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Vowel and Consonant Phoneme Changes in Reading Arabic Texts by Students of MAN 3 Mandailing Natal: An Autosegmental Phonology Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The research was qualitative research using generative linguistic method. This study is aimed at analyzing the changes of sound vocal and consonants in the read Arabic text by students from school MAN 3 Mandailing Natal from the aspect of phonological auto segmental. The data are from the recording of the read Arabic text words wich contain the sounds of vocal [a] and plosive consonants ض [d], ط [ṭ] and ق [qˠ.Data from there 40 informants (20 males and 20 females) of the research are the secondary school students from school MAN 3 Mandailing Natal. Data from the study are analyzed theoretically based on the phonological auto segmental, Sagey`s representation of distinctive features model (1986), Clements and Keyser`s representasion of syllable tiers (1983). In the recitation of Arabic text by students from MAN 3 Mandailing Natal readers the Arabic text vocal and consonants experiences a substitution of vocal and consonant by the closest. Vocal and consonant, that is vocal [a] which substituted with vocal [ɔ] and coronal plosive consonants ض [dˠ],ط [ṭ] and ق [qˠ which are substituted with coronal plosive consonants [d, t, k]. The substitution of vocal and consonant recitation the Arabic text by reciters of students from school MAN 3 Mandailing Natal has resulted the phonological changes in Arabic language and the meaning of Arabic words.

1. Introduction

Arabic has been taught at various educational levels in Indonesia, ranging from elementary and secondary education to higher education, both under the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 3 Mandailing, located in Mandailing Natal Regency, is an Islamic senior high school under the Ministry of Religious Affairs where Arabic is a compulsory subject across all academic programs. One important component of Arabic learning in this institution is the reading of Arabic discourse texts.

According to Tarigan (1984), reading is a process carried out and used by readers to obtain the message the author wants to convey through words/written material or to extract and understand the meaning contained in written material (Tarigan, 1984). Reading is the pronunciation of words and the acquisition of words from printed material. In language learning, there are four language skills that students must have, namely listening (*Istima`*), reading (*Qira`ah*), speaking (*Muhadasah*) and writing (*Kitabah*).

Reading skills are an integral part of language skills. Reading is the activity of deriving meaning from written texts (Yunianti et al., 2025). The ability to read Arabic texts depends heavily on understanding the content or meaning of what is being read (Abdallaoui Maan, 2021). Arabic language learning among non-Arabic speakers in this case by students of MAN 3 Mandailing Natal is a foreign language learning that has not been known by students since childhood. The problems faced in learning Arabic, like other foreign languages, include two things, namely linguistic and non-linguistic problems. Non-linguistic problems are sociological, psychological and methodological. While problems related to linguistic problems are in the form of language elements, namely sound system, vocabulary, sentence structure, meaning and writing (Tambunan et al., 2022). Learning Arabic as a foreign language learned by non-Arabic speakers, especially for speakers of the Mandailing dialect as the mother tongue of students of MAN 3 Mandailing Natal can certainly have several principles of similarity. This will influence the ease of learning a foreign language. However, there are also principles of differences between the mother tongue and foreign languages that cause difficulties in learning Arabic.

According to Nababan et al (1991: 2) the languages used in Indonesia are divided into three groups: 1) Indonesian, 2) regional (ethnic) languages, and 3) foreign languages (Nababan, 1991). The Mandailing dialect of the Batak language is an ethnic language that was born and lives in the Mandailing region of South Tapanuli and is now known as Mandailing Natal. The Mandailing dialect of the Batak language is used by people living in four regions, namely the Siabu region, the Panyabungan region, the Kotanopan region, and the Muara Sipongi region, as well as by ethnic Mandailings who were born in the Mandailing region but live abroad.

Since the spread of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago, Arabic has been one of the languages revered by Muslims in Indonesia (Mahfud et al., 2021). This is primarily due to religious reasons, namely that the Quran and Hadith are sources of teachings written in Arabic script and in Arabic. As a result, Arabic has become a language used as a subject in educational institutions from elementary school to higher education.

Arabic (BA) and the Mandailing dialect (DM) are two very different languages because they have distinct linguistic styles. The most fundamental difference lies in their racial and linguistic origins: Arabic originates from the Semitic (Assamiyah) language family (Al-Ajrami, 2024), while

the Mandailing dialect originates from the Austronesian language family.

When learning a foreign language, learners have the potential to transfer the rules and elements of their native language into the foreign language they are learning (Wilga, 2024). They are still unable to use the rules and structures of the foreign language effectively. As a result, learners make deviations from the foreign language, which tend to be influenced by their native language system.

Walizadah (2025) states that the appreciation of the first language or mother tongue occurs without competition with other languages, while the appreciation of the second language or the language being learned occurs when the mother tongue has taken root in a person (Walizadah, 2025). Thus, the second or language being learned will experience errors and interference, especially in the acquisition of the second language. According to Castano (2021), the phenomenon of language interference in the early stages of learning a second language has many characteristics of mother tongue absorption (language transfer) or language interference (interference) (Castaño, 2021).

There are four levels of language that serve as language rules: phonetics and phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, known as micro linguistics (Boboqulovna, 2025). These four levels of language are inseparable from language skills, namely reading, listening, listening, and writing. In relation to reading skills, reading as an activity of pronunciation of words and the acquisition of words from printed materials can be ensured to be closely related to rules. phonetics and phonology (Altamimi, 2024). Reading aloud includes reading by pronouncing the phoneme sounds of a language when reading texts from a particular language (Wahyuni, 2022). The vowel and consonant phoneme sound of a language must be pronounced correctly according to phonetic rules so that the words, phrases, clauses and sentences read do not experience errors in meaning (Kinanti et al., 2024).

Phonetics pays general attention to all the sounds uttered through the human mouth in all languages. In other words, phonetics investigates the speech organs that produce language sounds, the transmission and reception of language sounds (Zsiga, 2024). Phonetics which investigates the system of tools that produce language sounds along with the processes related to producing sounds is known as articulatory phonetics (Didirková & Simon, 2023; Liu et al., 2023). The vowel and consonant phoneme sound of a language must be pronounced correctly according to the rules of articulatory phonetics so that the words, phrases, clauses and sentences read do not experience errors in meaning.

Based on studies in phonetics, there are also studies of language sounds which pay special attention to a language to reveal its sound system which is known as phonological studies (Wang & Nance, 2023). Based on the results of the phonological study of the Mandailing dialect by Razak

(2022), there are five vowel sounds in DM, namely: /i, u, ə, ɛ /. Meanwhile, there are 18 consonant sounds in DM, namely: /b, p, t, d, g, k, ʄ, c, m, n, ɳ, ɲ, s, r, l, w, j, h/ (Razak, 2022). Arabic belongs to a group of Semitic languages that are still used today. Arabic is a language that was originally spoken by the Arab people and is the language of the Koran (Razak, 2022).

Arabic has 3 short vowel phonemes /a, i, u/ and 3 long vowel phonemes /a:, I (Abdelgadir, 2021). Likewise, the consonant sounds in the Arabic phonological phonetic repertoire consist of 28 consonant phonemes, namely: /b, t, d, ʈ, ɖ, k, q, ʔ, θ, ð, s, ʃ , ʂ , ʄ, z, ʐ, x, ɣ, ħ, ʕ, h, f, l, l, m, n, w, j/. Arabic Phonetics and Phonology is the study of Arabic speech sounds. This study will explain how Arabic sounds are pronounced by the human vocal tract. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide a solution for students of MAN 3 Mandailing Natal so they can read Arabic texts according to the rules of Arabic phonetics and phonology.

Based on the researcher's observations, one form of Arabic pronunciation produced by the twelfth-grade students of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 3 Mandailing Natal when reading the Arabic word إِذَا [iða:] is pronounced as إِسَا [isa:]. In this case, it is evident that the interdental fricative consonant phoneme /ذ/ [ð] in Arabic is realized by the students as the alveolar fricative consonant /s/ in the Mandailing dialect. This indicates that the students' articulation of the interdental fricative consonant ذ[ð] in Arabic does not align with the phonetic rules of Arabic itself. Such mispronunciation results in semantic errors or the loss of meaning of the word. Based on this phenomenon, the researcher aims to further examine the pronunciation of Arabic vowel and consonant phonemes produced by the students of MAN 3 Mandailing Natal in reading Arabic discourse texts. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to providing an overview of accurate and proper pronunciation of Arabic vowel and consonant phonemes according to the phonetic and phonological rules of Arabic for the students of MAN 3 Mandailing Natal.

In addition to the above, this research began with Muskar's (2016) research on the Phonological Interference of Mandailing Dialect in Reading the Qur'an (An Autoregmental Analysis). In the reading of the Qur'an by DM speakers, the consonants of the Arabic language of the Qur'an experienced consonant replacement with consonants of the Mandailing Dialect that were close in articulation, namely the coronal fricative consonants [ð, z, ʐ] were replaced with coronal fricative consonants [s]. Thus, the influence of the mother tongue in the reading of the Qur'an by DM speakers caused changes in the phonology of the Arabic language of the Qur'an (Muskar, 2016).

2. Method

This research is qualitative research, namely a problem-solving procedure that is investigated by describing the current state of the object of study based on the facts that are apparent or as

they are. This research was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Negri 3, Mandailing Natal Regency, Sibuhuan District. The data for this research was obtained from the pronunciation of Arabic vowels and consonants in reading Arabic texts recorded using a tape recorder. The participants in this research were 32 twelfth-grade students consisting of 16 boys and 16 girls. This research used the listening and recording techniques. The researcher listened to the recording repeatedly and recorded it on a data card. in accordance with the observed phonemes, namely Arabic vowels and consonants. The vowel and consonant phonemes were analyzed by referring to Arabic articulatory phonetics and making the pronunciation process of vowel and consonant phonemes into auto segmental phonological analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the findings of the study, it appears that there is a change in the pronunciation of the short vowel phoneme [a] occurring after the consonant phonemes [ɤ, q, r, ʈ], which is realized as the vowel phoneme [ɔ] by the twelfth-grade students of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 3 Mandailing Natal. Therefore, the researcher will describe the process of this vowel change from the short vowel [a] to [ɔ] in the words found in the Arabic reading text entitled الرياضة /ar-ṛiyāḍah/, and analyze it using the framework of auto segmental phonology as follows

3.1. Changes in the pronunciation of the short vowel phoneme [a] after the velar fricative consonant phoneme sound غ [ɤ]

The short vowel phoneme [a] in Arabic, which occurs after the voiced velar fricative consonant [ɤ], is replaced with the vowel phoneme [ɔ] in the Mandailing dialect by twelfth-grade students when reading the word غَيْرِ [ɤaɹri], which becomes [ɤɔɹri]. In this case, the mid, unrounded short vowel [a] in Arabic is substituted with the slightly lower, back, rounded vowel [ɔ] in the Mandailing dialect. This indicates a phonological shift in which the articulatory features of [a] are replaced by those of [ɔ], reflecting the influence of the students' first language on their pronunciation of Arabic.

3.2. Pronunciation of the short vowel phoneme [a]after the voiceless uvular plosive consonant phoneme ق [q]

In reading the Arabic text titled الرياضة/ar rija:ḍah/, the twelfth-grade students produced a change in the short vowel /a/ when it occurred after the voiceless uvular plosive consonant ق [q]. In the word الْقَدَمُ [al qadamu], the students pronounced it as [al qɔdamu], and in the word

الْقَوْمُ [alqawmu], it was pronounced as [al qɔwmu]. This indicates a shift from the short central unrounded vowel [a] in Arabic to the lower, back, rounded vowel [ɔ] characteristic of the Mandailing dialect

3.3. Pronunciation of the short vowel phoneme [a] after the voiceless dental velar plosive consonant phoneme ط [ṭ]

In reading the Arabic text titled الرياضة /ar rija:ḍah/, the twelfth-grade students produced a phonological change in the short vowel [a] when it occurs after the voiceless dento-velar plosive consonant ط [ṭ]. This shift is evident in the word الإفراطَ [al ifra:ṭ a], which was pronounced as [al ifrɔ:ṭɔ]. In this case, the short vowel [a] in Standard Arabic was realized as the vowel [ɔ], illustrating a substitution process influenced by the students' native phonological system.

From the data (1-3) above, in the pronunciation of the vowel phoneme [a] BA there is a process of changing the features of the short vowel phoneme [a] middle, medium, unrounded by replacing the features of the vowel phoneme [ɔ] rather low, back, rounded in DM. The process of replacing the pronunciation of the short vowel phoneme [a] to the vowel phoneme [ɔ] in reading Arabic texts by twelfth-grade students can be seen as represented in auto segmental phonology as follows. Based on the Sagey (1986) model, the replacement of the short vowel phoneme [a] middle, medium, unrounded in Arabic with the vowel phoneme [ɔ] rather low, back, rounded in the Mandailing dialect in the data above can be formulated as in figure 1 below.

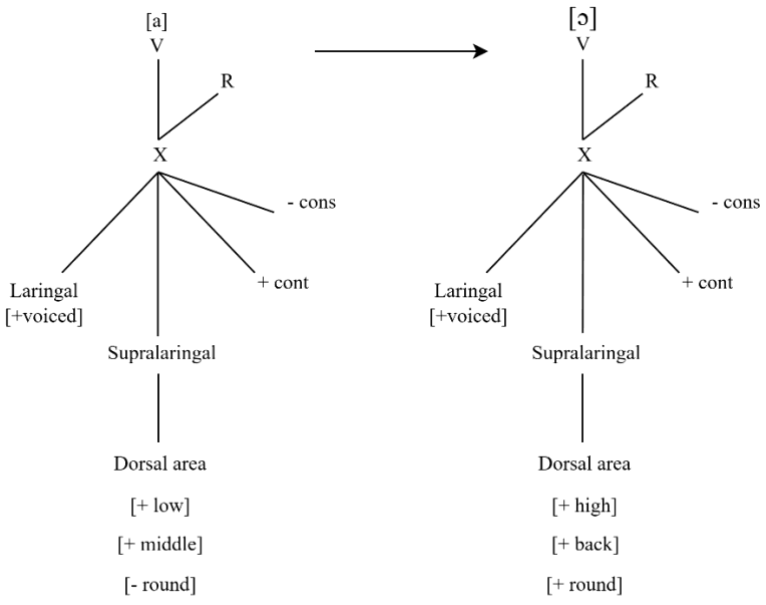

Figure 1. Formula for replacing the low, mid, unrounded dorsal vowel [a] in Arabic with the high, back, rounded dorsal vowel [ɔ] in DM

The diagram in Figure 1 presents the rule for substituting the low, central, unrounded short vowel [a] in Arabic with the high, back, rounded vowel [ɔ] in the Mandailing dialect. This substitution demonstrates a shift in the distinctive features of the vowel [a] from [+sonorant, +low, +central, –rounded, +short] to [+sonorant, +high, +back, +rounded] which are governed by the dorsal node in the hierarchical representation shown in the tree diagram. This results in a complete change in the features of the vowel [a]. The replacement of the low, central, unrounded dorsal vowel [a] with the high, back, rounded dorsal vowel [ɔ] can be observed in Data (1) the word غَيْرِ [ɤajri] → [ɤɔjri], Data (2) the words الْقَدَمُ [al qadamu] → [al qɔdamu] and الْقَوْمُ [al qawmu] → [al qɔwmu], and Data (3) the word الإِفْرَاطَ [al ifra:ṭa] → [al ifrɔṭɔ]. These data (1–3) can be illustrated using the syllable-tier representation proposed by Clements and Keyser (1983), as shown in Figure 2 below.

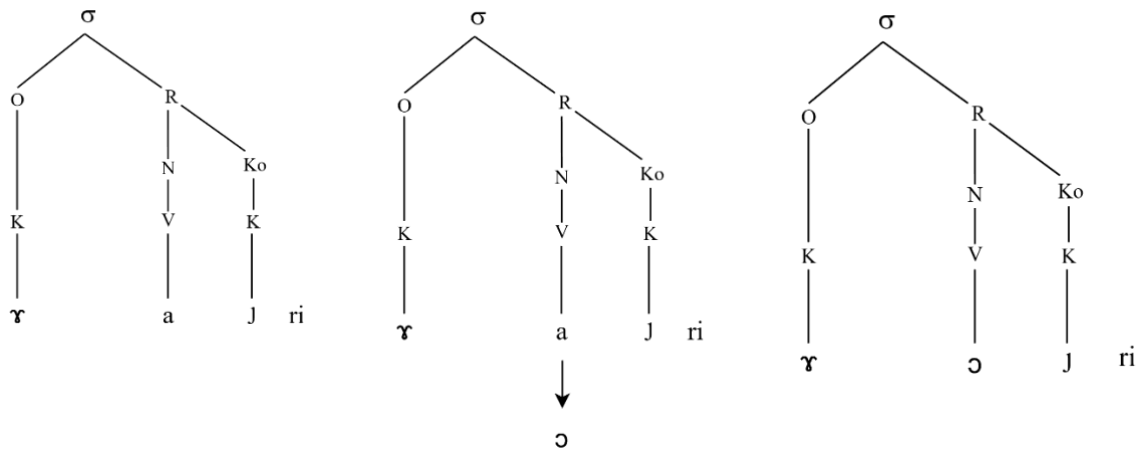

Figure 2. Representation of the change of the low, mid, unrounded dorsal vowel [a] [ɔ] in the word /ɤajri/ [ɤɔjri] in reading Arabic text

Based on Figure 2 above, it can be explained that the low, middle, unrounded, short vowel [a] which has the features [+syllabic, +sonorant, +low, +middle, -round] in BA, is pronounced as a high, back, round vowel [ɔ] which has the features [+syllabic, +sonorant, +high, +back, +round] in DM, so that the features [+low, +middle, -round] of the vowel [a] change into the features [+high, +back, +round] of the vowel [ɔ]. In this case, there is a replacement of the vowel feature [a] as a whole. This situation is caused by the system for recognizing Arabic alphabet letters in the Mandailing Natal ethnic community, which was taught earlier by teachers by calling the letter name غ[ɤɔ], so that when students read the word /ɤajri/ it is pronounced as [ɤajri] which means ``besides`` becoming [ɤɔjri] has no meaning because Arabic does not have a high, back, round vowel [ɔ]. With the replacement of these vowel phonemes when reading Arabic texts, the words

in data (2) the word الْقَدَمُ [alqadamu] → [al qɔdamu], الْقَوْمُ [al qawmu] → [al qɔwmu] and in data (3) the word الإِفْرَاطَ [al ifra:ṭa] → [al ifrɔṭɔ] will lose their meaning.

Furthermore, the research results obtained from the pronunciation of consonant sounds in reading Arabic text entitled الرياضة [ar rija:ḍah] by the twelfth-grade students through recordings from a tape recorder, there are 2 Arabic plosive consonants that experience changes in pronunciation, namely: the voiceless dental velar plosive consonant phoneme ط [ṭ] and the voiceless uvular stop consonant phoneme ق [q]. The researcher will discuss the process of replacing these consonant phonemes as follows.

3.3.1. Replacement of the voiceless dental alveolar plosive consonant ط [ṭ] with the voiceless alveolar plosive consonant [t]

The voiceless alveolar dental plosive consonant phoneme ط [ṭ] is an Arabic consonant that has distinctive features [+const, +kor, +dent velar, -cont, -son, +ant, -voice]. In reading Arabic texts by twelfth-grade students, this consonant is replaced with the voiceless alveolar plosive consonant [t] which has distinctive features [+const, +kor, +dent, -cont, -son, +ant, -voice]. This consonant replacement results in a change in the [+dent.vel] feature of the consonant phoneme ط /ṭ/ with the [+dental] feature of the consonant phoneme [t]. The replacement process occurred because the voiceless velar dental plosive consonant ط [ṭ] in BA was not found in the DM consonant inventory, so the twelfth-grade students replaced the BA consonant with the consonant [t], which is close in articulation to the DM consonant. The substitution of the voiceless dental velar plosive consonant ط [ṭ] in BA with the voiceless dental plosive [t] in DM, as found in the reading of the Arabic text الرياضة [ar rija:ḍah], appears in several words such as الإِفْرَاطَ [al ifra:ṭa] → [al ifrɔtɔ], الطَّاءِرَةَ [aṭṭa:ʔirata] → [at tɔ:ʔirɔta], and الطَّاوِلَةُ [aṭṭa:wilatu] → [at tɔ:wilatu]. Based on Sagey's (1986) model, the replacement of the voiceless velar dental plosive consonant ط [ṭ] with the voiceless alveolar plosive consonant [t] above can be formulated as in figure 3 below.

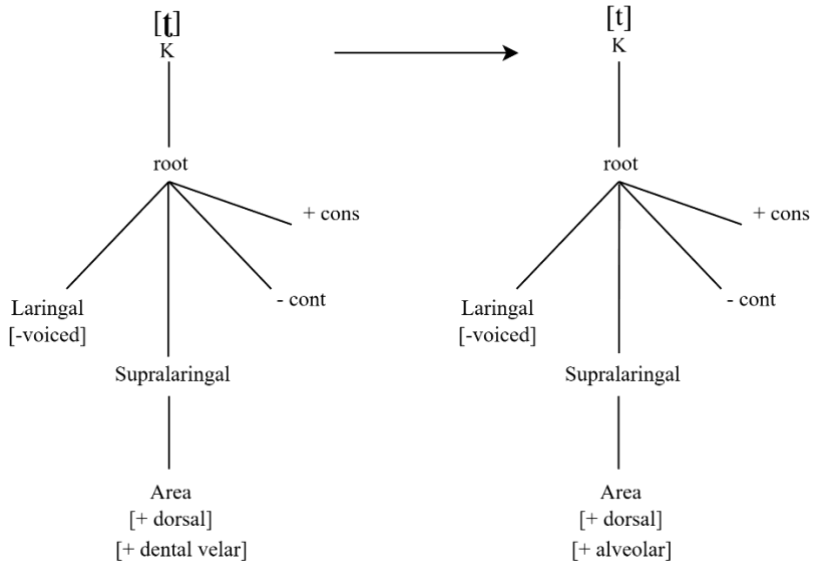

Figure 3. Formula for replacing the voiceless dental velar coronal plosive consonant ط [ţ] with the voiceless alveolar coronal plosive consonant [t] in reading Arabic text

The formula above shows the change of the [+coronal, +dent.velar] feature to the [+coronal, alveolar] feature which is shaded by the articulation area node in the hierarchy of the tree formula above. The replacement of the voiceless coronal plosive dental velar consonant [ţ] in the BA text with the voiceless coronal plosive alveolar consonant [t] DM. This causes the [+dent velar] feature to change to the [+ alveolar] feature. Replacement of the voiceless velar dental plosive coronal consonant [ţ] BA with the voiceless alveolar plosive coronal consonant [t] in the word الإِفْرَاطَ [al ifra:ţ a] → [al ifrɔtɔ], الطَّاءِرَةَ [aţ ţa:ʔirata] → [at tɔ:ʔirɔta], الطَّاوِلَةُ [aţţa:wilatu] → [at tɔ:wilatu].

Based on Clement and Keyser's syllable level representation, the above data can be illustrated as in Figure 4 below:

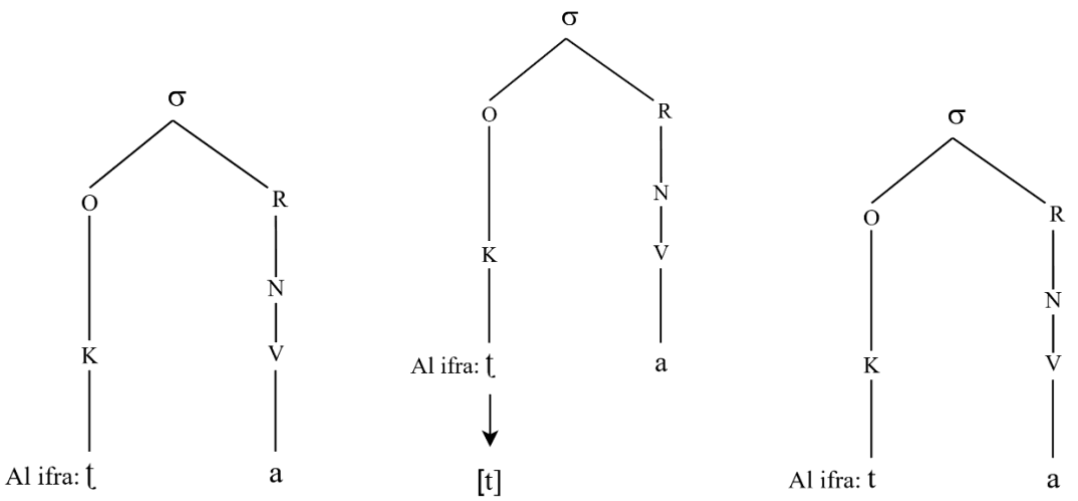

Figure 4. Representation of the replacement of the voiceless velar plosive dental consonant /ʈ/ → [t] in the word /al ifra:ʈa/→ [al ifra:ta] in reading Arabic text

From Figure 4. above, it can be explained that the voiceless coronal consonant plosive dental velar ط /ʈ/ BA, is pronounced as a voiceless alveolar plosive consonant [t] in DM because the [+dent.velar] feature of the voiceless coronal consonant plosive dental velar /ʈ/ BA is replaced by the [+alveolar] feature in the voiceless coronal consonant plosive alveolar [t], which is a consonant that is close in articulation to the consonant of the Mandailing dialect. Therefore, the twelfth-grade students of MAN 3 Mandailing Natal pronounce the word /alifra:ʈa/ which means `excessive exercise` as [al ifra:ta] which has no meaning, so that in this case there is a loss of meaning.

3.3.2. Replacement of the dorsal uvular plosive consonant ق /q/ with the dorsal velar plosive consonant ك /k/

The dorsal plosive consonant ق /q/ is a voiceless uvular consonant in BA which has distinctive features [+const, +dorsal, +uvular, -cont, -son, +ant, -voice]. This consonant is replaced by the voiceless velar dorsal plosive consonant [k] in DM which has distinctive features [+const, +dorsal, velar -cont, -son, +ant, -voice] in reading Arabic texts by the twelfth-grade students. The distinctive features of the voiceless velar dorsal plosive consonant [k] are [+const, +kor, velar, -cont, -son, +ant, -voice]. The replacement of the voiceless uvular plosive consonant in BA results in a change in the [+uvular] feature of the voiceless uvular dorsal plosive consonant /q/ to the [+velar] feature of the voiceless velar dorsal plosive consonant [k]. This replacement process occurs because the voiceless uvular coronal plosive consonant /q/ is not found in the consonant inventory of the Mandailing dialect. This resulted in the twelfth-grade students of MAN 3 Mandailing Natal replacing Arabic consonants with consonants that are close in articulation to the Mandailing dialect. The replacement of the voiceless dorsal plosive uvular consonant /q/ in the Arabic text entitled الرياضة [ar rija:ɖah], was found in the word الْقَدَمُ [alqadamu] → [al qɔdamu], the word الْقَوْمُ [al qawmu] → [al qɔwmu]. Based on the Sagey Model, the replacement of the voiceless uvular consonant [q] with the voiceless velar plosive consonant [k] above can be formulated as in figure 5 below.

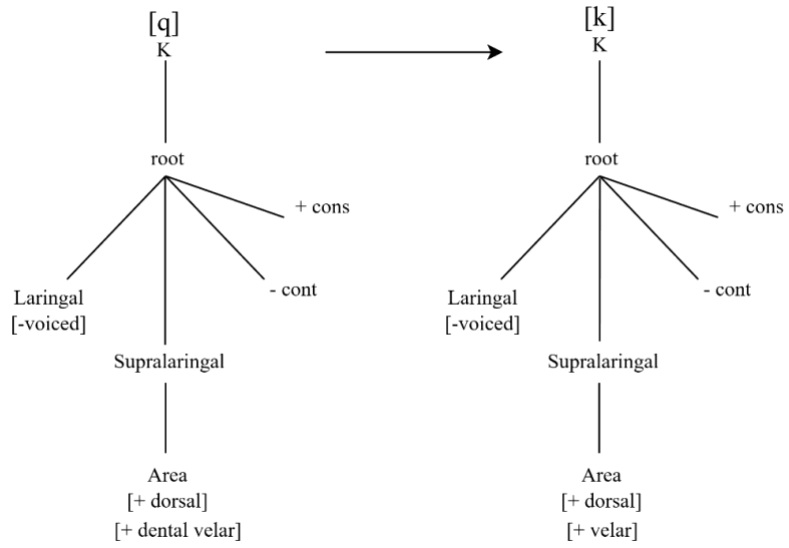

Figure 5. Formula for replacing the voiceless uvular plosive consonant ق /q/ with the voiceless velar plosive consonant /k/ in reading Arabic text

Through the tree formula in Figure 5 above, there is a change in the [+dorsal, +uvular] feature to the [+dorsal, alveolar] feature which is shaded by the articulation area node in the hierarchy of the tree formula. The replacement of the voiceless uvular plosive dorsal consonant /q/ in the BA text with the voiceless velar plosive coronal consonant [k] DM in reading the BA text causes the [+uvular] feature to change to the [+ velar] feature. The replacement of the voiceless uvular dorsal plosive consonant /q/ BA with the voiceless velar dorsal plosive consonant [k] in the word الْقَدَمُ [alqadamu] → [al qɔdamu], the word الْقَوْمُ [al qawmu] → [al qɔwmu] can be represented as follows. Based on Clement and Keyser's syllable level representation, the above data can be illustrated as in Figure 6 below:

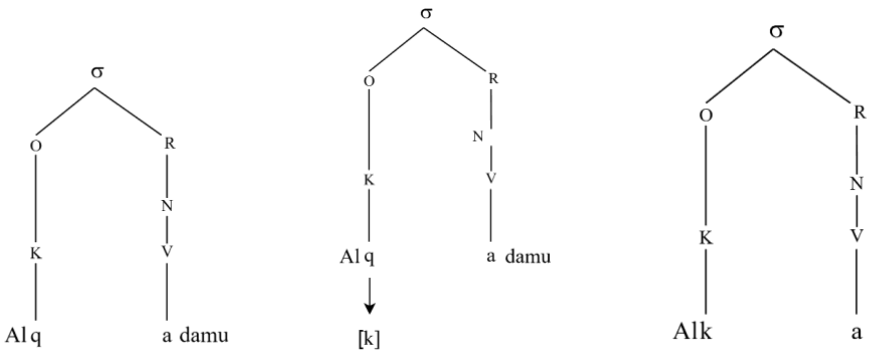

Figure 6. Representation of voiceless uvular plosive dorsal consonant replacement /q/ → [k] in the word /alqadamu/→ [alkɔdamu] in reading BA text

Based on Figure 6 above, the voiceless uvular plosive dorsal consonant coronal /q/ which

occupies the onset position changes to the voiceless velar plosive dorsal consonant [k] DM in the second syllable /al qadamu / to become [al kɔdamu]. The voiceless uvular plosive dorsal consonant ق /q/ changes to the voiceless velar plosive dorsal consonant [k] because in the Mandailing dialect there is no voiceless uvular plosive consonant ق /q/, so Mandailing dialect speakers change this sound to the voiceless velar plosive dorsal consonant [k] in the Mandailing dialect. This results in the [+uvular] feature of the voiceless uvular plosive dorsal consonant /q/ changing to the [+velar] feature of the voiceless velar plosive dorsal consonant [k]. Therefore, the twelfth-grade students of MAN 3 Mandailing Natal pronounce the word /alqadamu/ which means `foot` as [alkɔdamu] which means 'bruise', so that in this case there is a change in meaning.

4. Conclusion

In this article, the researcher would like to convey the findings obtained by the researcher in the field, namely regarding the changes in the pronunciation of Arabic vowel and consonant phonemes spoken by the twelfth-grade students of MAN 3 Mandailing Natal when reading Arabic texts in books used in Arabic language learning with the title الرياضة /Ar riyadah/. The change of the short vowel sound /a/ in BA to the vowel [ɔ] DM by the twelfth-grade students of MAN 3 Mandailing Natal when the vowel sound /a/ is after the fricative consonant , velar , voiced غ /ɤ/ , velar dental plosive consonant ط /ţ/ and uvular plosive consonant ق /q/ is due to the influence of the introduction of Hija`iyah letters by saying the name of the letter, such as the letter غ spelled as `ghoin` or `gho` , the letter ط spelled as `to` and the letter ق spelled as `kof`. So this affects the pronunciation of the three consonants when accompanied by the vowel sound /a/ pronounced by sounding it as the vowel sound /ɔ/.

Thus, it is hoped that Arabic teachers will teach the pronunciation of Arabic vowels and consonants by recognizing the relationship between spelling patterns and sounds. This is the case with the pronunciation of BA consonant sounds which do not exist in the student's language. Students should be given pronunciation practice that is appropriate to their area of articulation. BA teachers should increase their knowledge of Arabic phonetics and phonology.

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