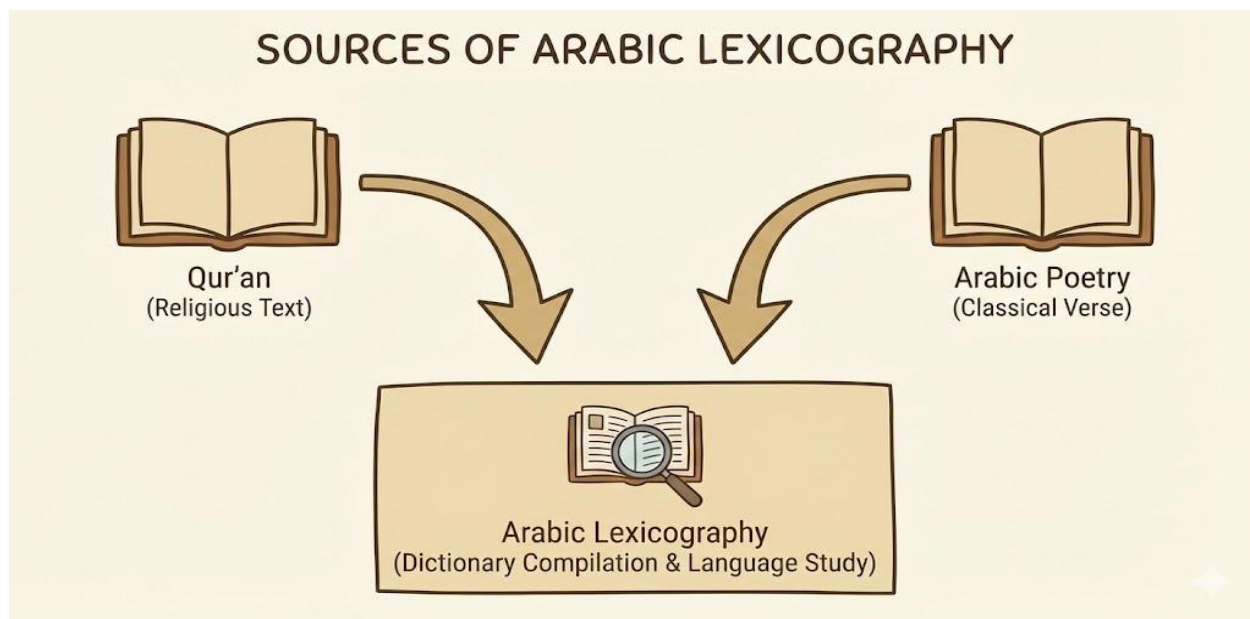


Figure 1.1 Relationship between early Arabic texts and lexicography.

1.1.2 Early Scholars and their Contributions

The earliest scholars of Arabic Lexicography were deeply respected linguists who dedicated their lives to studying the language. One of the most notable figures was **Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi**, who compiled *Kitab al-‘Ayn*, considered the first Arabic dictionary. His work was distinctive because it arranged words according to their phonetic roots, beginning with the letter ‘ayn. This method reflected a systematic approach to language analysis. Other scholars, such as **Sibawayh**, contributed by documenting grammatical rules that complemented lexicographical efforts.

Fill in the blank: The first Arabic dictionary, *Kitab al-‘Ayn*, was compiled by _____ ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi.





Plate 1.1 Early Arabic dictionary manuscript.

1.1.3 Motivations for Lexicographical Work

The motivations behind early lexicographical work were both practical and scholarly.

Practically, dictionaries helped non-Arab Muslims understand the Qur'an and classical poetry.

Scholarly motivations included the desire to systematise the language, preserve its richness, and provide a reference for future generations. Lexicographers also aimed to resolve disputes about word meanings and usage, ensuring consistency in interpretation.

Fill in the blank: One of the scholarly motivations for lexicographical work was to _____ the richness of the Arabic language.

Motivation Area	Key Purpose & Contribution
Preservation of Qur'anic Vocabulary	Safeguard rare and complex words in the Qur'an to ensure accurate interpretation and recitation.



<i>Explanation of Classical Poetry</i>	<i>Provide meanings of archaic terms used in pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry.</i>
<i>Systematisation of Language</i>	<i>Organize vocabulary into structured references, creating a foundation for grammar and philology.</i>
<i>Resolution of Disputes about Meanings</i>	<i>Offer authoritative definitions to settle scholarly disagreements over word usage.</i>
<i>Reference for Future Generations</i>	<i>Establish lasting resources for students, scholars, and jurists to maintain linguistic continuity.</i>

Box 1.1 Motivations for Early Lexicography

Pilot questions 1.1

1. Who compiled the first Arabic dictionary, *Kitab al-‘Ayn*?
2. What were the two main sources that motivated the origins of Arabic Lexicography?
3. Which method did Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad use to arrange words in his dictionary?
4. Name one scholarly motivation for early lexicographical work.
5. Why was lexicography important for non-native speakers of Arabic?

1.2 Growth Through Historical Periods

1.2.1 Lexicography in the classical period

The **classical period** refers to the early centuries of Islamic civilisation when Arabic scholarship flourished. During this time, lexicographers focused on documenting words found in the Qur’an, Hadith, and pre-Islamic poetry. Dictionaries such as *Kitab al-‘Ayn* by Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi and later works by scholars like Ibn Durayd reflected a strong emphasis on phonetic



arrangement and root-based classification. These efforts ensured that the Arabic language was preserved in its purest form and provided a foundation for later lexicographical traditions.

Fill in the blank: The classical period of Arabic Lexicography was characterised by a strong emphasis on _____ arrangement of words.

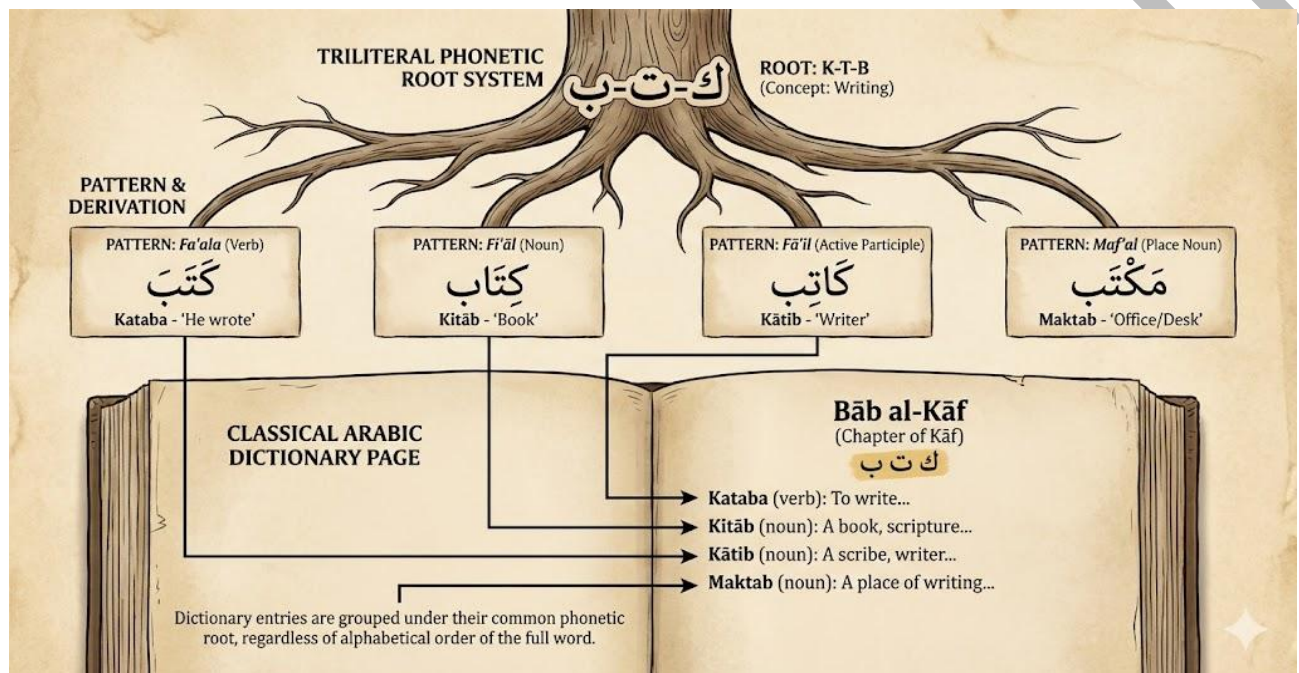


Figure 1.2 Root-based classification in classical Arabic lexicography.

1.2.2 Lexicography in the medieval period

The **medieval period** saw the expansion of lexicographical work as scholars attempted to refine earlier methods and address the growing complexity of the Arabic language. Dictionaries became more comprehensive, incorporating regional variations and specialised vocabularies. Works such as *Lisan al-Arab* by Ibn Manzur exemplified this era, offering detailed explanations and citations from poetry and prose. This period also marked the beginning of attempts to standardise definitions, making dictionaries more accessible to a wider audience.

Fill in the blank: One of the most famous medieval dictionaries was _____ al-Arab compiled by Ibn Manzur.





Plate 1.2 Manuscript of Ibn Manzur's Lisan al-Arab.

1.2.3 Lexicography in the modern period

The **modern period** introduced new approaches to Arabic Lexicography influenced by Western linguistic traditions and the rise of printing technology. Dictionaries began to adopt alphabetic order rather than phonetic or root-based systems, making them easier to use for students and researchers. Modern lexicographers also sought to address the limitations of earlier works by including scientific, technical, and contemporary terms. This period reflects the ongoing effort to keep Arabic dictionaries relevant to changing times and global scholarship.

Fill in the blank: In the modern period, Arabic dictionaries often adopted _____ order to improve accessibility.

Feature Area	Key Characteristics	Pedagogical / Practical Impact
Alphabetic Arrangement	Entries organized alphabetically rather than by root or rhyme,	Makes dictionaries easier to navigate for learners and non-specialists.



	<i>following Western lexicographic traditions.</i>	
Scientific & Technical Terms	<i>Inclusion of modern vocabulary from science, technology, and global disciplines.</i>	<i>Expands Arabic lexicon to meet contemporary needs in education and research.</i>
Accessibility for Learners	<i>Simplified definitions, bilingual glossaries (Arabic-English, Arabic-French), and learner-friendly formatting.</i>	<i>Supports students, translators, and non-native speakers in mastering Arabic.</i>
Western Linguistic Influence	<i>Adoption of structural and descriptive methods inspired by European lexicography.</i>	<i>Aligns Arabic dictionaries with global linguistic standards, aiding comparative studies.</i>
Printing & Digital Technology	<i>Use of mass printing in the 20th century and digital platforms today (apps, online corpora).</i>	<i>Ensures wide distribution, portability, and integration into modern learning environments.</i>
Dialectal Inclusion	<i>Some modern dictionaries incorporate colloquial Arabic alongside Modern Standard Arabic.</i>	<i>Bridges gap between everyday speech and formal language.</i>
Multimedia Integration	<i>Online dictionaries include audio pronunciation, verb conjugation charts, and interactive search.</i>	<i>Enhances learner engagement and supports diverse learning styles.</i>

Box 1.2 Features of Modern Arabic Dictionaries

Pilot questions 1.2

1. Which dictionary by Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad is considered a hallmark of the classical period?
2. What was the main characteristic of medieval dictionaries such as *Lisan al-Arab*?
3. How did modern dictionaries differ in their arrangement compared to classical ones?
4. Name one technological advancement that influenced modern Arabic Lexicography.
5. Why was the inclusion of scientific and technical terms significant in modern dictionaries?



1.3 Challenges and Aspirations in Historical Lexicography

1.3.1 Defects of early dictionaries

Early Arabic dictionaries, while groundbreaking, were not without limitations. One major challenge was the **arrangement system**, which often relied on phonetic or root-based ordering. Although this method was logical for scholars, it proved difficult for learners who were unfamiliar with the structure. Another defect was the lack of consistency in definitions, as different lexicographers sometimes offered varying interpretations of the same word. Furthermore, many dictionaries were limited in scope, focusing mainly on Qur'anic vocabulary and poetry, while neglecting everyday language.

Fill in the blank: One of the main defects of early Arabic dictionaries was the lack of _____ in definitions.

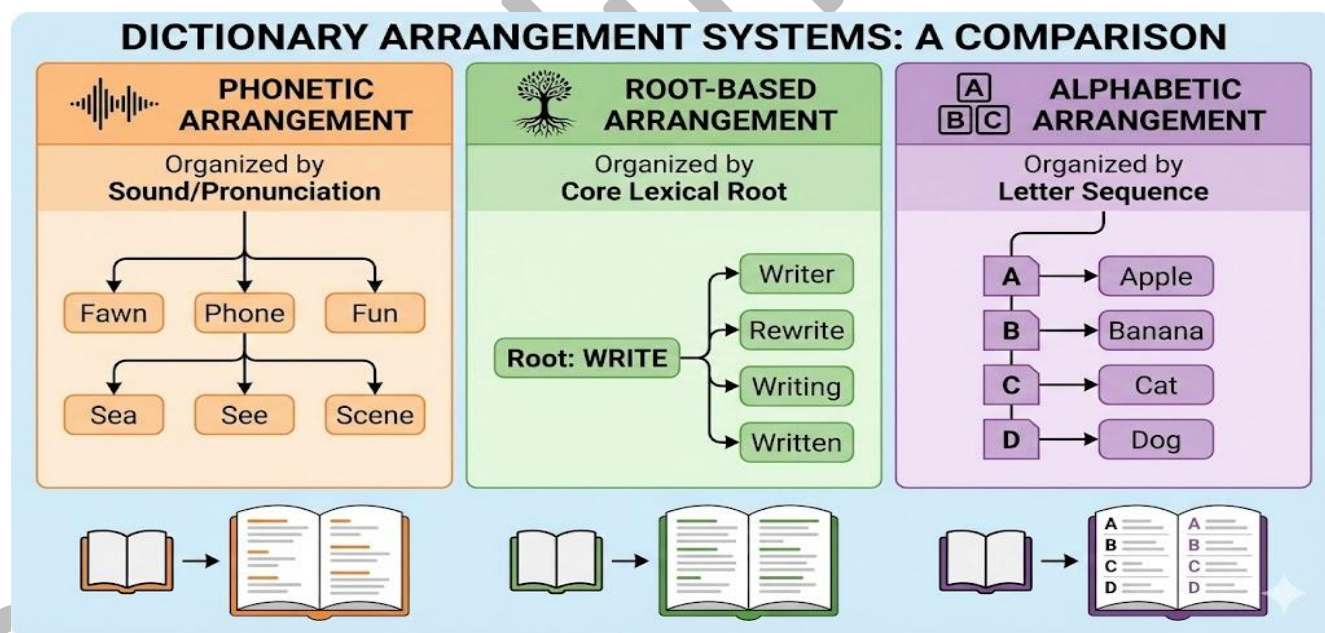


Figure 1.3 Comparison of dictionary arrangement systems.



1.3.2 Efforts to improve lexicographical methods

Despite these challenges, scholars made significant efforts to improve lexicographical methods. They introduced more systematic approaches to definitions, expanded the range of vocabulary covered, and began to cite examples from prose and poetry to clarify meanings. The inclusion of **contextual usage**, defined as the practice of showing how words are used in sentences, helped learners grasp meanings more effectively. Over time, dictionaries became more comprehensive, bridging the gap between scholarly needs and everyday language.

Fill in the blank: The inclusion of _____ usage in dictionaries helped learners understand meanings more effectively.



Plate 1.3 Example of contextual usage in medieval Arabic dictionaries.

1.3.3 Aspiration for a comprehensive historical dictionary

The aspiration to create a **comprehensive historical dictionary**, defined as a dictionary that records the evolution of words across different periods, has long been a goal of Arabic



lexicographers. Such a dictionary would not only preserve the richness of the language but also provide insights into cultural and intellectual history. Modern scholars and language academies continue to work towards this vision, aiming to compile a resource that captures the full breadth of Arabic vocabulary, from its earliest roots to contemporary usage. This aspiration reflects the enduring importance of lexicography in safeguarding linguistic heritage.

Fill in the blank: A comprehensive historical dictionary aims to record the _____ of words across different periods.

<i>Aspiration Area</i>	<i>Key Purpose & Contribution</i>
<i>Recording the Evolution of Words</i>	<i>Trace semantic shifts and changes in usage across centuries.</i>
<i>Preserving Cultural & Intellectual Heritage</i>	<i>Safeguard linguistic treasures tied to Qur'anic, poetic, and scholarly traditions.</i>
<i>Bridging Classical & Modern Usage</i>	<i>Connect ancient vocabulary with contemporary meanings and applications.</i>
<i>Reference for Future Scholarship</i>	<i>Provide a reliable resource for linguists, historians, and educators.</i>
<i>Supporting Language Academies</i>	<i>Aid institutions like Arabic language academies in standardization and policy-making.</i>

Box 1.3 Aspirations for a Comprehensive Historical Dictionary

Pilot questions 1.3

1. What was one major defect of early Arabic dictionaries?
2. How did scholars attempt to improve lexicographical methods?
3. What is meant by contextual usage in dictionaries?
4. What is the main goal of a comprehensive historical dictionary?



5. Why is the aspiration for a comprehensive historical dictionary significant for future scholarship?

Series Summary

This Series has introduced you to the historical background of Arabic Lexicography, highlighting its importance in preserving the Arabic language and supporting linguistic scholarship. We began by examining the early development of lexicography, focusing on its origins, the contributions of pioneering scholars, and the motivations behind their work. We then moved on to trace the growth of lexicography across the classical, medieval, and modern periods, showing how methods evolved and dictionaries became more comprehensive. Finally, we considered the challenges faced by early dictionaries, the efforts made to improve lexicographical methods, and the aspiration for a comprehensive historical dictionary that records the evolution of words across time.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define the origins of Arabic Lexicography and explain the contributions of early scholars. You should also be able to analyse the progression of lexicography through different historical periods, evaluate the defects of early dictionaries and the improvements made, and describe the aspiration for a comprehensive historical dictionary. These skills directly align with the Series Learning Outcomes and provide you with a strong foundation for exploring the subsequent Series in this course.

Glossary of Terms

- **Alphabetic order:** A method of arranging words in dictionaries according to the sequence of letters in the alphabet, making entries easier to locate for learners.
- **Comprehensive historical dictionary:** A dictionary designed to record the evolution of words across different periods, preserving both linguistic and cultural heritage.



- **Contextual usage:** The practice of showing how words are used within sentences or texts, helping learners to understand meanings more effectively.
- **Lexicography:** The science and practice of compiling dictionaries, including the methods used to collect, arrange, and define words.
- **Lexicon:** The complete set of words in a language, often studied to understand vocabulary and meaning.
- **Medieval period:** The stage in Arabic Lexicography when dictionaries became more comprehensive, incorporating regional variations and detailed citations from poetry and prose.
- **Phonetic order:** A system of arranging dictionary entries based on the sounds of words, often beginning with specific letters or phonemes.
- **Root-based classification:** A method of organising words in dictionaries according to their linguistic roots, reflecting the structure of the Arabic language.
- **Classical period:** The early stage of Arabic Lexicography, marked by works such as *Kitab al-'Ayn*, which focused on Qur'anic vocabulary and poetry.
- **Sibawayh:** An early Arabic scholar known for documenting grammatical rules that complemented lexicographical efforts.
- **Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi:** The compiler of *Kitab al-'Ayn*, the first Arabic dictionary, which arranged words according to phonetic roots.
- **Lisan al-Arab:** A medieval Arabic dictionary compiled by Ibn Manzur, known for its detailed explanations and citations from poetry and prose.



Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Objective Questions

1. Who compiled *Kitab al-ʿAyn*, the first Arabic dictionary? (Linked to SLO 1.2)
2. Which dictionary by Ibn Manzur is considered a hallmark of the medieval period? (Linked to SLO 1.3)
3. In the modern period, Arabic dictionaries often adopted which order of arrangement? (Linked to SLO 1.3)
4. What was one major defect of early Arabic dictionaries? (Linked to SLO 1.4)
5. A comprehensive historical dictionary aims to record the _____ of words across different periods. (Linked to SLO 1.5)

Short-Answer Questions

6. Define lexicography and explain its purpose in the context of Arabic scholarship. (Linked to SLO 1.1)
7. Describe one scholarly motivation behind the compilation of early Arabic dictionaries. (Linked to SLO 1.1)
8. Explain how contextual usage improved the effectiveness of medieval dictionaries. (Linked to SLO 1.4)
9. Identify one technological advancement that influenced modern Arabic Lexicography. (Linked to SLO 1.3)
10. State one aspiration of language academies in relation to Arabic Lexicography. (Linked to SLO 1.5)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse the progression of Arabic Lexicography from the classical to the modern period, highlighting key features of each stage. (Linked to SLO 1.3)
12. Evaluate the defects of early dictionaries and discuss the efforts made by scholars to improve lexicographical methods. (Linked to SLO 1.4)
13. Discuss the significance of a comprehensive historical dictionary for the preservation of Arabic language and culture. (Linked to SLO 1.5)



Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Objective Questions

1. Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi.
2. *Lisan al-Arab*.
3. Alphabetic order.
4. Lack of consistency in definitions.
5. Evolution.

Short-Answer Questions

6. Lexicography is the science and practice of compiling dictionaries. In Arabic scholarship, it serves to preserve vocabulary, explain meanings, and provide systematic references for learners and scholars.
7. One scholarly motivation was to preserve the richness of the Arabic language for future generations.
8. Contextual usage provided examples of words in sentences, helping learners understand meanings more effectively.
9. Printing technology.
10. To compile a comprehensive historical dictionary that records the evolution of words.

Long-Answer Questions

11. **Basic response:** In the classical period, lexicography focused on Qur'anic vocabulary and poetry, with root-based classification. The medieval period expanded coverage, incorporating regional variations and detailed citations, exemplified by *Lisan al-Arab*. The modern period introduced alphabetic order, printing technology, and inclusion of scientific and technical terms.

Value-added response: Beyond these stages, the progression reflects broader cultural and intellectual shifts. The classical period emphasised purity of language, the medieval period responded to diversity and complexity, and the modern period aligned Arabic scholarship with global linguistic practices.

12. **Basic response:** Early dictionaries were limited by phonetic arrangements and inconsistent definitions. Scholars improved methods by expanding vocabulary, citing examples, and introducing contextual usage.

Value-added response: These improvements also reflected a growing awareness of the needs of learners and the importance of accessibility. By bridging scholarly traditions with practical applications, lexicographers laid the groundwork for modern dictionary-making.



13. **Basic response:** A comprehensive historical dictionary preserves the evolution of words, ensuring cultural and linguistic heritage is safeguarded.

Value-added response: Such a dictionary also supports comparative linguistic studies, strengthens Arabic's role in global scholarship, and provides a foundation for future innovations in language teaching and research.



Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 1]

Pilot questions 1.1

1. Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi.
2. The Qur'an and poetry.
3. Phonetic arrangement.
4. To preserve the richness of the Arabic language.
5. To help non-native speakers of Arabic understand the language.

Pilot questions 1.2

1. *Kitab al-'Ayn*.
2. Detailed explanations and citations from poetry and prose.
3. Alphabetic order.
4. Printing technology.
5. To make dictionaries relevant by including scientific and technical terms.

Pilot questions 1.3

1. Lack of consistency in definitions.
2. By expanding vocabulary, systematising definitions, and citing examples.
3. Showing how words are used in sentences.
4. To record the evolution of words across different periods.
5. Because it preserves linguistic heritage and supports future scholarship.

References and Attributions [Series 1]

Primary Sources and Suggested Readings



- Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi. *Kitab al-‘Ayn*. Early Arabic dictionary noted for phonetic arrangement.
- Ibn Manzur. *Lisan al-Arab*. Comprehensive medieval dictionary with detailed citations from poetry and prose.
- Sibawayh. *Al-Kitab*. Foundational work on Arabic grammar, complementing lexicographical traditions.

Illustrations (Figures, Plates, Boxes)

- *Figure 1.1 Relationship between early Arabic texts and lexicography*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a simple diagram showing Qur’an and poetry as sources leading to Arabic Lexicography.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “diagram origins of Arabic lexicography OER”.
- *Plate 1.1 Early Arabic dictionary manuscript*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of an ancient Arabic manuscript representing early lexicography.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Kitab al-‘Ayn manuscript OER image”.
- *Box 1.1 Motivations for Early Lexicography*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box listing motivations for early Arabic lexicography.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “motivations for Arabic lexicography OER”.
- *Figure 1.2 Root-based classification in classical Arabic lexicography*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram showing Arabic words organised by phonetic roots in classical dictionaries.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “root-based classification Arabic lexicography OER diagram”.
- *Plate 1.2 Manuscript of Ibn Manzur’s Lisan al-Arab*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of a medieval Arabic manuscript representing Lisan al-Arab.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Lisan al-Arab manuscript OER image”.
- *Box 1.2 Features of Modern Arabic Dictionaries*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box listing features of modern Arabic dictionaries.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “modern Arabic dictionaries features OER”.
- *Figure 1.3 Comparison of dictionary arrangement systems*



- AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram comparing phonetic, root-based, and alphabetic dictionary arrangements.”
- Suggested OER search string: “comparison of dictionary arrangement systems Arabic lexicography OER diagram”.
- *Plate 1.3 Example of contextual usage in medieval Arabic dictionaries*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of a medieval Arabic manuscript showing contextual usage of words.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “medieval Arabic dictionary contextual usage OER image”.
- *Box 1.3 Aspirations for a Comprehensive Historical Dictionary*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box listing aspirations for a comprehensive historical Arabic dictionary.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “aspirations for comprehensive historical Arabic dictionary OER”.



Series 2 Schools of the Arabic Lexicon

2.1 The Kufan School

- 2.1.1 Historical background of the Kufan School
- 2.1.2 Major scholars and their contributions
- 2.1.3 Methodological features of Kufan lexicography

2.2 The Basran School

- 2.2.1 Historical background of the Basran School
- 2.2.2 Major scholars and their contributions
- 2.2.3 Methodological features of Basran lexicography

2.3 Comparative Perspectives and Influence

- 2.3.1 Differences between Kufan and Basran approaches
- 2.3.2 Areas of convergence and mutual influence
- 2.3.3 Impact of the Schools on later Arabic dictionaries

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the historical background of Arabic Lexicography, tracing its origins, growth through different periods, and the challenges faced by early dictionaries.

Building on that foundation, this Series will focus on the **Schools of the Arabic Lexicon**, which represent distinct scholarly traditions that shaped the methods and practices of dictionary compilation. Understanding these schools is crucial because they reveal how different intellectual centres contributed to the preservation and refinement of the Arabic language.



The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the major Schools of the Arabic Lexicon, namely the Kufan and Basran Schools, and to equip you with the ability to explain their historical contexts, analyse their methodological features, and evaluate their influence on later Arabic dictionaries.

We shall commence this Series by examining the Kufan School, looking at its historical background, leading scholars, and methodological features. Next, we will move on to the Basran School, exploring its contributions and distinctive approaches. Finally, we will wrap up by comparing the two Schools, highlighting their differences, areas of convergence, and their lasting impact on subsequent Arabic lexicographical traditions.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 2.1** define the historical background of the Kufan School of Arabic Lexicography,
- **SLO 2.2** explain the contributions of major Kufan scholars to the development of lexicographical methods,
- **SLO 2.3** describe the methodological features that characterised the Kufan School,
- **SLO 2.4** define the historical background of the Basran School of Arabic Lexicography,
- **SLO 2.5** explain the contributions of major Basran scholars to the development of lexicographical methods,
- **SLO 2.6** describe the methodological features that characterised the Basran School,
- **SLO 2.7** analyse the differences between Kufan and Basran approaches to lexicography,
- **SLO 2.8** evaluate the areas of convergence and mutual influence between the two Schools, and
- **SLO 2.9** assess the impact of the Kufan and Basran Schools on later Arabic dictionaries.



2.1 The Kufan School

2.1.1 Historical background of the Kufan School

The **Kufan School** refers to the tradition of Arabic linguistic and lexicographical scholarship that developed in the city of Kufa, one of the earliest centres of Islamic learning. Kufa was a melting pot of cultures and dialects, which made it an ideal environment for scholars to study the richness and diversity of the Arabic language. The Kufan School emerged as a rival to the Basran School, with each centre developing distinctive methods of analysis and interpretation.

Fill in the blank: The Kufan School developed in the city of _____, which was known for its diverse population and dialects.

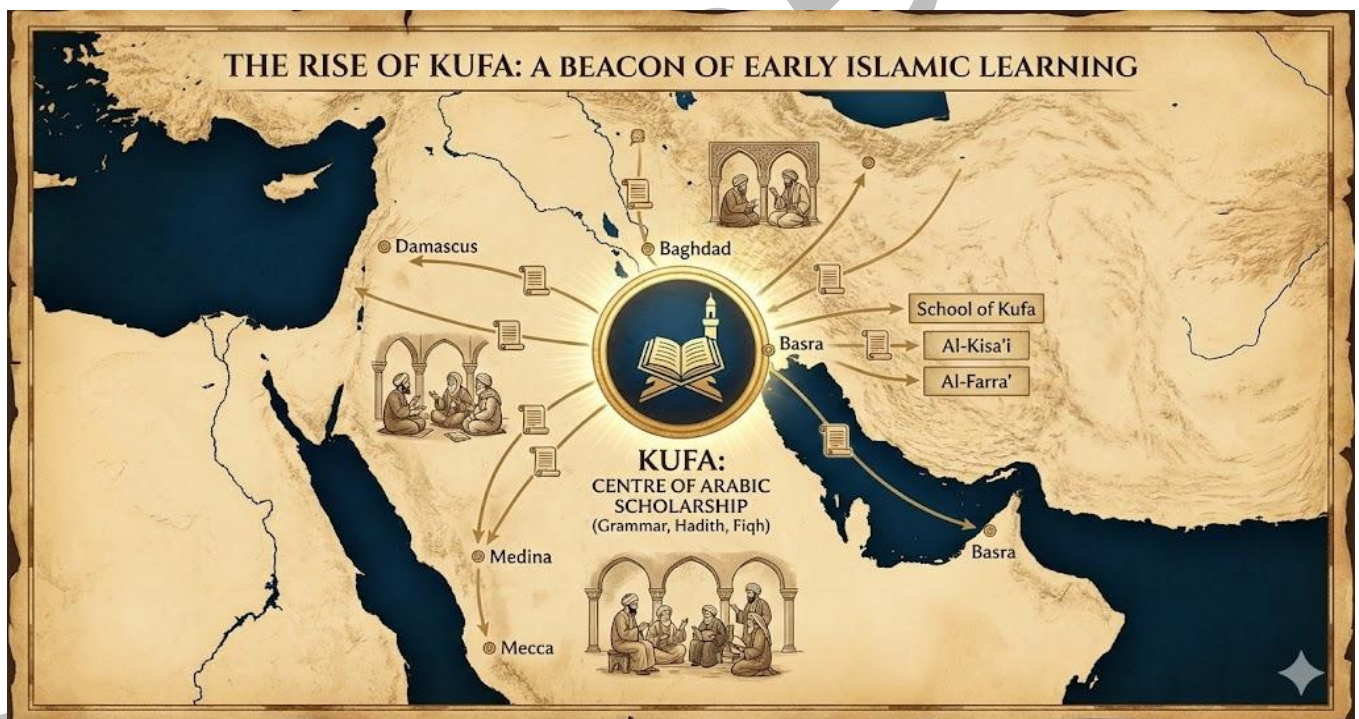


Figure 2.1 Kufa as a centre of Arabic lexicography.

2.1.2 Major scholars and their contributions

Among the leading figures of the Kufan School were scholars such as **Al-Kisā'ī** (الكسائي) and **Al-Farrā'** (الفراء). Al-Kisā'ī was renowned for his expertise in grammar and lexicon, and he served



as a tutor to the Abbasid caliphs. His works reflected the Kufan emphasis on practical usage and dialectal diversity. Al-Farrā', another prominent Kufan scholar, contributed significantly to the study of Qur'anic vocabulary and interpretation. Together, these scholars established the Kufan School as a respected authority in Arabic lexicography.

Fill in the blank: One of the most prominent Kufan scholars, _____, served as a tutor to the Abbasid caliphs.



Plate 2.1 Manuscript representing Kufan contributions to Arabic lexicography.

2.1.3 Methodological features of Kufan lexicography

The Kufan School was characterised by its focus on **dialectal variation** (اللهجات), defined as the study of differences in word usage and pronunciation across Arabic-speaking tribes. Kufan scholars often gave priority to the linguistic traditions of **Bedouin tribes** (قبائل البدو), considering them closer to the pure form of Arabic. Another feature was their emphasis on **practical usage**, which meant that dictionaries and linguistic works often included examples from everyday speech alongside Qur'anic and poetic references. This approach distinguished the Kufan School from the Basran School, which leaned more towards theoretical and grammatical precision.



Fill in the blank: The Kufan School gave priority to the linguistic traditions of _____ tribes, considering them closer to pure Arabic.

Methodological Features of the Kufan School
Emphasis on dialectal variation (اللهجات)
Priority given to Bedouin speech traditions (قبائل البدو)
Focus on practical usage alongside Qur'anic references
Rivalry with the Basran School in methodology

Box 2.1 Methodological Features of the Kufan School

Pilot questions 2.1

1. In which city did the Kufan School develop?
2. Name two prominent scholars of the Kufan School.
3. What was Al-Kisā'i's role in relation to the Abbasid caliphs?
4. What methodological feature distinguished the Kufan School from the Basran School?
5. Why did Kufan scholars prioritise Bedouin speech traditions?

2.2 The Basran School

2.2.1 Historical background of the Basran School

The **Basran School** refers to the tradition of Arabic linguistic and lexicographical scholarship that developed in the city of Basra, another major intellectual centre of early Islam. Basra was known for its scholarly rigour and emphasis on systematic analysis of the Arabic language.

Unlike Kufa, which leaned towards dialectal diversity, the Basran School focused on grammatical precision and theoretical frameworks. This made Basra a hub for scholars who sought to codify the rules of Arabic and establish authoritative standards for lexicography.



Fill in the blank: The Basran School developed in the city of _____, which was known for its scholarly rigour and systematic analysis.

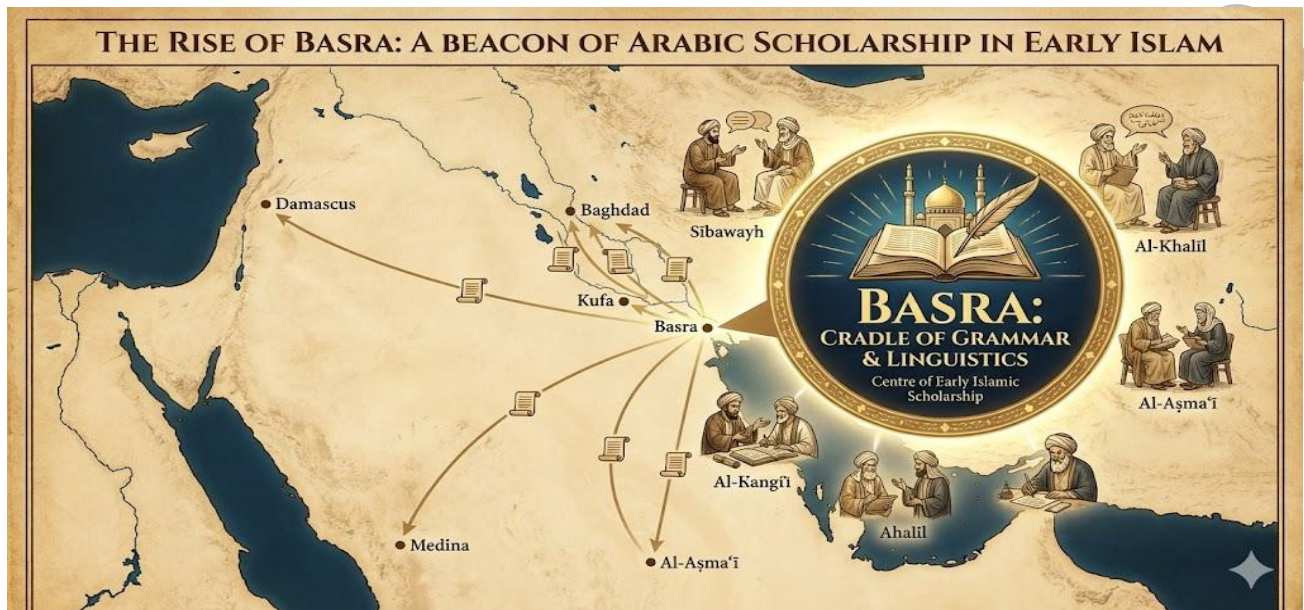


Figure 2.2 Basra as a centre of Arabic lexicography.

2.2.2 Major scholars and their contributions

Prominent scholars of the Basran School included **Abu ‘Amr ibn al-‘Ala** (أبو عمرو بن العلاء) and **Al-Asma‘ī** (الأصمعي). Abu ‘Amr ibn al-‘Ala was one of the earliest authorities on Arabic grammar and lexicon, and his works influenced later generations of scholars. Al-Asma‘ī was celebrated for his vast knowledge of poetry and oral traditions, which he used to support lexicographical analysis. The Basran School thus became renowned for combining grammatical precision with literary evidence, ensuring that dictionaries reflected both linguistic rules and cultural richness.

Fill in the blank: One of the most prominent Basran scholars, _____, was celebrated for his vast knowledge of poetry and oral traditions.





Plate 2.2 Manuscript representing Basran contributions to Arabic lexicography.

2.2.3 Methodological features of Basran lexicography

The Basran School was characterised by its emphasis on **grammatical precision** (الدقة النحوية), defined as the careful codification of rules governing word forms and sentence structures. Basran scholars relied heavily on **literary evidence** (الشواهد الأدبية), especially poetry, to justify their definitions and interpretations. Another key feature was their preference for theoretical frameworks, which distinguished them from the Kufan School's focus on dialectal variation. The Basran approach aimed to establish a standardised form of Arabic that could serve as a reference for scholars and learners alike.

Fill in the blank: The Basran School relied heavily on _____ evidence, especially poetry, to justify definitions and interpretations.

Methodological Features of the Basran School
Emphasis on grammatical precision (الدقة النحوية)
Reliance on literary evidence (الشواهد الأدبية), especially poetry



Preference for theoretical frameworks
Aim to standardise Arabic for scholarly reference
Rivalry with the Kufan School in methodology

Box 2.2 Methodological Features of the Basran School

Pilot questions 2.2

1. In which city did the Basran School develop?
2. Name two prominent scholars of the Basran School.
3. What was Abu 'Amr ibn al-'Ala's main area of expertise?
4. What type of evidence did Al-Asma'i rely on in his lexicographical work?
5. What methodological feature distinguished the Basran School from the Kufan School?

2.3 Comparative Perspectives and Influence

2.3.1 Differences between Kufan and Basran approaches

The **Kufan School** and the **Basran School** developed distinct approaches to Arabic lexicography. The Kufans emphasised **dialectal variation** (اللهجات), giving priority to Bedouin speech traditions, which they considered closer to pure Arabic. In contrast, the Basrans focused on **grammatical precision** (الدقة النحوية), codifying rules and relying heavily on literary evidence such as poetry. These differences reflected the intellectual environments of Kufa and Basra, with Kufa being more exposed to diverse dialects and Basra being more oriented towards systematic scholarship.

Fill in the blank: While the Kufan School emphasised dialectal variation, the Basran School focused on _____ precision.



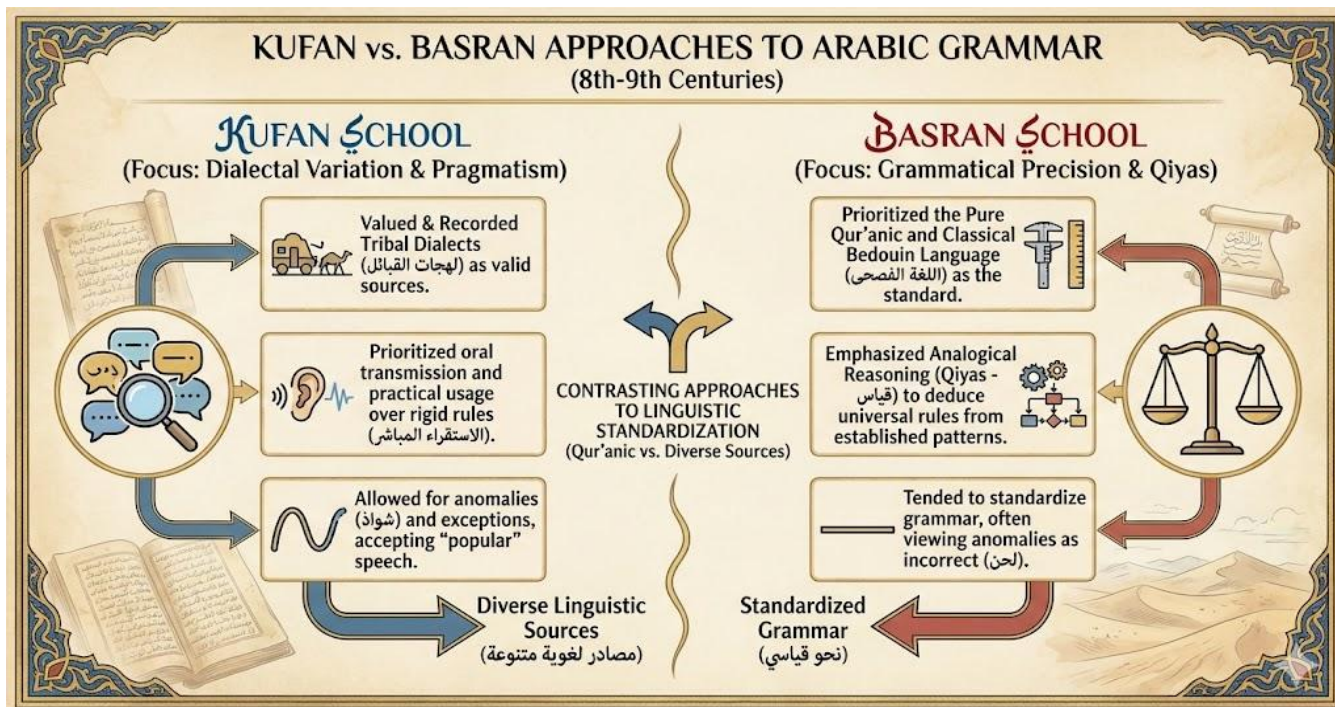


Figure 2.3 Comparative approaches of Kufan and Basran Schools.

2.3.2 Areas of convergence and mutual influence

Despite their differences, the two Schools shared common ground. Both valued the preservation of Arabic and recognised the importance of Qur'anic vocabulary and poetry. Over time, scholars from each School began to borrow methods from the other, leading to a more balanced approach. For example, Kufan scholars incorporated grammatical analysis, while Basran scholars acknowledged dialectal evidence when necessary. This mutual influence enriched Arabic lexicography and ensured that dictionaries reflected both linguistic diversity and scholarly rigour.

Fill in the blank: Kufan scholars eventually incorporated _____ analysis, while Basran scholars acknowledged dialectal evidence.





Plate 2.3 Manuscripts reflecting convergence of Kufan and Basran methods.

2.3.3 Impact of the Schools on later Arabic dictionaries

The legacy of both Schools is evident in later Arabic dictionaries. The **integration of dialectal variation and grammatical precision** became a hallmark of comprehensive works such as *Lisan al-Arab* (لسان العرب). These dictionaries balanced practical usage with theoretical frameworks, making them valuable resources for scholars and learners alike. The influence of the Kufan and Basran Schools thus extended beyond their immediate contexts, shaping the standards of Arabic lexicography for centuries.

Fill in the blank: Later Arabic dictionaries, such as _____, integrated both dialectal variation and grammatical precision.

Lasting Influence of Kufan and Basran Schools
Integration of dialectal variation and grammatical precision
Establishment of balanced lexicographical methods
Influence on comprehensive dictionaries such as <i>Lisan al-Arab</i> (لسان العرب)
Contribution to the preservation of Arabic linguistic heritage
Foundation for modern Arabic lexicography



Box 2.3 Lasting Influence of Kufan and Basran Schools

Pilot questions 2.3

1. What was the main methodological difference between the Kufan and Basran Schools?
2. Which type of evidence did Basran scholars rely on most heavily?
3. How did Kufan scholars adapt their methods over time?
4. Name one dictionary that reflects the combined influence of both Schools.
5. Why are the Kufan and Basran Schools considered foundational to Arabic lexicography?

Series Summary

This Series has examined the Schools of the Arabic Lexicon, highlighting their significance in shaping the methods and traditions of Arabic lexicography. We began with the Kufan School, exploring its historical background, the contributions of scholars such as Al-Kisā'ī and Al-Farrā', and its emphasis on dialectal variation and practical usage. We then moved on to the Basran School, considering its scholarly rigour, the works of figures like Abu 'Amr ibn al-'Ala and Al-Asma'ī, and its focus on grammatical precision and literary evidence. Finally, we compared the two Schools, noting their differences, areas of convergence, and the lasting influence they had on later dictionaries such as *Lisan al-Arab*.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define the historical contexts of both the Kufan and Basran Schools, explain the contributions of their leading scholars, describe their methodological features, and analyse the differences and points of convergence between them. You should also be able to evaluate their combined impact on later Arabic dictionaries. These abilities directly align with the Series Learning Outcomes and provide you with a strong foundation for understanding the intellectual traditions that underpin Arabic lexicography.



Glossary of Terms

- **Al-Asma'ī (الأصمعي)**: A prominent scholar of the Basran School, celebrated for his vast knowledge of poetry and oral traditions, which he used to support lexicographical analysis.
- **Al-Farrā' (الفراء)**: A leading scholar of the Kufan School, known for his contributions to Qur'anic vocabulary and interpretation.
- **Al-Kisā'ī (الكسائي)**: A distinguished Kufan scholar and tutor to the Abbasid caliphs, recognised for his expertise in grammar and lexicon.
- **Alphabetic order**: A method of arranging words in dictionaries according to the sequence of letters in the alphabet, making entries easier to locate.
- **Basran School**: A tradition of Arabic lexicography based in Basra, characterised by grammatical precision and reliance on literary evidence.
- **Bedouin tribes (قبائل البدو)**: Nomadic Arab tribes whose speech traditions were considered by Kufan scholars to represent pure Arabic.
- **Dialectal variation (اللهجات)**: Differences in word usage and pronunciation across Arabic-speaking tribes, emphasised by the Kufan School.
- **Grammatical precision (الدقة النحوية)**: The careful codification of rules governing word forms and sentence structures, emphasised by the Basran School.
- **Kufan School**: A tradition of Arabic lexicography based in Kufa, noted for its focus on dialectal variation and practical usage.
- **Lisan al-Arab (لسان العرب)**: A comprehensive medieval Arabic dictionary that integrated both dialectal variation and grammatical precision, reflecting the combined influence of the Kufan and Basran Schools.
- **Literary evidence (الشواهد الأدبية)**: Citations from poetry and prose used by Basran scholars to justify definitions and interpretations in lexicography.
- **Practical usage**: The inclusion of everyday speech examples in dictionaries, alongside Qur'anic and poetic references, emphasised by the Kufan School.



Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective Questions

1. In which city did the Kufan School develop? (Linked to SLO 2.1)
2. Who among the Kufan scholars served as a tutor to the Abbasid caliphs? (Linked to SLO 2.2)
3. What methodological feature distinguished the Basran School from the Kufan School? (Linked to SLO 2.6)
4. Which Basran scholar was celebrated for his vast knowledge of poetry and oral traditions? (Linked to SLO 2.5)
5. Later Arabic dictionaries, such as *Lisan al-Arab*, integrated both _____ variation and grammatical precision. (Linked to SLO 2.9)

Short-Answer Questions

6. Define dialectal variation and explain its importance in the Kufan School. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
7. Describe one major contribution of Al-Farrā' to Arabic lexicography. (Linked to SLO 2.2)
8. Explain how literary evidence was used by Basran scholars in their lexicographical work. (Linked to SLO 2.6)
9. Identify one area of convergence between the Kufan and Basran Schools. (Linked to SLO 2.8)
10. State one way in which the Kufan and Basran Schools influenced later Arabic dictionaries. (Linked to SLO 2.9)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse the methodological differences between the Kufan and Basran Schools, highlighting their respective strengths. (Linked to SLO 2.7)
12. Evaluate the contributions of Al-Kisā'ī and Al-Asma'ī to Arabic lexicography, noting how their work reflected the traditions of their Schools. (Linked to SLO 2.2, SLO 2.5)
13. Discuss the lasting influence of the Kufan and Basran Schools on later Arabic dictionaries, with reference to *Lisan al-Arab*. (Linked to SLO 2.9)



Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective Questions

1. Kufa.
2. Al-Kisā'ī.
3. Grammatical precision.
4. Al-Asma'ī.
5. Dialectal.

Short-Answer Questions

6. Dialectal variation (اللهجات) refers to differences in word usage and pronunciation across Arabic-speaking tribes. In the Kufan School, it was considered vital for preserving the richness of Arabic.
7. Al-Farrā' contributed to the study of Qur'anic vocabulary and interpretation, strengthening the Kufan tradition of practical usage.
8. Basran scholars used poetry and prose as literary evidence (الشواهد الأدبية) to justify definitions and interpretations, ensuring accuracy and cultural depth.
9. Both Schools valued Qur'anic vocabulary and poetry as essential sources for lexicography.
10. They influenced later dictionaries by integrating dialectal variation with grammatical precision, creating balanced resources.

Long-Answer Questions

11. **Basic response:** The Kufan School emphasised dialectal variation and practical usage, while the Basran School focused on grammatical precision and literary evidence.

Value-added response: The Kufan approach preserved linguistic diversity, while the Basran method ensured standardisation. Together, they provided complementary strengths that enriched Arabic lexicography.

12. **Basic response:** Al-Kisā'ī, a Kufan scholar, was known for his grammatical expertise and role as tutor to Abbasid caliphs. Al-Asma'ī, from Basra, contributed through his knowledge of poetry and oral traditions.

Value-added response: Their contributions reflect the intellectual traditions of their Schools: Al-Kisā'ī's focus on dialectal diversity and Al-Asma'ī's reliance on literary evidence. Their work bridged scholarly rigour with cultural preservation.



13. **Basic response:** The Kufan and Basran Schools influenced later dictionaries such as *Lisan al-Arab*, which integrated both dialectal variation and grammatical precision.

Value-added response: Their legacy established balanced lexicographical methods, preserved linguistic heritage, and laid the foundation for modern Arabic lexicography, ensuring relevance across centuries.



Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 2]

Pilot questions 2.1

1. Kufa.
2. Al-Kisā'ī and Al-Farrā'.
3. He served as a tutor to the Abbasid caliphs.
4. Emphasis on dialectal variation and practical usage.
5. Because they were considered closer to the pure form of Arabic.

Pilot questions 2.2

1. Basra.
2. Abu 'Amr ibn al-'Ala and Al-Asma'ī.
3. Arabic grammar and lexicon.
4. Poetry and oral traditions.
5. Grammatical precision and reliance on literary evidence.

Pilot questions 2.3

1. The Kufan School emphasised dialectal variation, while the Basran School focused on grammatical precision.
2. Literary evidence, especially poetry.
3. By incorporating grammatical analysis into their methods.
4. *Lisan al-Arab* (لسان العرب).
5. Because they established foundational methods that shaped Arabic lexicography for centuries.

References and Attributions [Series 2]

Primary Sources and Suggested Readings

- Al-Kisā'ī (الكسائي). Contributions to grammar and lexicon within the Kufan School.



- Al-Farrā' (الفراء). Works on Qur'anic vocabulary and interpretation, representing Kufan scholarship.
- Abu 'Amr ibn al-'Ala (أبو عمرو بن العلاء). Early Basran authority on Arabic grammar and lexicon.
- Al-Asma'i (الأصمعي). Basran scholar renowned for his knowledge of poetry and oral traditions.
- Ibn Manzur. *Lisan al-Arab* (لسان العرب). Comprehensive medieval dictionary integrating Kufan and Basran traditions.

Illustrations (Figures, Plates, Boxes)

- *Figure 2.1 Kufa as a centre of Arabic lexicography*
 - [Insert Figure here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: "Generate a map diagram highlighting Kufa as a centre of Arabic scholarship in early Islam."
 - Suggested OER search string: "map of Kufa centre of Arabic scholarship OER".
- *Plate 2.1 Manuscript representing Kufan contributions to Arabic lexicography*
 - [Insert Plate here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: "Generate an image of an ancient Arabic manuscript linked to Kufan scholars."
 - Suggested OER search string: "Kufan scholars Arabic manuscript OER image".
- *Box 2.1 Methodological Features of the Kufan School*
 - [Insert Box here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: "Generate a text box listing methodological features of the Kufan School of Arabic lexicography."
 - Suggested OER search string: "Kufan School methodological features Arabic lexicography OER".
- *Figure 2.2 Basra as a centre of Arabic lexicography*
 - [Insert Figure here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: "Generate a map diagram highlighting Basra as a centre of Arabic scholarship in early Islam."
 - Suggested OER search string: "map of Basra centre of Arabic scholarship OER".
- *Plate 2.2 Manuscript representing Basran contributions to Arabic lexicography*
 - [Insert Plate here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: "Generate an image of an ancient Arabic manuscript linked to Basran scholars."
 - Suggested OER search string: "Basran scholars Arabic manuscript OER image".



- *Box 2.2 Methodological Features of the Basran School*
 - [Insert Box here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box listing methodological features of the Basran School of Arabic lexicography.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Basran School methodological features Arabic lexicography OER”.
- *Figure 2.3 Comparative approaches of Kufan and Basran Schools*
 - [Insert Figure here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram comparing Kufan focus on dialectal variation with Basran focus on grammatical precision.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “comparison Kufan Basran schools Arabic lexicography OER diagram”.
- *Plate 2.3 Manuscripts reflecting convergence of Kufan and Basran methods*
 - [Insert Plate here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of Arabic manuscripts showing combined Kufan and Basran influences.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic manuscripts Kufan Basran convergence OER image”.
- *Box 2.3 Lasting Influence of Kufan and Basran Schools*
 - [Insert Box here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box listing the lasting influence of Kufan and Basran Schools on Arabic lexicography.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “influence Kufan Basran schools Arabic lexicography OER”.



Series 3 Study of Old and Modern Dictionaries

3.1 Classical and Medieval Dictionaries

- 3.1.1 Early dictionaries and their compilers
- 3.1.2 Methodological features of classical dictionaries
- 3.1.3 Medieval expansions and comprehensive works (e.g., *Lisan al-Arab*)

3.2 Modern Dictionaries

- 3.2.1 Transition to alphabetic order and printing technology
- 3.2.2 Inclusion of scientific and technical terms
- 3.2.3 Role of language academies in modern lexicography

3.3 Comparative Study and Contemporary Relevance

- 3.3.1 Differences between old and modern dictionaries
- 3.3.2 Areas of continuity and adaptation
- 3.3.3 Importance of dictionaries in contemporary Arabic scholarship

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the Schools of the Arabic Lexicon, focusing on the Kufan and Basran traditions and their influence on later scholarship. Building on that foundation, this Series turns to the **Study of Old and Modern Dictionaries**, which represent the practical outcomes of those scholarly traditions. Dictionaries are more than repositories of words; they are cultural



records that capture the evolution of language across centuries. Understanding their development helps us appreciate how Arabic lexicography has adapted to meet the needs of different eras.

The aim of this Series is to examine the features of classical and medieval dictionaries, trace the transition to modern lexicographical practices, and evaluate their relevance to contemporary Arabic scholarship. By doing so, the Series intends to equip you with the ability to analyse both historical and modern approaches to dictionary-making.

We shall commence this Series by studying classical and medieval dictionaries, beginning with early works and their methodological features, and then considering comprehensive medieval contributions such as *Lisan al-Arab*. Next, we will move on to modern dictionaries, looking at the shift to alphabetic order, the impact of printing technology, and the inclusion of scientific and technical terms, alongside the role of language academies. Finally, we will wrap up with a comparative study that highlights the differences and continuities between old and modern dictionaries, concluding with their importance in contemporary Arabic scholarship.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 3.1** define the historical background of classical and medieval Arabic dictionaries,
- **SLO 3.2** explain the methodological features of early dictionary compilers,
- **SLO 3.3** describe the contributions of comprehensive medieval works such as *Lisan al-Arab*,
- **SLO 3.4** define the transition to alphabetic order in modern dictionaries,
- **SLO 3.5** explain the role of printing technology in shaping modern Arabic lexicography,
- **SLO 3.6** describe the inclusion of scientific and technical terms in modern dictionaries,
- **SLO 3.7** explain the role of language academies in modern Arabic lexicography,
- **SLO 3.8** analyse the differences between old and modern dictionaries,
- **SLO 3.9** evaluate the areas of continuity and adaptation across dictionary traditions, and
- **SLO 3.10** assess the importance of dictionaries in contemporary Arabic scholarship.



3.1 Classical and Medieval Dictionaries

3.1.1 Early dictionaries and their compilers

The earliest Arabic dictionaries were created to preserve the language and provide clarity for Qur'anic interpretation. One of the first was **Kitāb al-‘Ayn** (كتاب العين), compiled by **Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad al-Farahīdī** (الخليل بن أحمد الفراهيدي). The title refers to the Arabic letter ‘Ayn, which was used as the starting point for the dictionary’s arrangement. This work is considered the foundation of Arabic lexicography, introducing systematic methods for organising words according to their root letters.

Fill in the blank: The first major Arabic dictionary, _____, was compiled by Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad al-Farahīdī.



Plate 3.1 Manuscript of Kitāb al-‘Ayn.



3.1.2 Methodological features of classical dictionaries

Classical dictionaries were characterised by their reliance on **root-based organisation** (الجذر اللغوي), defined as the arrangement of words according to their trilateral or quadrilateral roots. This method allowed scholars to trace meanings back to their linguistic origins. Another feature was the inclusion of **Qur'anic vocabulary** (ألفاظ القرآن), ensuring that dictionaries served as tools for religious study. Poetry was also frequently cited as evidence, reflecting the cultural importance of oral traditions in Arabic scholarship.

Fill in the blank: Classical dictionaries often arranged words according to their _____ roots.

METHODOLOGICAL FEATURES OF CLASSICAL ARABIC DICTIONARIES

- Root-based organisation (الجذر اللغوي)
- Inclusion of Qur'anic vocabulary (ألفاظ القرآن)
- Use of poetry as literary evidence (الشواهد الشعرية)
- Aim to preserve linguistic heritage (الحفاظ على التراث اللغوي)

Box 3.1 Methodological Features of Classical Dictionaries

3.1.3 Medieval expansions and comprehensive works

During the medieval period, Arabic lexicography expanded significantly. The most famous work was **Lisan al-Arab** (لسان العرب), compiled by **Ibn Manzur** (ابن منظور) in the 13th century. This dictionary brought together earlier sources and became a comprehensive reference for scholars. It integrated both Kufan and Basran traditions, balancing dialectal variation with grammatical precision. Its vast coverage made it a cornerstone of Arabic scholarship and a model for later dictionaries.

Fill in the blank: The medieval dictionary compiled by Ibn Manzur in the 13th century is called _____.



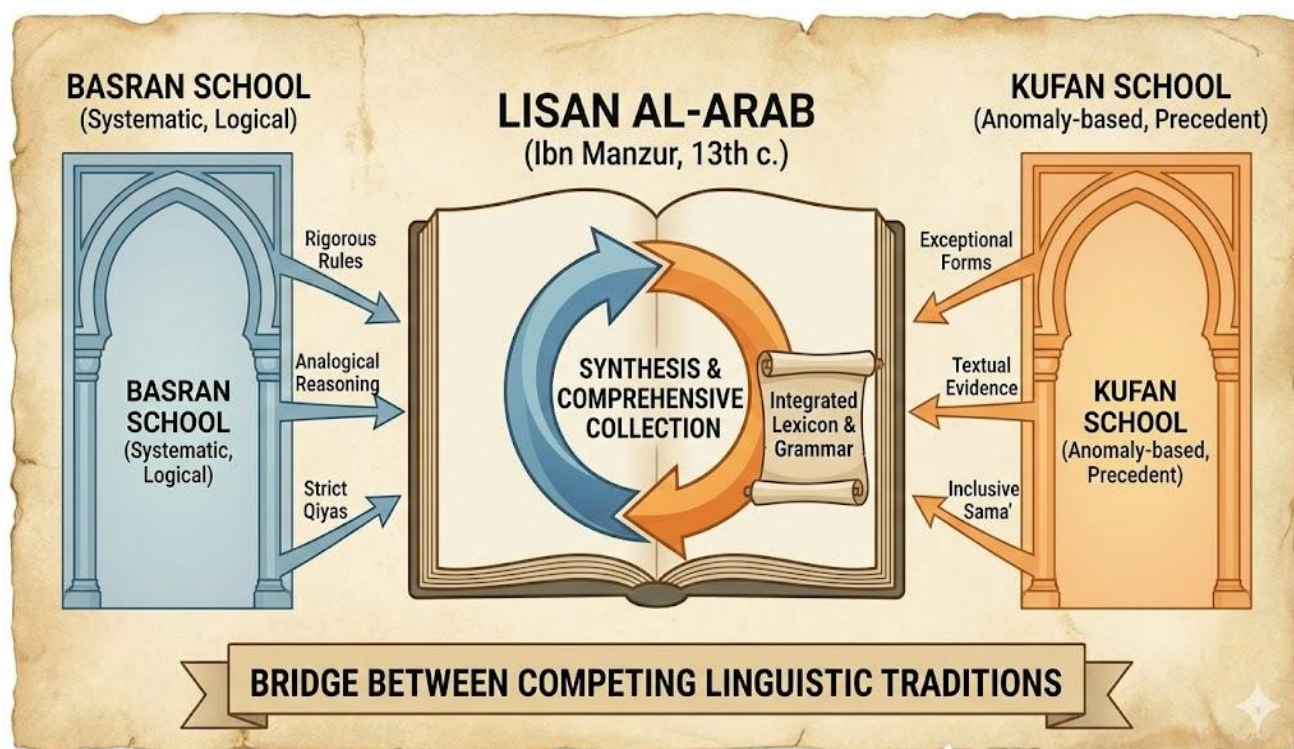


Figure 3.1 Integration of Kufan and Basran traditions in Lisan al-Arab.

Pilot questions 3.1

1. Who compiled *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*?
2. What organisational method was used in classical dictionaries?
3. Why was Qurʾanic vocabulary included in early dictionaries?
4. Which medieval dictionary integrated Kufan and Basran traditions?
5. What made *Lisan al-Arab* a cornerstone of Arabic scholarship?



3.2 Modern Dictionaries

3.2.1 Transition to alphabetic order and printing technology

Modern Arabic dictionaries marked a significant shift from the root-based organisation of classical works to **alphabetic order** (الترتيب الأبجدي), defined as the arrangement of words according to the sequence of letters in the alphabet. This change made dictionaries more accessible to learners and general users. The advent of **printing technology** (تقنية الطباعة) further transformed lexicography, allowing dictionaries to be mass-produced and widely distributed. This development ensured that dictionaries were no longer confined to scholars but became everyday tools for education and communication.

Fill in the blank: Modern Arabic dictionaries shifted from root-based organisation to _____ order.

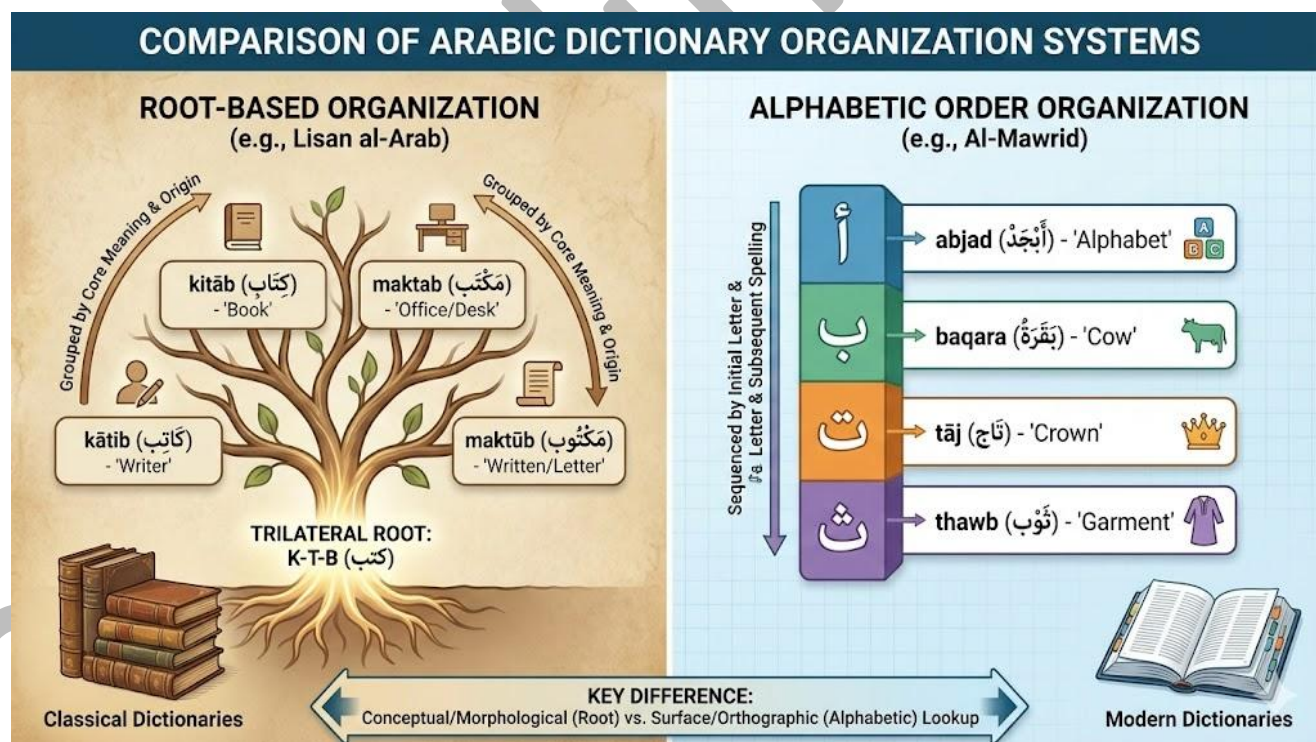


Figure 3.2 Transition from root-based to alphabetic order in Arabic dictionaries.



3.2.2 Inclusion of scientific and technical terms

With the rise of modern sciences and global exchange, dictionaries began to include **scientific and technical terms** (المصطلحات العلمية والفنية). This expansion reflected the need to adapt Arabic to new fields of knowledge such as medicine, engineering, and technology. By incorporating these terms, modern dictionaries ensured that Arabic remained relevant and capable of expressing contemporary concepts. This inclusion also supported educational institutions and professionals who required precise terminology in their work.

Fill in the blank: Modern dictionaries expanded their scope by including _____ and technical terms.

<i>Feature Area</i>	<i>Key Characteristics</i>	<i>Practical Impact</i>
<i>Alphabetic Order</i> (الترتيب الأبجدي)	<i>Entries arranged alphabetically rather than by traditional root-based systems.</i>	<i>Easier navigation for learners and non-specialists.</i>
<i>Printing Technology</i> (تقنية الطباعة)	<i>Mass printing and later digital publication of dictionaries.</i>	<i>Wider distribution and accessibility across regions.</i>
<i>Scientific & Technical Terms</i> (المصطلحات العلمية والفنية)	<i>Inclusion of modern vocabulary from science, technology, and global disciplines.</i>	<i>Expands Arabic lexicon to meet contemporary needs.</i>
<i>Accessibility for Users</i>	<i>Simplified definitions, bilingual glosses, and learner-friendly formatting.</i>	<i>Supports students, professionals, and non-native speakers.</i>
<i>Western Influence</i>	<i>Adoption of structural and descriptive methods inspired by European lexicography.</i>	<i>Aligns Arabic dictionaries with global linguistic standards.</i>



Digital Integration	<i>Online platforms, apps, and multimedia features (audio, conjugation charts).</i>	<i>Enhances engagement and supports diverse learning styles.</i>
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Box 3.2 Features of Modern Dictionaries

3.2.3 Role of language academies in modern lexicography

The establishment of **language academies** (المجامع اللغوية) played a crucial role in modern Arabic lexicography. These academies were responsible for standardising terminology, approving new words, and ensuring consistency across dictionaries. They acted as authoritative bodies that guided the development of Arabic in response to modern challenges. Their work helped unify the language across different regions and safeguarded its adaptability in the face of rapid scientific and cultural changes.

Fill in the blank: Language academies were responsible for _____ terminology and approving new words in modern dictionaries.





Plate 3.2 Language academies supporting modern Arabic lexicography.

Pilot questions 3.2

1. What organisational method replaced root-based arrangement in modern dictionaries?
2. Why was printing technology important for the spread of modern dictionaries?
3. Which new types of terms were included in modern dictionaries?
4. What role did language academies play in modern lexicography?
5. How did modern dictionaries make Arabic more accessible to learners and professionals?



3.3 Comparative Study and Contemporary Relevance

3.3.1 Differences between old and modern dictionaries

Old dictionaries, such as *Kitāb al-‘Ayn* and *Lisan al-Arab*, were organised according to **root-based systems** (الجزر اللغوي), which required users to identify the trilateral or quadrilateral root of a word before locating it. This method was highly systematic but often challenging for learners unfamiliar with root structures. In contrast, modern dictionaries adopted **alphabetic order** (الترتيب الأبجدي), which simplified access and made dictionaries more user-friendly. Another difference lies in scope: old dictionaries focused on Qur’anic vocabulary and poetry, while modern dictionaries expanded to include scientific and technical terms.

Fill in the blank: Old dictionaries were organised according to root-based systems, while modern dictionaries adopted _____ order.

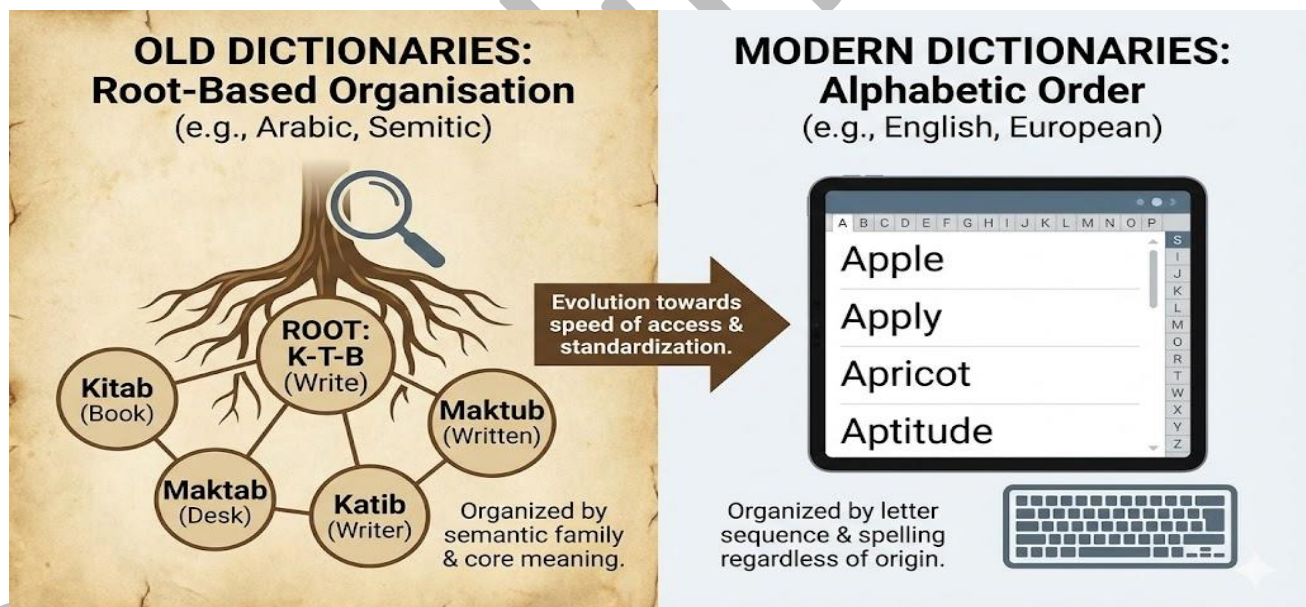


Figure 3.3 Comparison of old and modern dictionary organisation.



3.3.2 Areas of continuity and adaptation

Despite their differences, both old and modern dictionaries share common features. They aim to preserve the Arabic language and provide authoritative references for scholars and learners. The inclusion of **Qur'anic vocabulary** (ألفاظ القرآن) remains a constant, ensuring that dictionaries serve religious as well as linguistic purposes. At the same time, modern dictionaries adapted by incorporating new terminology and responding to contemporary needs. This balance between continuity and adaptation reflects the resilience of Arabic lexicography across centuries.

Fill in the blank: Both old and modern dictionaries continue to include _____ vocabulary as a constant feature.



Plate 3.3 Continuity and adaptation in Arabic dictionaries.

3.3.3 Importance of dictionaries in contemporary Arabic scholarship

In today's world, dictionaries play a vital role in education, research, and communication. They serve as tools for **standardisation** (التوحيد), ensuring consistency in spelling, meaning, and usage across different regions. They also support the development of Arabic in scientific, technological, and cultural contexts. Modern dictionaries, guided by language academies,



continue the legacy of classical works while addressing contemporary challenges. Their relevance lies not only in preserving heritage but also in enabling Arabic to thrive in global discourse.

Fill in the blank: Dictionaries serve as tools for _____, ensuring consistency in spelling, meaning, and usage.

Contemporary Relevance of Arabic Dictionaries

Preservation of linguistic heritage

Standardisation (التوحيد) across regions

Inclusion of modern scientific and technical terms

Support for education and research

Contribution to global discourse

Box 3.3 Contemporary Relevance of Arabic Dictionaries

Pilot questions 3.3

1. What organisational method distinguished old dictionaries from modern ones?
2. Which feature has remained constant across both old and modern dictionaries?
3. How did modern dictionaries adapt to contemporary needs?
4. What role do dictionaries play in standardising Arabic today?
5. Why are dictionaries considered vital for contemporary Arabic scholarship?



Series Summary

This Series has focused on the study of old and modern dictionaries, showing how Arabic lexicography evolved from its classical foundations to contemporary practice. We began with classical and medieval dictionaries, examining early works such as *Kitāb al-‘Ayn* and comprehensive medieval contributions like *Lisan al-Arab*. We then moved on to modern dictionaries, highlighting the shift to alphabetic order, the impact of printing technology, and the inclusion of scientific and technical terms, alongside the role of language academies. Finally, we compared old and modern traditions, noting both their differences and areas of continuity, and considered the importance of dictionaries in contemporary scholarship.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define the historical background of classical and medieval dictionaries, explain their methodological features, describe the contributions of major works, and analyse the transition to modern practices. You should also be able to evaluate the differences and continuities between old and modern dictionaries and assess their relevance in today’s Arabic scholarship. These abilities directly align with the Series Learning Outcomes and provide you with the skills to appreciate and critically engage with the development of Arabic lexicography across time.

Glossary of Terms

- **Alphabetic order (الترتيب الأبجدي):** A method of arranging words in dictionaries according to the sequence of letters in the alphabet, making entries easier to locate.
- **Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad al-Farahīdī (الخليل بن أحمد الفراهيدي):** The compiler of *Kitāb al-‘Ayn*, recognised as the founder of Arabic lexicography.
- **Ibn Manzur (ابن منظور):** The medieval scholar who compiled *Lisan al-Arab*, one of the most comprehensive Arabic dictionaries.
- **Kitāb al-‘Ayn (كتاب العين):** The first major Arabic dictionary, organised by root letters and compiled by Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad al-Farahīdī.



- **Language academies (المجامع اللغوية)**: Institutions established to standardise Arabic terminology, approve new words, and guide modern lexicography.
- **Lisan al-Arab (لسان العرب)**: A medieval dictionary compiled by Ibn Manzur, integrating Kufan and Basran traditions and serving as a cornerstone of Arabic scholarship.
- **Printing technology (تقنية الطباعة)**: The process of producing books and dictionaries in large quantities, which made modern dictionaries widely available.
- **Qur'anic vocabulary (ألفاظ القرآن)**: Words and expressions found in the Qur'an that were included in dictionaries to aid religious study and interpretation.
- **Root-based organisation (الجذر اللغوي)**: A system used in classical dictionaries where words are arranged according to their triliteral or quadriliteral roots.
- **Scientific and technical terms (المصطلحات العلمية والفنية)**: Modern additions to dictionaries that reflect the expansion of Arabic to cover fields such as medicine, engineering, and technology.
- **Standardisation (التوحيد)**: The process of ensuring consistency in spelling, meaning, and usage of words across different regions and contexts.



Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective Questions

1. Who compiled *Kitāb al-‘Ayn*? (Linked to SLO 3.1)
2. Which organisational method was used in classical dictionaries? (Linked to SLO 3.2)
3. Which medieval dictionary was compiled by Ibn Manzur? (Linked to SLO 3.3)
4. What organisational method replaced root-based arrangement in modern dictionaries? (Linked to SLO 3.4)
5. Which new types of terms were included in modern dictionaries? (Linked to SLO 3.6)

Short-Answer Questions

6. Define alphabetic order and explain why it made modern dictionaries more accessible. (Linked to SLO 3.4)
7. Describe the role of printing technology in the spread of modern dictionaries. (Linked to SLO 3.5)
8. Explain how language academies contributed to modern Arabic lexicography. (Linked to SLO 3.7)
9. Identify one area of continuity between old and modern dictionaries. (Linked to SLO 3.9)
10. State one reason why dictionaries are vital for contemporary Arabic scholarship. (Linked to SLO 3.10)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse the methodological differences between classical and modern dictionaries. (Linked to SLO 3.8)
12. Evaluate the contributions of *Kitāb al-‘Ayn* and *Lisan al-Arab* to Arabic lexicography. (Linked to SLO 3.1, SLO 3.3)
13. Discuss the importance of dictionaries in contemporary scholarship, with reference to their role in standardisation. (Linked to SLO 3.10)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective Questions

1. Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad al-Farahīdī.
2. Root-based organisation.



3. *Lisan al-Arab*.
4. Alphabetic order.
5. Scientific and technical terms.

Short-Answer Questions

6. Alphabetic order arranges words according to the sequence of letters in the alphabet. It simplified dictionary use and made them more accessible to learners and general users.
7. Printing technology enabled dictionaries to be mass-produced and widely distributed, making them available beyond scholarly circles.
8. Language academies standardised terminology, approved new words, and ensured consistency across dictionaries.
9. Both old and modern dictionaries include Qur'anic vocabulary as a constant feature.
10. Dictionaries are vital because they preserve linguistic heritage and support education, research, and communication.

Long-Answer Questions

11. **Basic response:** Classical dictionaries used root-based organisation and focused on Qur'anic vocabulary and poetry, while modern dictionaries adopted alphabetic order and expanded to include scientific and technical terms.

Value-added response: The classical method preserved linguistic depth but was complex for learners, whereas modern methods prioritised accessibility and relevance. Together, they illustrate the evolution of Arabic lexicography from heritage preservation to practical usability.

12. **Basic response:** *Kitāb al-'Ayn* was the first systematic dictionary, while *Lisan al-Arab* compiled earlier sources into a comprehensive reference.

Value-added response: *Kitāb al-'Ayn* introduced root-based organisation, laying the foundation for lexicography, while *Lisan al-Arab* integrated Kufan and Basran traditions, becoming a cornerstone of Arabic scholarship and influencing later dictionaries.

13. **Basic response:** Dictionaries are important in contemporary scholarship because they standardise spelling, meaning, and usage.

Value-added response: Beyond standardisation, they enable Arabic to adapt to scientific and technological contexts, unify language across regions, and contribute to global discourse, ensuring the language remains vibrant and relevant.



Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 3]

Pilot questions 3.1

1. Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad al-Farahīdī.
2. Root-based organisation.
3. To aid religious study and interpretation.
4. *Lisan al-Arab*.
5. Its comprehensive coverage and integration of Kufan and Basran traditions.

Pilot questions 3.2

1. Alphabetic order.
2. It enabled mass production and wide distribution of dictionaries.
3. Scientific and technical terms.
4. They standardised terminology and approved new words.
5. By making dictionaries accessible to learners and professionals.

Pilot questions 3.3

1. Root-based organisation distinguished old dictionaries, while alphabetic order characterised modern ones.
2. Qur'anic vocabulary.
3. By incorporating new terminology and responding to contemporary needs.
4. They ensure consistency in spelling, meaning, and usage.
5. Because they preserve heritage, support education and research, and enable Arabic to thrive in global discourse.



References and Attributions [Series 3]

Primary Sources and Suggested Readings

- Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad al-Farahīdī. *Kitāb al-‘Ayn*. Recognised as the first systematic Arabic dictionary.
- Ibn Manzur. *Lisan al-Arab*. A medieval comprehensive dictionary integrating Kufan and Basran traditions.
- Arabic Language Academies. Publications and reports on the standardisation of modern Arabic terminology.

Illustrations

- *Plate 3.1 Manuscript of Kitāb al-‘Ayn*
 - [Insert Plate here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of an ancient Arabic manuscript page from Kitāb al-‘Ayn.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Kitab al-Ayn manuscript OER image.”
- *Box 3.1 Methodological Features of Classical Dictionaries*
 - [Insert Box here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box listing methodological features of classical Arabic dictionaries.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “classical Arabic dictionaries methodological features OER.”
- *Figure 3.1 Integration of Kufan and Basran traditions in Lisan al-Arab*
 - [Insert Figure here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram showing how Lisan al-Arab integrates Kufan and Basran traditions.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Lisan al-Arab Kufan Basran traditions OER diagram.”
- *Figure 3.2 Transition from root-based to alphabetic order in Arabic dictionaries*
 - [Insert Figure here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram comparing root-based organisation with alphabetic order in Arabic dictionaries.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic dictionaries root-based vs alphabetic order OER diagram.”



- *Box 3.2 Features of Modern Dictionaries*
 - [Insert Box here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box listing the main features of modern Arabic dictionaries.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “features of modern Arabic dictionaries OER.”
- *Plate 3.2 Language academies supporting modern Arabic lexicography*
 - [Insert Plate here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of an Arabic language academy session or building.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic language academy modern lexicography OER image.”
- *Figure 3.3 Comparison of old and modern dictionary organisation*
 - [Insert Figure here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram comparing root-based organisation in old dictionaries with alphabetic order in modern dictionaries.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “comparison old vs modern Arabic dictionaries OER diagram.”
- *Plate 3.3 Continuity and adaptation in Arabic dictionaries*
 - [Insert Plate here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image showing a medieval Arabic manuscript next to a modern printed dictionary.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic manuscript and modern dictionary OER image.”
- *Box 3.3 Contemporary Relevance of Arabic Dictionaries*
 - [Insert Box here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box listing the contemporary relevance of Arabic dictionaries.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “contemporary relevance Arabic dictionaries OER.”



Series 4 Orders of Lexicon Entries

4.1 Root-Based Order

- 4.1.1 Concept of root-based arrangement
- 4.1.2 Advantages and challenges of root-based order
- 4.1.3 Examples from classical dictionaries

4.2 Alphabetic Order

- 4.2.1 Emergence of alphabetic arrangement in modern dictionaries
- 4.2.2 Benefits of alphabetic order for accessibility
- 4.2.3 Limitations compared to root-based systems

4.3 Thematic and Subject-Based Order

- 4.3.1 Organisation by themes or subject fields
- 4.3.2 Use in specialised dictionaries (e.g., scientific, technical, or bilingual works)
- 4.3.3 Strengths and weaknesses of thematic order

4.4 Comparative Evaluation and Contemporary Applications

- 4.4.1 Comparative analysis of root-based, alphabetic, and thematic orders
- 4.4.2 Adaptations in digital and online lexicography
- 4.4.3 Relevance of ordering systems in contemporary Arabic scholarship

Introduction

In the last Series, we examined the study of old and modern dictionaries, tracing their evolution from classical works such as *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* to modern printed and digital resources. Building on that foundation, this Series turns to the **Orders of Lexicon Entries**, which determine how words



are arranged and accessed in dictionaries. The order of entries is not a trivial matter; it shapes how easily users can locate information and influences the overall usability of a lexicon. Understanding these systems is essential for appreciating both the historical traditions and the modern innovations of Arabic lexicography.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the different systems used for ordering lexicon entries, to analyse their strengths and limitations, and to evaluate their relevance in contemporary scholarship. By doing so, the Series will equip you with the ability to critically assess how ordering methods affect dictionary design and usage.

We shall commence this Series by exploring root-based order, considering its conceptual basis, advantages, and challenges, with examples from classical dictionaries. Next, we will move on to alphabetic order, examining its emergence in modern dictionaries and its benefits for accessibility. Following that, we will study thematic and subject-based order, focusing on its use in specialised dictionaries and its strengths and weaknesses. Finally, we will wrap up with a comparative evaluation of all three systems, highlighting their adaptations in digital lexicography and their continuing relevance in contemporary Arabic scholarship.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 4.1** define the concept of root-based order in lexicon entries,
- **SLO 4.2** explain the advantages and challenges of root-based organisation with examples from classical dictionaries,
- **SLO 4.3** describe the emergence of alphabetic order in modern dictionaries,
- **SLO 4.4** analyse the benefits of alphabetic order for accessibility,
- **SLO 4.5** evaluate the limitations of alphabetic order compared to root-based systems,
- **SLO 4.6** define thematic and subject-based order in lexicon entries,
- **SLO 4.7** explain how thematic order is applied in specialised dictionaries,



- **SLO 4.8** evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of thematic order,
- **SLO 4.9** analyse the differences between root-based, alphabetic, and thematic orders,
- **SLO 4.10** assess the relevance of ordering systems in digital and contemporary Arabic lexicography.

4.1 Root-Based Order

4.1.1 Concept of root-based arrangement

The **root-based order** (الجزر اللغوي) refers to the system of organising words in dictionaries according to their trilateral or quadrilateral roots. In this method, users must first identify the root letters of a word before locating it in the dictionary. This approach reflects the structure of the Arabic language, where most words are derived from a root that conveys a core meaning. Root-based arrangement was the earliest and most influential system in Arabic lexicography, ensuring that dictionaries preserved the linguistic depth of the language.

Fill in the blank: In root-based order, words are arranged according to their _____ letters.



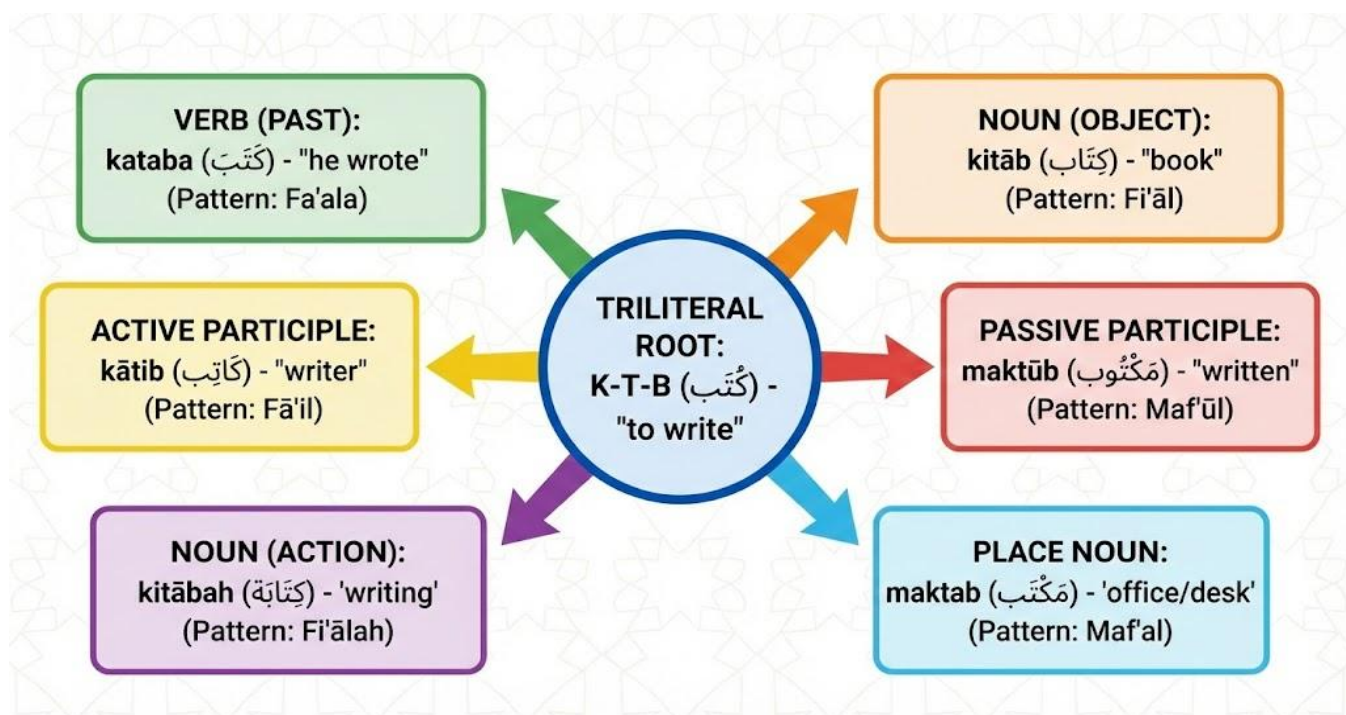


Figure 4.1 Root-based organisation of Arabic words.

4.1.2 Advantages and challenges of root-based order

One major advantage of root-based order is that it highlights the **semantic relationships** (العلاقات الدلالية) between words. By grouping words under their common root, dictionaries reveal connections in meaning and usage. This system also supports advanced study of morphology and etymology. However, the challenge lies in accessibility. Learners who are not familiar with root structures may struggle to identify the correct entry. Additionally, irregular or borrowed words that do not fit neatly into the root system can be difficult to classify.

Fill in the blank: Root-based order reveals the _____ relationships between words by grouping them under common roots.

Aspect	Advantages	Challenges
Semantic Relationships	Highlights connections between words derived from the same root.	Irregular or borrowed words may not fit easily into the system.



<i>Morphology & Etymology</i>	<i>Supports study of word formation and historical development.</i>	<i>Requires advanced knowledge of roots, making it difficult for beginners.</i>
<i>Linguistic Depth</i>	<i>Preserves richness of Arabic's trilateral and quadrilateral root system.</i>	<i>Can obscure immediate meaning for learners unfamiliar with derivational patterns.</i>
<i>Cultural Heritage</i>	<i>Maintains traditional lexicographic methods tied to classical scholarship.</i>	<i>Less accessible compared to alphabetic order used in modern dictionaries.</i>
<i>Systematic Organization</i>	<i>Provides a structured way to trace families of words.</i>	<i>May complicate quick reference for everyday users.</i>

Box 4.1 Advantages and Challenges of Root-Based Order

4.1.3 Examples from classical dictionaries

The most notable example of root-based order is **Kitāb al-‘Ayn** (كتاب العين), compiled by Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad al-Farahīdī. This dictionary arranged entries by root letters, beginning with the letter ‘Ayn. Another example is **Lisan al-Arab** (لسان العرب) by Ibn Manzur, which also relied heavily on root-based organisation while integrating earlier sources. These works demonstrate how root-based order shaped the foundations of Arabic lexicography and influenced later dictionaries.

Fill in the blank: The first major Arabic dictionary arranged by root letters was _____, compiled by Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad al-Farahīdī.





Plate 4.1 Manuscript of Kitāb al-'Ayn.

Pilot questions 4.1

1. What does root-based order mean in Arabic lexicography?
2. Which linguistic feature does root-based order highlight?
3. What is one challenge learners face when using root-based dictionaries?
4. Name one classical dictionary that used root-based organisation.
5. Why is root-based order considered foundational in Arabic lexicography?

4.2 Alphabetic Order

4.2.1 Emergence of alphabetic arrangement in modern dictionaries

The **alphabetic order** (الترتيب الأبجدي) refers to the system of arranging words according to the sequence of letters in the alphabet. Unlike root-based organisation, this method does not require users to identify the root of a word before locating it. Alphabetic arrangement emerged strongly



in modern dictionaries, particularly with the advent of printing technology, which made dictionaries more widely available. This system was designed to improve accessibility for learners and general users, ensuring that dictionaries could be consulted quickly and efficiently.

Fill in the blank: Alphabetic order arranges words according to the sequence of _____ in the alphabet.

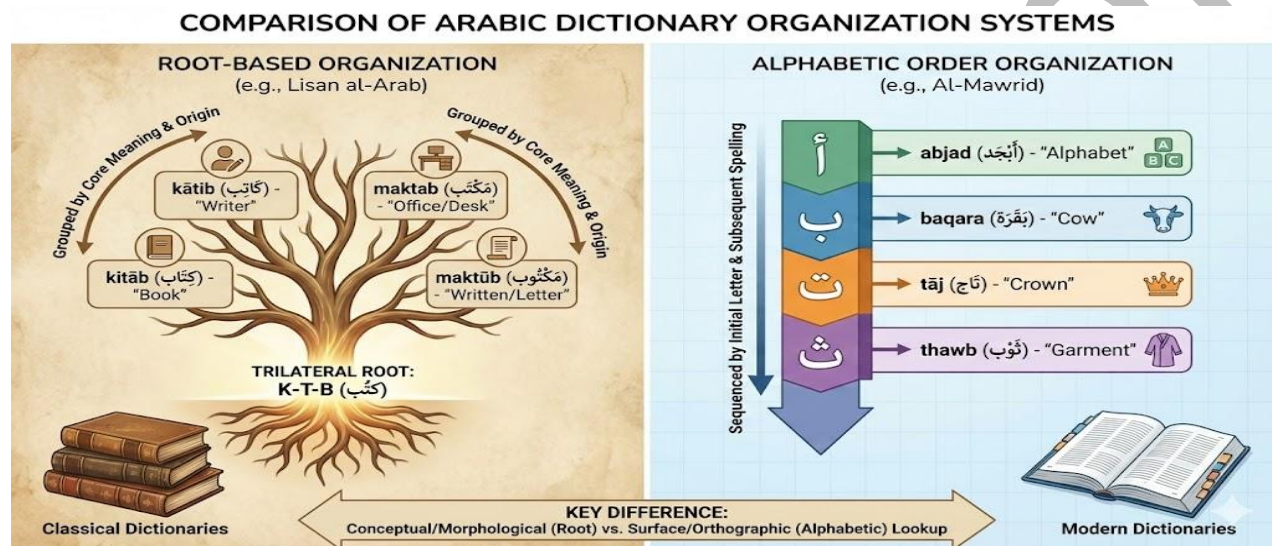


Figure 4.2 Comparison of root-based and alphabetic organisation in dictionaries.

4.2.2 Benefits of alphabetic order for accessibility

One of the greatest benefits of alphabetic order is its **user-friendliness** (سهولة الاستخدام), defined as the ease with which learners and general users can locate entries. This system eliminates the need for advanced knowledge of roots, making dictionaries more accessible to beginners and non-specialists. It also speeds up the process of finding words, which is particularly useful in educational and professional contexts. Alphabetic order therefore broadened the audience for dictionaries, allowing them to serve not only scholars but also students and everyday users.

Fill in the blank: Alphabetic order is considered more _____ because it eliminates the need for root identification.



<i>Benefit Area</i>	<i>Key Features & Contributions</i>	<i>Practical Impact</i>
<i>User-Friendly for Beginners</i>	<i>Alphabetic arrangement is straightforward, requiring no prior knowledge of roots or morphology.</i>	<i>Makes dictionaries accessible to students and casual users.</i>
<i>Faster Word Location</i>	<i>Words can be found quickly without analyzing their root or derivational patterns.</i>	<i>Saves time and improves usability for everyday reference.</i>
<i>General & Professional Use</i>	<i>Suitable for learners, translators, and professionals across disciplines.</i>	<i>Broadens the scope of dictionary use beyond specialized scholars.</i>
<i>Wider Audience Reach</i>	<i>Expands dictionary accessibility to non-specialists, non-native speakers, and global users.</i>	<i>Promotes Arabic learning internationally and supports cross-cultural communication.</i>

Box 4.2 Benefits of Alphabetic Order

4.2.3 Limitations compared to root-based systems

Despite its accessibility, alphabetic order has limitations. It does not highlight the **semantic relationships** (العلاقات الدلالية) between words, since entries are listed independently rather than grouped under a common root. This can make it harder to study morphology and etymology in depth. Additionally, alphabetic order may obscure connections between words that share a linguistic origin, reducing its usefulness for advanced scholarship. While it is practical for everyday use, it lacks the analytical depth of root-based systems.

Fill in the blank: Alphabetic order does not highlight the _____ relationships between words as root-based systems do.



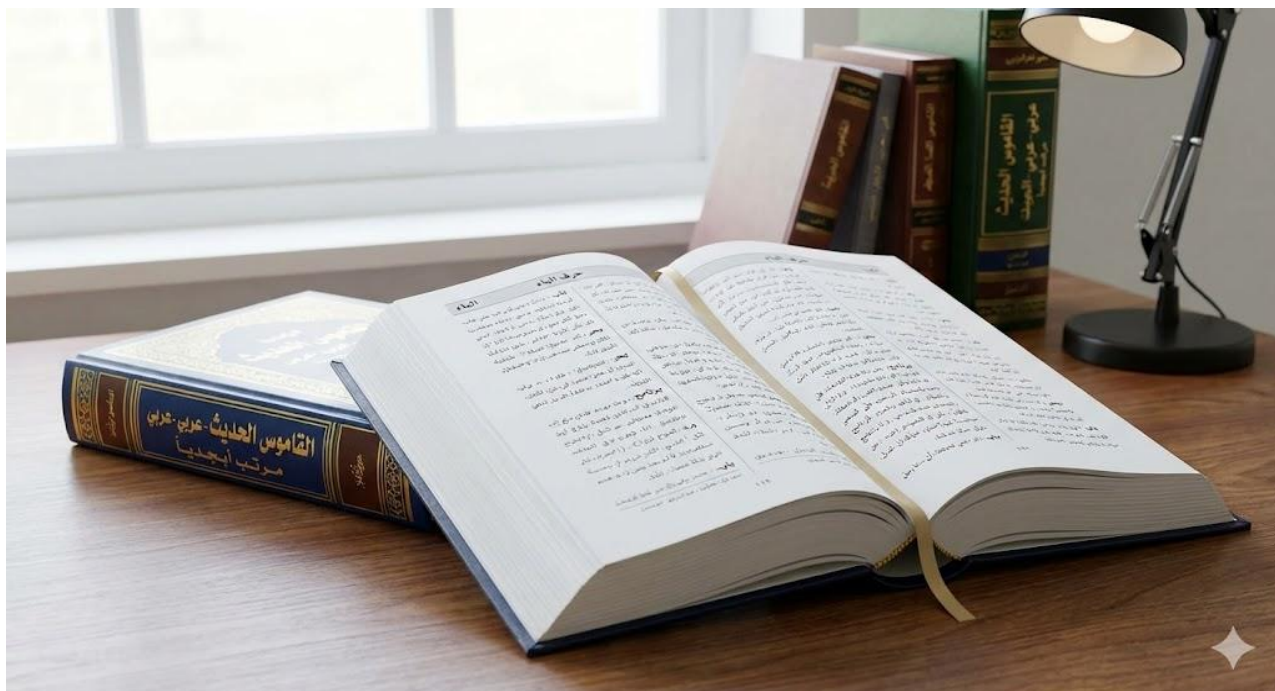


Plate 4.2 Modern Arabic dictionary using alphabetic order.

Pilot questions 4.2

1. What does alphabetic order mean in the context of dictionaries?
2. Why did alphabetic order become more common in modern dictionaries?
3. What is one benefit of alphabetic order for accessibility?
4. What is one limitation of alphabetic order compared to root-based systems?
5. How did alphabetic order broaden the audience for dictionaries?

4.3 Thematic and Subject-Based Order

4.3.1 Organisation by themes or subject fields

The **thematic order** (الترتيب الموضوعي) refers to the arrangement of dictionary entries according to subject areas or themes rather than roots or alphabetic sequence. In this system, words are grouped under categories such as medicine, law, science, or everyday life. This makes it easier



for users to find vocabulary related to a specific field. Thematic organisation is particularly useful in specialised dictionaries where the focus is on practical application rather than linguistic analysis.

Fill in the blank: Thematic order arranges dictionary entries according to _____ areas or themes.

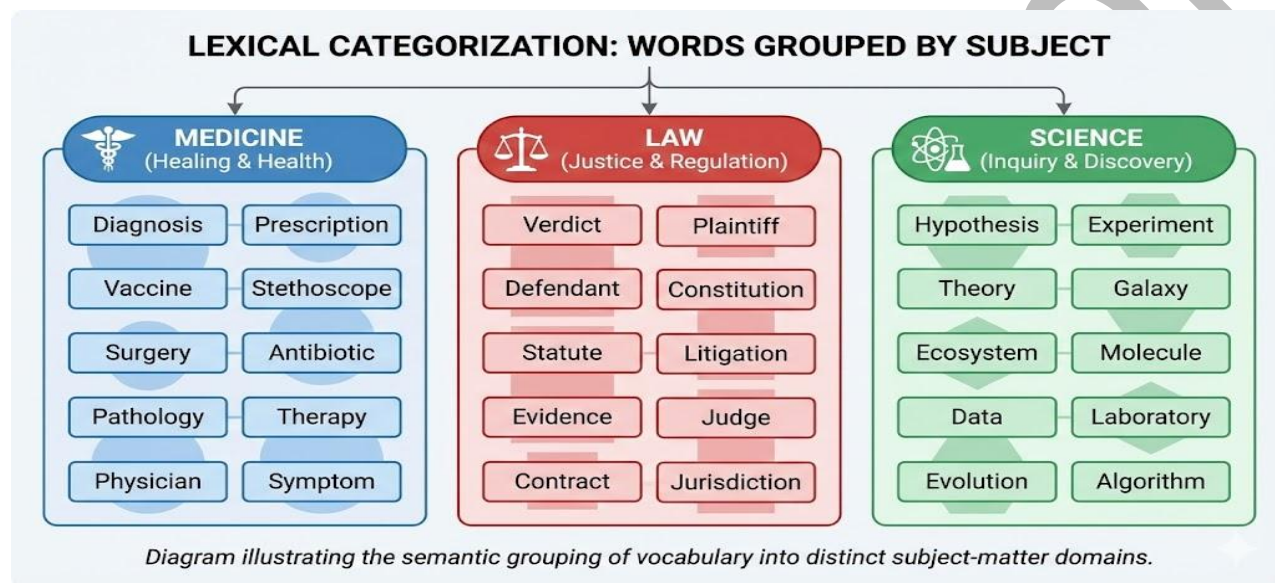


Figure 4.3 Thematic organisation of dictionary entries.

4.3.2 Use in specialised dictionaries

Specialised dictionaries often adopt thematic order to serve professionals and learners in specific fields. For example, a medical dictionary will group terms under anatomy, diseases, and treatments, while a legal dictionary will arrange entries under contracts, property, and criminal law. The inclusion of **subject-based organisation** (التنظيم حسب الموضوع) ensures that users can quickly access relevant terminology without navigating through unrelated entries. This approach is particularly valuable in bilingual dictionaries, where thematic grouping helps learners connect vocabulary across languages.



Fill in the blank: Specialised dictionaries use thematic order to group terms under _____ relevant to a particular field.

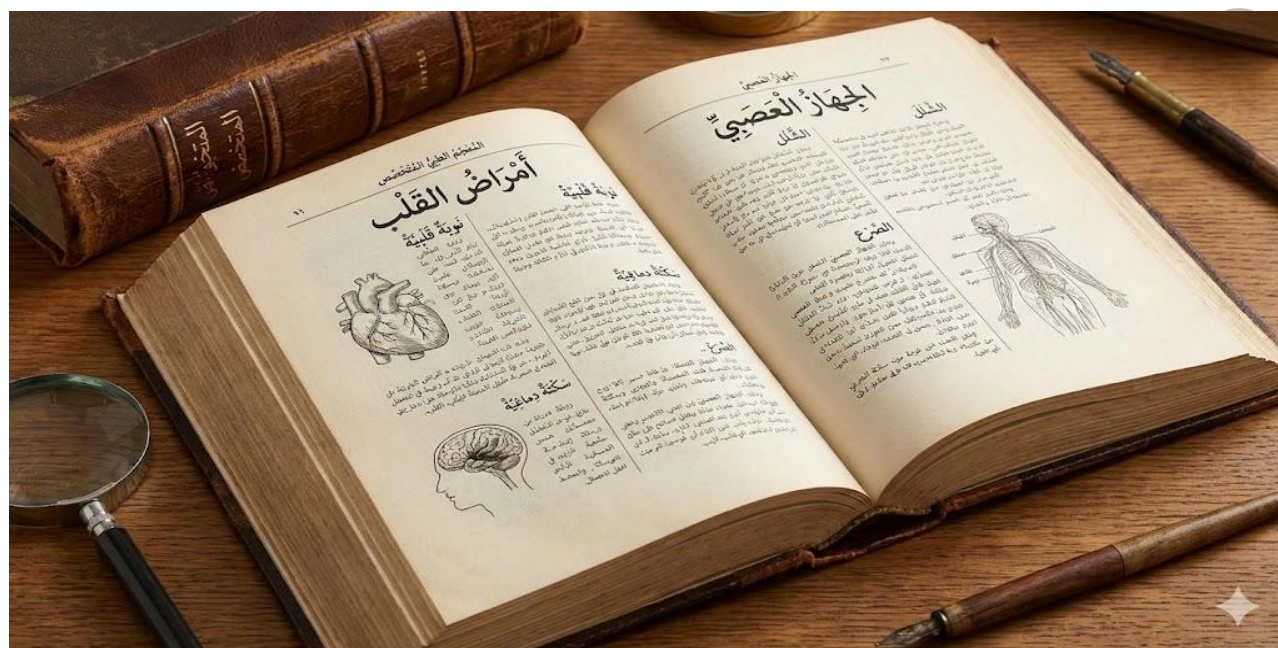


Plate 4.3 Specialised dictionary using thematic order.

4.3.3 Strengths and weaknesses of thematic order

Thematic order has clear strengths. It is practical for learners and professionals who need vocabulary in specific contexts, and it supports subject-based learning. However, its weaknesses include limited coverage of general language and reduced emphasis on linguistic relationships. Unlike root-based or alphabetic systems, thematic dictionaries may not provide comprehensive access to all words in the language. They are best used as supplementary resources alongside general dictionaries.

Fill in the blank: One weakness of thematic order is that it provides limited coverage of _____ language.

Strengths of Thematic Order	Weaknesses of Thematic Order
Practical for professionals and learners	Limited coverage of general language



Supports subject-based learning	Reduced emphasis on linguistic relationships
Quick access to relevant terminology	Best used as supplementary resource

Box 4.3 Strengths and Weaknesses of Thematic Order

Pilot questions 4.3

1. What does thematic order mean in lexicography?
2. How are entries arranged in specialised dictionaries using thematic order?
3. Give one example of a field where thematic dictionaries are useful.
4. What is one strength of thematic order?
5. What is one weakness of thematic order compared to root-based or alphabetic systems?

4.4 Comparative Evaluation and Contemporary Applications

4.4.1 Comparative analysis of root-based, alphabetic, and thematic orders

Each ordering system in lexicography offers unique strengths and limitations. **Root-based order** (الجزر اللغوي) highlights the linguistic depth of Arabic by grouping words under their trilateral or quadrilateral roots, but it can be challenging for beginners. **Alphabetic order** (الترتيب الأبجدي) improves accessibility by arranging words according to the sequence of letters, yet it does not reveal semantic relationships. **Thematic order** (الترتيب الموضوعي) organises entries by subject fields, making it practical for specialised dictionaries, though it provides limited coverage of general language. A comparative view helps learners appreciate how these systems complement one another in different contexts.

Fill in the blank: Root-based order highlights linguistic depth, while alphabetic order improves _____ for general users.



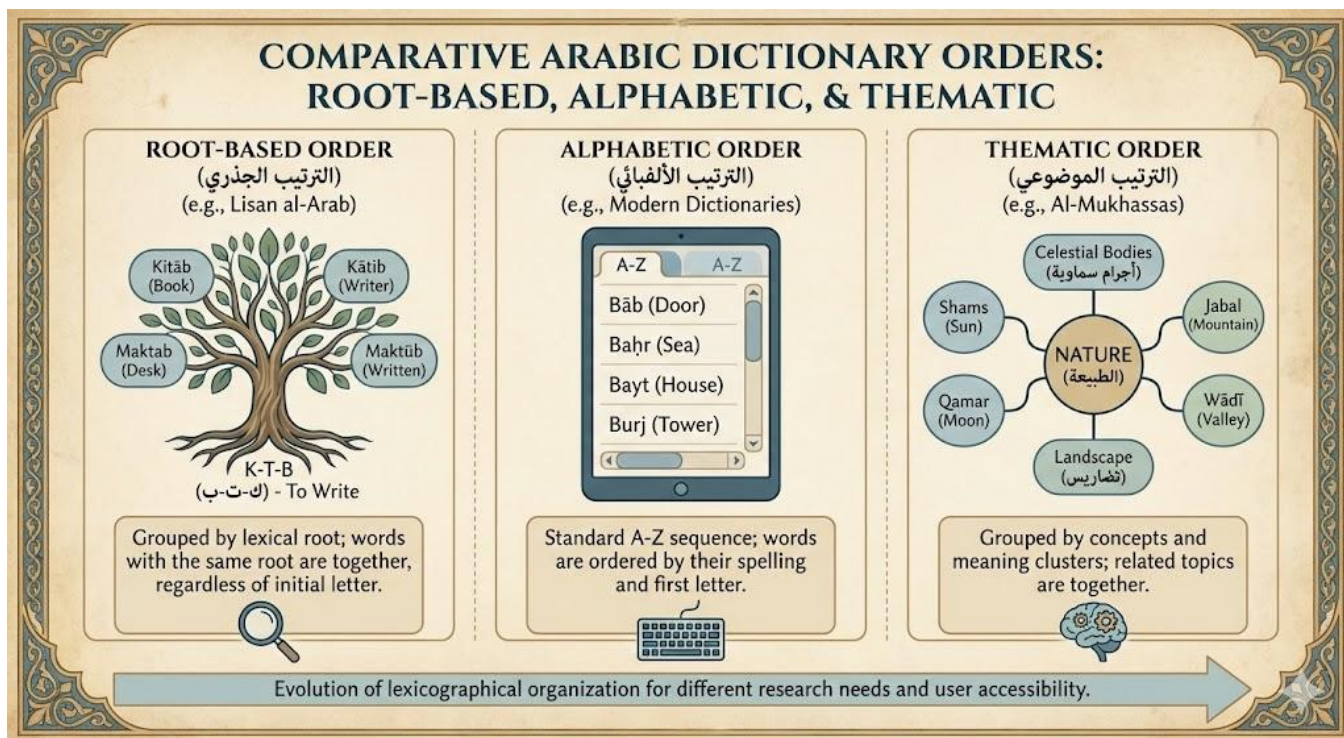


Figure 4.4 Comparative analysis of ordering systems in Arabic lexicography.

4.4.2 Adaptations in digital and online lexicography

Modern technology has transformed dictionary use. **Digital lexicography** (المعاجم الرقمية) refers to the creation and use of dictionaries in electronic formats, including online platforms and mobile applications. These resources often combine multiple ordering systems, allowing users to search by root, alphabet, or subject. Search engines and hyperlinks make navigation faster and more flexible than traditional print dictionaries. Digital adaptations also enable continuous updates, ensuring that new words and technical terms are incorporated promptly.

Fill in the blank: Digital lexicography allows users to search by root, alphabet, or _____ depending on their needs.



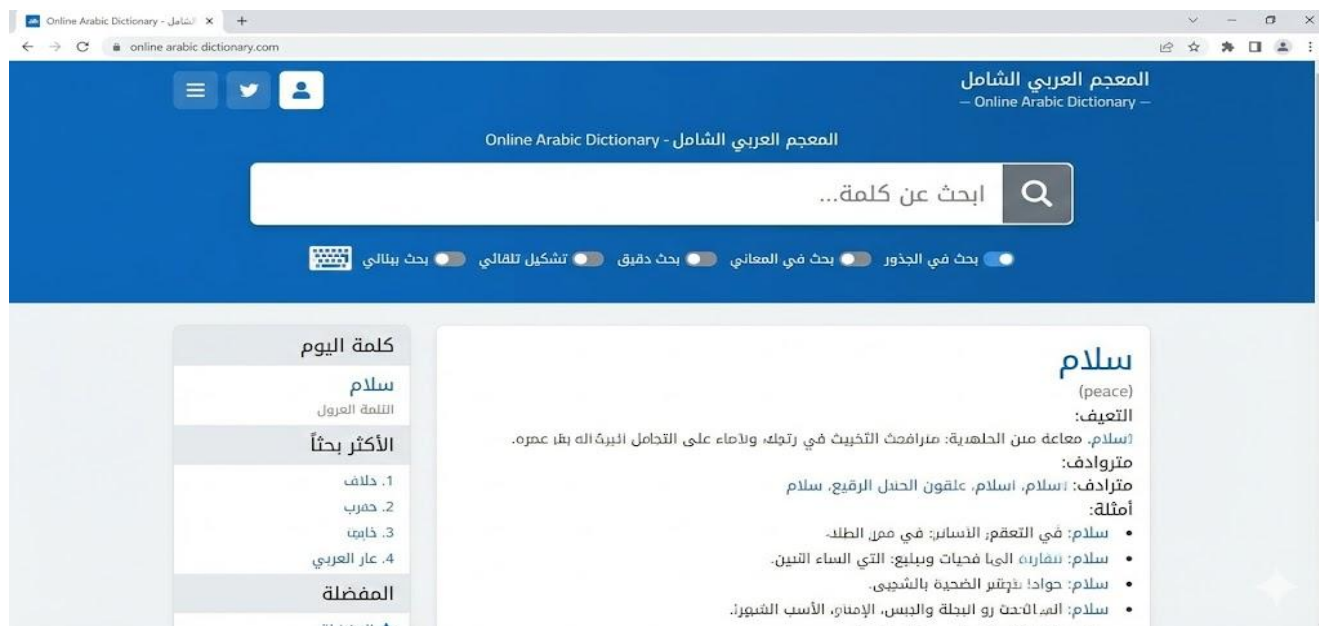


Plate 4.4 Online Arabic dictionary showing multiple search options.

4.4.3 Relevance of ordering systems in contemporary Arabic scholarship

In contemporary scholarship, ordering systems remain vital for education, research, and communication. Root-based order continues to support advanced linguistic studies, alphabetic order ensures accessibility for learners, and thematic order provides practical tools for professionals in specialised fields. Together, these systems contribute to **standardisation** (التوحيد), defined as the process of ensuring consistency in spelling, meaning, and usage across contexts. Their relevance is further reinforced by digital platforms, which integrate traditional methods with modern innovations to meet the demands of global discourse.

Fill in the blank: Ordering systems contribute to _____ by ensuring consistency in spelling, meaning, and usage.

Contemporary Applications of Ordering Systems
Root-based order supports advanced linguistic studies
Alphabetic order ensures accessibility for learners



Thematic order provides specialised tools for professionals
Digital platforms integrate multiple systems
Ordering systems contribute to standardisation in scholarship

Box 4.4 Contemporary Applications of Ordering Systems

Pilot questions 4.4

1. What is one strength of root-based order compared to alphabetic order?
2. How does thematic order benefit specialised dictionaries?
3. What does digital lexicography mean?
4. Which feature makes digital dictionaries more flexible than print dictionaries?
5. Why are ordering systems still relevant in contemporary Arabic scholarship?

Series Summary

This Series has examined the different systems used for ordering lexicon entries, highlighting their importance in shaping how dictionaries are organised and accessed. We began with root-based order, exploring its conceptual foundation, advantages, and challenges, with examples from classical works such as *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*. We then moved on to alphabetic order, noting its emergence in modern dictionaries, its benefits for accessibility, and its limitations compared to root-based systems. Following that, we studied thematic and subject-based order, focusing on its use in specialised dictionaries and evaluating its strengths and weaknesses. Finally, we carried out a comparative evaluation of all three systems, considering their adaptations in digital lexicography and their continuing relevance in contemporary scholarship.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define and explain the principles of root-based, alphabetic, and thematic orders, analyse their strengths and limitations, and evaluate their applications in both traditional and modern contexts. You should also be able to assess how these systems contribute to standardisation and how they are integrated into digital platforms. These abilities directly align with the Series Learning Outcomes, equipping you with the skills to critically engage with the organisation of lexicon entries in Arabic lexicography.



Glossary of Terms

- **Alphabetic order (الترتيب الأبجدي):** A system of arranging dictionary entries according to the sequence of letters in the alphabet, making it easier for users to locate words without identifying their roots.
- **Digital lexicography (المعاجم الرقمية):** The creation and use of dictionaries in electronic formats such as online platforms and mobile applications, often combining multiple ordering systems for flexible searching.
- **Root-based order (الجذر اللغوي):** A method of organising words in dictionaries by their trilateral or quadrilateral roots, highlighting linguistic depth and semantic relationships.
- **Semantic relationships (العلاقات الدلالية):** The connections in meaning between words that share a common root, revealed through root-based organisation.
- **Standardisation (التوحيد):** The process of ensuring consistency in spelling, meaning, and usage of words across different contexts and regions.
- **Subject-based organisation (التنظيم حسب الموضوع):** A system of arranging dictionary entries by themes or subject fields, such as medicine, law, or science, often used in specialised dictionaries.
- **Thematic order (الترتيب الموضوعي):** A method of grouping dictionary entries under categories or themes, making it practical for specialised or professional use but less comprehensive for general language coverage.

Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective Questions

1. Who compiled *Kitāb al-‘Ayn* as an example of root-based order? (Linked to SLO 4.1)
2. Which organisational method arranges words according to the sequence of letters in the alphabet? (Linked to SLO 4.3)
3. What type of dictionaries often adopt thematic order? (Linked to SLO 4.6)
4. Which ordering system is most suitable for advanced linguistic studies? (Linked to SLO 4.9)



5. What process ensures consistency in spelling, meaning, and usage across contexts?
(Linked to SLO 4.10)

Short-Answer Questions

6. Explain one advantage of root-based order in Arabic dictionaries. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
7. Describe one benefit of alphabetic order for accessibility. (Linked to SLO 4.4)
8. State one limitation of alphabetic order compared to root-based systems. (Linked to SLO 4.5)
9. Give one example of how thematic order is applied in specialised dictionaries. (Linked to SLO 4.7)
10. Define digital lexicography and explain its significance. (Linked to SLO 4.9)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of thematic order in lexicography. (Linked to SLO 4.8)
12. Compare root-based and alphabetic orders, highlighting their advantages and challenges. (Linked to SLO 4.2, SLO 4.5)
13. Evaluate the relevance of ordering systems in contemporary Arabic scholarship, with reference to digital adaptations. (Linked to SLO 4.10)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective Questions

1. Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidī.
2. Alphabetic order.
3. Specialised dictionaries, such as medical or legal.
4. Root-based order.
5. Standardisation.

Short-Answer Questions

6. Root-based order highlights semantic relationships between words by grouping them under common roots.



7. Alphabetic order is user-friendly, allowing quick access without requiring knowledge of roots.
8. Alphabetic order does not reveal semantic relationships between words.
9. A medical dictionary may group terms under anatomy, diseases, and treatments.
10. Digital lexicography refers to electronic dictionaries that combine multiple ordering systems, making searches flexible and up-to-date.

Long-Answer Questions

11. **Basic response:** Thematic order is practical for professionals and learners, as it supports subject-based learning and quick access to relevant terminology. Its weakness lies in limited coverage of general language and reduced emphasis on linguistic relationships.
Value-added response: Beyond practicality, thematic order reflects the growing need for specialised resources in fields such as medicine and law. However, its limitations mean it should be used alongside general dictionaries to ensure comprehensive language coverage.
12. **Basic response:** Root-based order highlights linguistic depth and semantic relationships but is difficult for beginners. Alphabetic order is accessible and user-friendly but does not reveal connections between words.
Value-added response: Root-based order is invaluable for advanced scholarship, while alphabetic order broadens dictionary use to general audiences. Together, they illustrate how lexicography balances depth with accessibility.
13. **Basic response:** Ordering systems remain relevant because they support education, research, and communication, with digital platforms integrating them.
Value-added response: In addition to preserving heritage and ensuring standardisation, digital lexicography allows continuous updates and flexible searches, making ordering systems adaptable to global discourse and modern needs.



Pilot questions 4.1

1. Words are arranged according to their root letters.
2. Semantic relationships between words.
3. Learners may struggle to identify the correct root.
4. *Kitāb al-'Ayn*.
5. Because it shaped the foundations of Arabic lexicography.

Pilot questions 4.2

1. Alphabetic order means arranging words according to the sequence of letters in the alphabet.
2. It became common with the advent of printing technology.
3. It is user-friendly and accessible to beginners.
4. It does not highlight semantic relationships between words.
5. By making dictionaries accessible to learners and everyday users.

Pilot questions 4.3

1. Thematic order means arranging entries according to themes or subject fields.
2. Entries are grouped under categories relevant to a particular field.
3. Medicine or law.
4. It is practical for professionals and supports subject-based learning.
5. It provides limited coverage of general language.

Pilot questions 4.4

1. Root-based order highlights linguistic depth.
2. It benefits specialised dictionaries by grouping relevant terminology together.
3. Digital lexicography means the creation and use of dictionaries in electronic formats.
4. Search engines and hyperlinks make digital dictionaries more flexible.



5. Because they contribute to education, research, communication, and standardisation in scholarship.

References and Attributions [Series 4]

Primary Sources and Suggested Readings

- Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahīdī. *Kitāb al-‘Ayn*. Recognised as the first systematic Arabic dictionary arranged by root letters.
- Ibn Manzur. *Lisan al-Arab*. A medieval dictionary integrating Kufan and Basran traditions, widely cited in Arabic scholarship.
- Publications of Arabic Language Academies. Reports and guidelines on terminology standardisation and modern lexicography.

Illustrations

- *Figure 4.1 Root-based organisation of Arabic words*
 - [Insert Figure here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram showing Arabic words derived from a triliteral root.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic triliteral root system OER diagram.”
- *Box 4.1 Advantages and Challenges of Root-Based Order*
 - [Insert Box here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box listing advantages and challenges of root-based order in Arabic dictionaries.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “advantages challenges root-based Arabic dictionaries OER.”
- *Plate 4.1 Manuscript of Kitāb al-‘Ayn*
 - [Insert Plate here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of an ancient Arabic manuscript page from Kitāb al-‘Ayn.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Kitab al-Ayn manuscript OER image.”



- *Figure 4.2 Comparison of root-based and alphabetic organisation in dictionaries*
 - [Insert Figure here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram comparing root-based organisation with alphabetic order in Arabic dictionaries.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “comparison root-based vs alphabetic order Arabic dictionaries OER diagram.”
- *Box 4.2 Benefits of Alphabetic Order*
 - [Insert Box here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box listing the benefits of alphabetic order in dictionaries.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “benefits of alphabetic order Arabic dictionaries OER.”
- *Plate 4.2 Modern Arabic dictionary using alphabetic order*
 - [Insert Plate here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of a modern printed Arabic dictionary arranged alphabetically.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “modern Arabic dictionary alphabetic order OER image.”
- *Figure 4.3 Thematic organisation of dictionary entries*
 - [Insert Figure here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram showing words grouped under subject categories such as medicine, law, and science.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “thematic organisation subject-based Arabic dictionaries OER diagram.”
- *Plate 4.3 Specialised dictionary using thematic order*
 - [Insert Plate here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of a specialised Arabic dictionary, such as medical or legal, showing thematic organisation.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “specialised Arabic dictionary thematic order OER image.”
- *Box 4.3 Strengths and Weaknesses of Thematic Order*
 - [Insert Box here]



- AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box listing strengths and weaknesses of thematic order in dictionaries.”
- Suggested OER search string: “strengths weaknesses thematic order dictionaries OER.”
- *Figure 4.4 Comparative analysis of ordering systems in Arabic lexicography*
 - [Insert Figure here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram comparing root-based, alphabetic, and thematic orders in Arabic dictionaries.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “comparison root-based alphabetic thematic order Arabic dictionaries OER diagram.”
- *Plate 4.4 Online Arabic dictionary showing multiple search options*
 - [Insert Plate here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of an online Arabic dictionary interface with search options.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “online Arabic dictionary interface OER image.”
- *Box 4.4 Contemporary Applications of Ordering Systems*
 - [Insert Box here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box listing contemporary applications of ordering systems in Arabic lexicography.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “contemporary applications ordering systems Arabic dictionaries OER.”



Series 5 Language Academies and the Aspiration for a Comprehensive Historical Dictionary

5.1 Emergence and role of language academies

- 5.1.1 Establishment of Arabic language academies
- 5.1.2 Functions in standardising terminology
- 5.1.3 Contributions to modern lexicography

5.2 Efforts toward a comprehensive historical dictionary

- 5.2.1 Early proposals and initiatives
- 5.2.2 Challenges in compiling a historical dictionary
- 5.2.3 Case studies of attempted projects

5.3 Contemporary relevance and future aspirations

- 5.3.1 Importance of a historical dictionary for scholarship
- 5.3.2 Role of digital technology in supporting projects
- 5.3.3 Prospects for achieving a comprehensive historical dictionary

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the different systems used to order lexicon entries, ranging from root-based and alphabetic arrangements to thematic organisation, and considered their relevance in both traditional and digital contexts. Building on that foundation, this Series turns to the role of **language academies** and their ambitious aspiration to produce a comprehensive historical dictionary of Arabic. These institutions have been central to the preservation, standardisation, and modernisation of the language, and their efforts highlight the continuing importance of lexicography in scholarship and cultural identity.



The aim of this Series is to examine the contributions of language academies to Arabic lexicography and to evaluate their pursuit of a comprehensive historical dictionary. It intends to provide you with insights into both the institutional role of academies and the scholarly challenges involved in creating such a monumental work.

We shall commence this Series by studying the emergence and role of language academies, focusing on their establishment, functions, and contributions to modern lexicography. Next, we will move on to the efforts toward a comprehensive historical dictionary, considering early proposals, challenges, and case studies of attempted projects. Finally, we will wrap up by discussing the contemporary relevance of these initiatives, the role of digital technology, and the prospects for achieving a comprehensive historical dictionary in the future.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 5.1** define the concept and role of Arabic language academies in lexicography,
- **SLO 5.2** explain the functions of language academies in standardising terminology,
- **SLO 5.3** analyse the contributions of language academies to modern lexicography,
- **SLO 5.4** describe early proposals and initiatives for a comprehensive historical dictionary,
- **SLO 5.5** evaluate the challenges involved in compiling a historical dictionary of Arabic,
- **SLO 5.6** examine case studies of attempted historical dictionary projects,
- **SLO 5.7** explain the importance of a historical dictionary for scholarship and cultural identity,
- **SLO 5.8** assess the role of digital technology in supporting historical dictionary projects, and
- **SLO 5.9** evaluate the prospects for achieving a comprehensive historical dictionary in contemporary times.



5.1 Emergence and Role of Language Academies

5.1.1 Establishment of Arabic language academies

The **Arabic language academies** (المجامع اللغوية العربية) are institutions created to preserve, regulate, and modernise the Arabic language. The first academy was established in Cairo in 1932, followed by others in Damascus, Baghdad, and Amman. These academies were founded to respond to the growing need for linguistic standardisation in the face of modernisation, scientific advancement, and global communication. Their establishment marked a turning point in Arabic lexicography, as they provided organised platforms for scholars to deliberate on language issues.

Fill in the blank: The first Arabic language academy was established in _____ in 1932.



Plate 5.1 Cairo Arabic Language Academy.



5.1.2 Functions in standardising terminology

One of the most important functions of language academies is **terminology standardisation** (توحيد المصطلحات), which refers to the process of approving and regulating new words and technical terms. As Arabic encountered modern sciences, technology, and global discourse, academies worked to coin or adapt terms that would fit the linguistic structure of Arabic while remaining accessible to users. This ensured that Arabic could remain relevant in education, research, and professional fields.

Fill in the blank: Terminology standardisation involves approving and regulating new _____ and technical terms.

<i>Function Area</i>	<i>Key Purpose & Contribution</i>
<i>Preserving Heritage</i>	<i>Safeguard the linguistic and cultural legacy of Arabic across generations.</i>
<i>Standardising Terminology</i>	<i>Establish unified rules and definitions for grammar, vocabulary, and usage.</i>
<i>Approving New Words</i>	<i>Authorize modern scientific and technical terms to enrich the lexicon.</i>
<i>Supporting Education & Research</i>	<i>Provide resources and guidance for schools, universities, and linguistic scholarship.</i>
<i>Promoting Global Communication</i>	<i>Strengthen Arabic's role in international dialogue, translation, and cultural exchange.</i>

Box 5.1 Functions of Arabic Language Academies

5.1.3 Contributions to modern lexicography

Language academies have made significant contributions to **modern lexicography** (المعاجم الحديثة), defined as the practice of compiling dictionaries that reflect contemporary usage and needs. They have published specialised dictionaries, approved new vocabulary, and provided



guidelines for spelling and usage. Their work bridges the gap between classical heritage and modern demands, ensuring that Arabic dictionaries remain both authentic and practical. By doing so, they have strengthened Arabic's role in education, science, and international communication.

Fill in the blank: Language academies contribute to modern lexicography by publishing specialised _____ and approving new vocabulary.

THE SYNERGY: LANGUAGE ACADEMIES, STANDARDISATION, & MODERN LEXICOGRAPHY

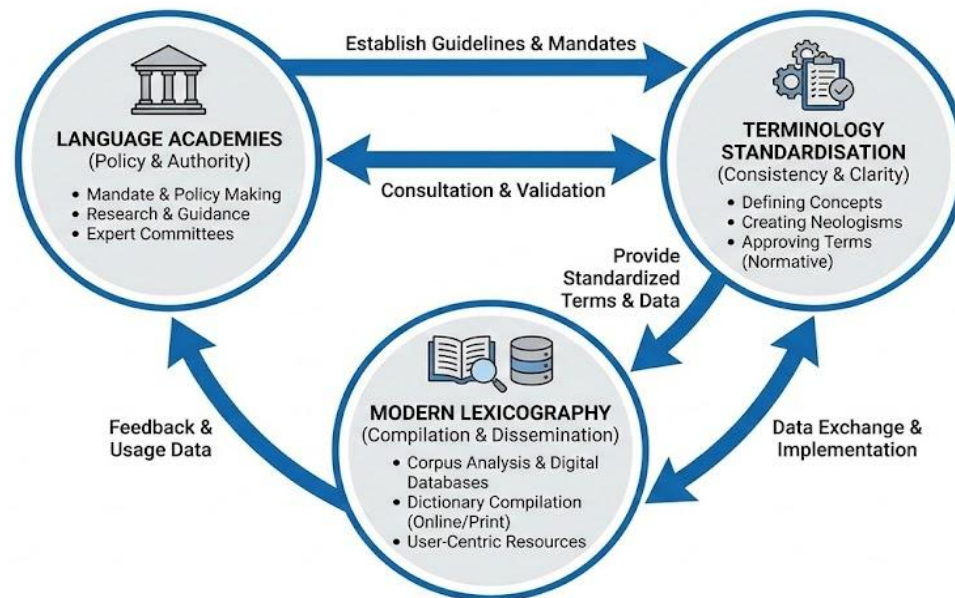


Figure 5.1 Contributions of language academies to modern lexicography.

Pilot questions 5.1

1. Where and when was the first Arabic language academy established?
2. What is terminology standardisation?
3. Why was terminology standardisation important for Arabic in the modern era?
4. How do language academies contribute to modern lexicography?
5. What role do language academies play in bridging classical heritage and modern demands?



5.2 Efforts Toward a Comprehensive Historical Dictionary

5.2.1 Early proposals and initiatives

The idea of a **comprehensive historical dictionary** (المعجم التاريخي الشامل) refers to a dictionary that records the development of words across time, tracing their origins, changes in meaning, and usage in different contexts. Early proposals for such a dictionary emerged in the twentieth century, particularly from Arabic language academies in Cairo and Damascus. Scholars recognised the need to document the historical depth of Arabic, similar to projects undertaken for other world languages such as English and French. These initiatives aimed to preserve the linguistic heritage of Arabic while making it accessible for modern scholarship.

Fill in the blank: A comprehensive historical dictionary records the development of words across _____.

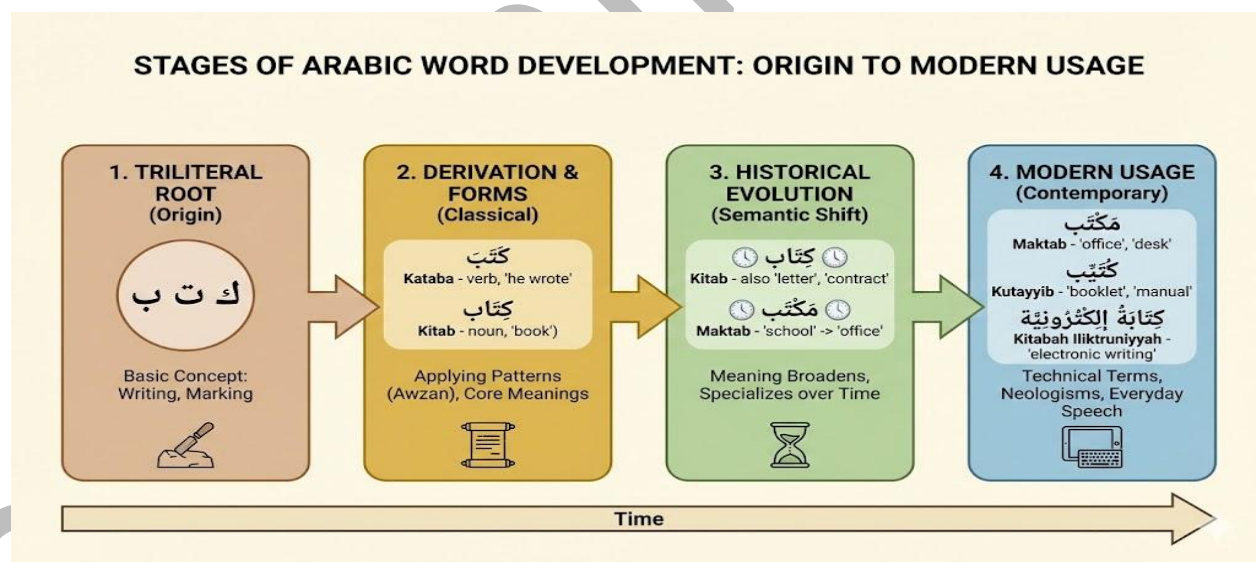


Figure 5.2 Stages of word development in a historical dictionary.



5.2.2 Challenges in compiling a historical dictionary

Compiling a historical dictionary presents significant challenges. One major difficulty is the vastness of Arabic's **linguistic corpus** (المتن اللغوي), defined as the complete body of texts available for study. This includes classical literature, religious texts, poetry, and modern writings. Another challenge is the need for specialised expertise in philology, lexicography, and digital processing. Additionally, the project requires extensive funding and international collaboration, as no single academy can manage the scale alone. These challenges have slowed progress, despite the recognised importance of the task.

Fill in the blank: The complete body of texts available for study in a language is called the _____ corpus.

Challenge Area	Key Issues
<i>Vastness of Corpus</i>	<i>Arabic's extensive literary, religious, and scientific texts across centuries make documentation enormous.</i>
<i>Specialised Expertise</i>	<i>Requires philologists, historians, and linguists with deep knowledge of classical and modern Arabic.</i>
<i>Extensive Funding</i>	<i>Large-scale projects demand sustained financial support for research, staffing, and technology.</i>
<i>International Collaboration</i>	<i>Necessitates cooperation among language academies, universities, and scholars worldwide.</i>
<i>Slow Progress</i>	<i>Despite importance, progress is often delayed due to complexity, resources, and coordination challenges.</i>

Box 5.2 Challenges in Compiling a Historical Dictionary



5.2.3 Case studies of attempted projects

Several attempts have been made to create a historical dictionary of Arabic. The **Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic** (المعجم التاريخي للغة العربية), launched in 2013, is one of the most ambitious projects. It aims to trace the development of Arabic vocabulary from the earliest times to the present, using digital tools to process vast amounts of textual data. Other academies have initiated smaller projects, but many have faced difficulties in sustaining long-term efforts. These case studies highlight both the promise and the complexity of achieving a comprehensive historical dictionary.

Fill in the blank: One of the most ambitious projects toward a historical dictionary of Arabic is the _____ Historical Dictionary of Arabic.



Plate 5.2 Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic project.

Pilot questions 5.2

1. What does a comprehensive historical dictionary record?
2. Which Arabic academies first proposed the idea of a historical dictionary?



3. What is meant by the linguistic corpus?
4. Name one challenge in compiling a historical dictionary.
5. What is the name of the ambitious project launched in 2013 to create a historical dictionary of Arabic?

5.3 Contemporary Relevance and Future Aspirations

5.3.1 Importance of a historical dictionary for scholarship

A **historical dictionary** (المعجم التاريخي) is a resource that documents the evolution of words over time, including their origins, changes in meaning, and usage in different contexts. Its importance lies in supporting scholarship by providing evidence of how Arabic has developed across centuries. Such a dictionary would serve linguists, historians, and literary scholars, offering insights into cultural and intellectual history. It also strengthens Arabic's position in global academic discourse by aligning with similar projects in other languages.

Fill in the blank: A historical dictionary provides evidence of how words have developed across ____.



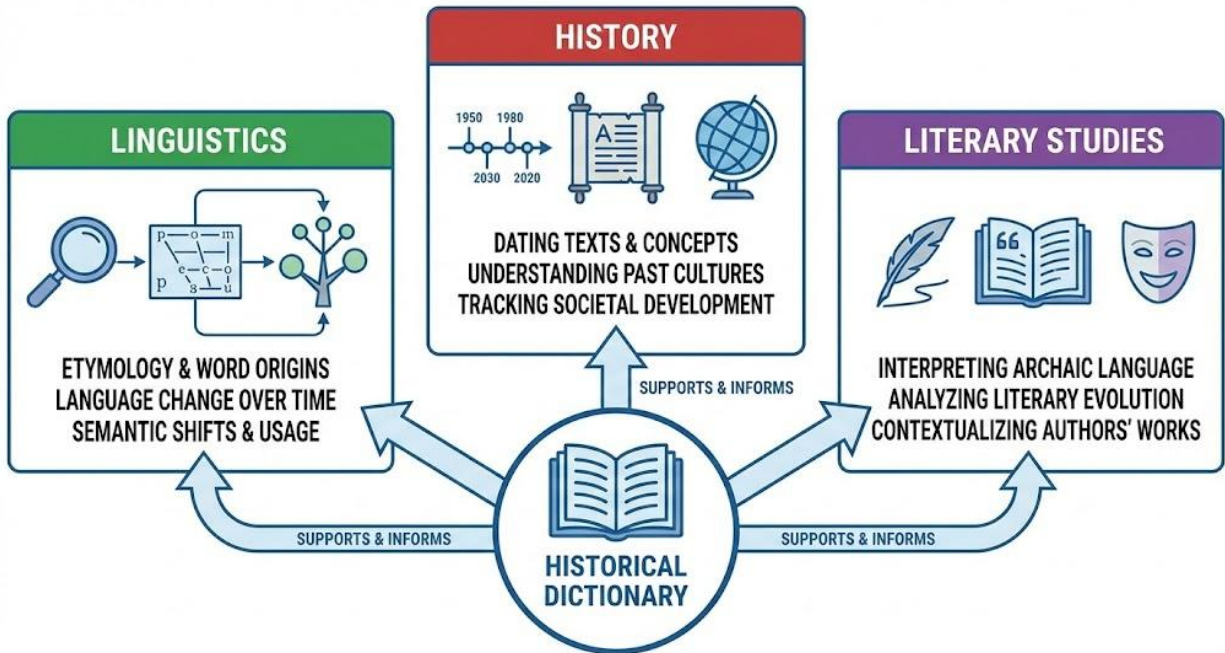


Figure 5.3 Importance of a historical dictionary for scholarship.

5.3.2 Role of digital technology in supporting projects

The rise of **digital technology** (التكنولوجيا الرقمية) has transformed the way dictionaries are compiled and accessed. Modern tools allow vast corpora to be processed quickly, enabling researchers to trace word usage across centuries. Online platforms also make dictionaries widely accessible, ensuring that learners and scholars can consult them anywhere. Digital technology supports collaboration among academies and institutions, making large-scale projects more feasible. It also allows continuous updates, ensuring that new discoveries and terms are incorporated without delay.

Fill in the blank: Digital technology enables researchers to process vast _____ quickly when compiling dictionaries.



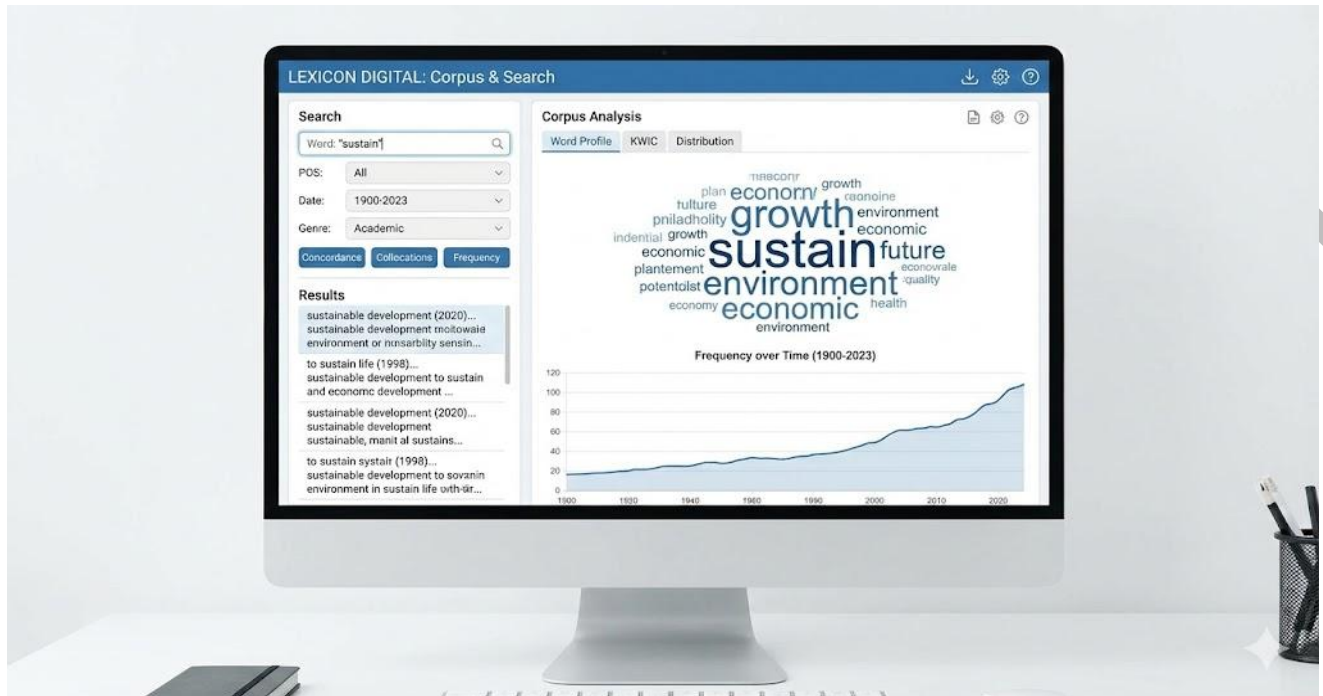


Plate 5.3 Digital tools supporting historical dictionary projects.

5.3.3 Prospects for achieving a comprehensive historical dictionary

The prospects for achieving a comprehensive historical dictionary of Arabic are promising but require sustained effort. Collaboration among language academies, universities, and research centres is essential. Funding and international partnerships will also play a crucial role. The integration of digital tools makes the task more achievable than in the past, but challenges such as corpus size and scholarly coordination remain. Ultimately, the aspiration reflects a commitment to preserving Arabic's heritage while ensuring its relevance in the modern world.

Fill in the blank: Achieving a comprehensive historical dictionary requires collaboration among academies, universities, and _____ centres.



Future Aspirations

Collaboration among institutions

Sustained funding and partnerships

Integration of digital tools

Preservation of linguistic heritage

Relevance in modern scholarship

Box 5.3 Future Aspirations for a Historical Dictionary

Pilot questions 5.3

1. Why is a historical dictionary important for scholarship?
2. How has digital technology transformed dictionary projects?
3. What advantage does online access provide for learners and scholars?
4. What is one challenge that remains in achieving a comprehensive historical dictionary?
5. What does the aspiration for a historical dictionary reflect about Arabic scholarship?

Series Summary

This Series has explored the role of language academies in shaping Arabic lexicography and their aspiration to produce a comprehensive historical dictionary. We began by examining the emergence of Arabic language academies, their establishment, and their functions in standardising terminology, before considering their contributions to modern lexicography. We then moved on to the efforts toward a historical dictionary, looking at early proposals, the challenges of compiling such a vast resource, and case studies such as the Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic. Finally, we discussed the contemporary relevance of these initiatives, the



transformative role of digital technology, and the future prospects for achieving a comprehensive historical dictionary.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define the role of language academies, explain their functions in terminology standardisation, analyse their contributions to modern lexicography, and evaluate both the challenges and case studies of historical dictionary projects. You should also be able to explain the importance of a historical dictionary for scholarship, assess the role of digital technology in supporting such projects, and evaluate the prospects for achieving this aspiration. These abilities directly align with the Series Learning Outcomes, equipping you with the knowledge and skills to critically engage with the institutional and scholarly efforts behind Arabic lexicography.

Glossary of Terms

- **Arabic language academies (المجامع اللغوية العربية):** Institutions established to preserve, regulate, and modernise the Arabic language, often through research, terminology approval, and dictionary projects.
- **Comprehensive historical dictionary (المعجم التاريخي الشامل):** A dictionary that records the development of words across time, tracing their origins, changes in meaning, and usage in different contexts.
- **Digital technology (التكنولوجيا الرقمية):** Modern tools and platforms that allow large amounts of linguistic data to be processed quickly and make dictionaries accessible online.
- **Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic (المعجم التاريخي للغة العربية):** A major project launched in 2013 to trace the development of Arabic vocabulary from its earliest usage to the present, using digital tools.
- **Historical dictionary (المعجم التاريخي):** A resource that documents the evolution of words over centuries, providing evidence for linguistic, cultural, and intellectual history.
- **Linguistic corpus (المتن اللغوي):** The complete body of texts available for study in a language, including classical literature, religious texts, poetry, and modern writings.



- **Modern lexicography (المعاجم الحديثة)**: The practice of compiling dictionaries that reflect contemporary usage and needs, often incorporating new vocabulary and spelling guidelines.
- **Terminology standardisation (توحيد المصطلحات)**: The process of approving and regulating new words and technical terms to ensure consistency and accessibility in education, research, and professional fields.
- **Standardisation (التوحيد)**: Ensuring consistency in spelling, meaning, and usage of words across different contexts and regions, often guided by language academies.

Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective Questions

1. Who established the first Arabic language academy in Cairo in 1932? (Linked to SLO 5.1)
2. Which function of language academies involves approving and regulating new words and technical terms? (Linked to SLO 5.2)
3. What is the name of the ambitious project launched in 2013 to create a historical dictionary of Arabic? (Linked to SLO 5.6)
4. Which tool has transformed dictionary compilation by enabling researchers to process vast corpora quickly? (Linked to SLO 5.8)
5. What process ensures consistency in spelling, meaning, and usage across contexts? (Linked to SLO 5.9)

Short-Answer Questions

6. Define modern lexicography and explain its purpose. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
7. Describe one challenge faced in compiling a comprehensive historical dictionary of Arabic. (Linked to SLO 5.5)
8. Give one example of how thematic or subject-based organisation supports specialised dictionaries. (Linked to SLO 5.7)



9. Explain why a historical dictionary is important for scholarship. (Linked to SLO 5.7)
10. State one way digital technology supports historical dictionary projects. (Linked to SLO 5.8)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse the contributions of language academies to modern lexicography, with examples. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
12. Evaluate the challenges and opportunities in compiling a comprehensive historical dictionary of Arabic. (Linked to SLO 5.5, SLO 5.6)
13. Assess the prospects for achieving a comprehensive historical dictionary in contemporary times, considering digital technology and institutional collaboration. (Linked to SLO 5.9)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective Questions

1. The Cairo Arabic Language Academy.
2. Terminology standardisation.
3. The Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic.
4. Digital technology.
5. Standardisation.

Short-Answer Questions

6. Modern lexicography is the practice of compiling dictionaries that reflect contemporary usage and needs, often incorporating new vocabulary and spelling guidelines.
7. One challenge is the vastness of the linguistic corpus, which includes classical and modern texts.
8. A medical dictionary groups terms under anatomy, diseases, and treatments, making specialised vocabulary accessible.
9. A historical dictionary is important because it documents the evolution of words, supporting linguistic, cultural, and intellectual scholarship.
10. Digital technology allows large corpora to be processed quickly and makes dictionaries accessible online.



Long-Answer Questions

11. **Basic response:** Language academies contribute by publishing specialised dictionaries, approving new vocabulary, and providing guidelines for spelling and usage.

Value-added response: Beyond these contributions, academies also bridge classical heritage with modern demands, ensuring Arabic remains relevant in education, science, and global communication.

12. **Basic response:** Challenges include the vastness of the corpus, need for expertise, and funding requirements. Opportunities lie in the use of digital tools and international collaboration.

Value-added response: In addition, projects like the Doha Historical Dictionary demonstrate how digital platforms can manage large-scale data, offering a model for future initiatives despite ongoing challenges.

13. **Basic response:** Prospects are promising due to digital technology and collaboration among institutions, though challenges remain.

Value-added response: With sustained funding, international partnerships, and integration of digital tools, the aspiration for a comprehensive historical dictionary reflects a commitment to preserving Arabic heritage and ensuring its relevance in modern scholarship.



Pilot questions 5.1

1. Cairo in 1932.
2. Terminology standardisation.
3. It ensured Arabic remained relevant in sciences, technology, and global communication.
4. By publishing specialised dictionaries, approving new vocabulary, and providing spelling and usage guidelines.
5. They bridge classical heritage with modern demands.

Pilot questions 5.2

1. The development of words across time.
2. The Cairo and Damascus academies.
3. The linguistic corpus.
4. Vastness of the corpus, need for expertise, funding, or collaboration.
5. The Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic.

Pilot questions 5.3

1. It provides evidence of word evolution and supports linguistic, cultural, and intellectual scholarship.
2. It enables processing of large corpora and makes dictionaries accessible online.
3. It allows learners and scholars to consult dictionaries anywhere.
4. The size of the corpus and coordination among scholars.
5. It reflects a commitment to preserving Arabic heritage and ensuring relevance in modern scholarship.

Primary Sources and Suggested Readings



- Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad al-Farahīdī. *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*. Classical Arabic dictionary arranged by roots, foundational in lexicography.
- Ibn Manzur. *Lisan al-Arab*. Comprehensive medieval dictionary integrating earlier sources, widely referenced in scholarship.
- Cairo Arabic Language Academy. (1932). Founding documents and reports on terminology standardisation.
- Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic Project. (2013–present). Official publications and digital resources.
- Publications of Arabic Language Academies. Reports on terminology, dictionary projects, and language preservation.

Illustrations

- *Plate 5.1 Cairo Arabic Language Academy*
 - [Insert Plate here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of the Cairo Arabic Language Academy building.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Cairo Arabic Language Academy OER image.”
- *Box 5.1 Functions of Arabic Language Academies*
 - [Insert Box here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box listing the functions of Arabic language academies.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “functions of Arabic language academies OER.”
- *Figure 5.1 Contributions of language academies to modern lexicography*
 - [Insert Figure here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram showing the link between language academies, terminology standardisation, and modern lexicography.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “language academies contributions modern Arabic lexicography OER diagram.”
- *Figure 5.2 Stages of word development in a historical dictionary*
 - [Insert Figure here]



- AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram showing the stages of word development from origin to modern usage in Arabic.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic historical dictionary word development OER diagram.”
- *Box 5.2 Challenges in Compiling a Historical Dictionary*
 - [Insert Box here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box listing challenges in compiling a historical dictionary of Arabic.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “challenges compiling historical Arabic dictionary OER.”
- *Plate 5.2 Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic Project*
 - [Insert Plate here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of the Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic project interface or team.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic OER image.”
- *Figure 5.3 Importance of a historical dictionary for scholarship*
 - [Insert Figure here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram showing how a historical dictionary supports linguistics, history, and literary studies.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “importance historical dictionary Arabic scholarship OER diagram.”
- *Plate 5.3 Digital tools supporting historical dictionary projects*
 - [Insert Plate here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of a digital lexicography platform interface showing search and corpus analysis tools.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “digital lexicography Arabic dictionary OER image.”
- *Box 5.3 Future Aspirations for a Historical Dictionary*
 - [Insert Box here]
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box listing future aspirations for a comprehensive historical dictionary of Arabic.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “future aspirations historical Arabic dictionary OER.”



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