

Errors in the Pronunciation of Arabic Letter Articulation Points *Makharij al-Huruf* among 7th-Grade Students at MTsN 4 Gunungkidul

Khaerul Anwar¹, Inas Salsabila Arumnisa²,

¹ Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Yogyakarta, Indonesia

² Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Yogyakarta, Indonesia

 anwarkhaerul93@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to identify and analyze patterns of Arabic makhārij al-ḥurūf pronunciation errors among seventh-grade students at MTsN 4 Gunungkidul, with particular attention to the forms, distribution, and possible factors associated with these errors. The study employed a mixed-methods approach with a sequential explanatory design. Quantitative data were obtained through an oral reading test administered to 21 students, while qualitative data were collected through observations and semi-structured interviews with selected students and an Arabic language teacher. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the distribution of students experiencing errors in each target letter, while qualitative data were analyzed to explain the pronunciation patterns identified in the quantitative phase. Corder's error analysis framework was used to identify and classify pronunciation errors.

The findings show that pronunciation errors were not randomly distributed but tended to occur in letters requiring precise articulatory control or differentiation of similar phonetic characteristics. Nine of the 21 students (42.86%) made errors involving the letter Qāf (ق), followed by 'Ain (ع), reported by 8 students (38.10%), and Thā' (ث) and Khā' (خ), each reported by 6 students (28.57%). These percentages represent the proportion of students who made an error involving each target letter, rather than error rates per occurrence of the letter in the test. The qualitative findings further indicate recurring substitution patterns, including ط → ت, ص → س, ك → ق, and ش → س, suggesting difficulties in maintaining differences in articulatory position and phonetic characteristics. Participants also reported previous learning experiences, limited reading practice, and situational nervousness during individual reading and recording as factors associated with their pronunciation difficulties. These factors are interpreted as contextual explanations rather than established causal relationships.

The study contributes to Arabic pronunciation research by integrating the distribution of errors with substitution patterns and articulatory characteristics through a sequential explanatory design. The findings suggest that assessment of makhārij al-ḥurūf should move beyond identifying incorrect letters toward examining the relationship between target sounds, substitute sounds, and the articulatory characteristics involved. The results provide an empirical basis for developing targeted pronunciation exercises focusing on frequently confused letter pairs and articulatory distinctions.

Keywords: pronunciation errors; makhārij al-ḥurūf; Arabic reading; phonetics; error analysis; sequential explanatory mixed methods.

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INTRODUCTION

Arabic plays an important role in education, particularly in Islamic education, as it provides access to the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic literature. One essential skill in Arabic learning is reading (*maharah qira'ah*), which requires accurate pronunciation of each letter according to its *makhraj*. In Islamic educational institutions, Arabic is therefore not merely a foreign language subject but also an important instrument for understanding Islamic sources (Indriani, 2024). Arabic learning involves four essential skills: listening (*istima'*), speaking (*kalam*), reading (*qira'ah*), and writing (*kitabah*). Among these, *maharah qira'ah* is a receptive and active skill that requires learners not only to recognize and pronounce written symbols but also to understand and interpret the information conveyed by the text (Mahbubah & Maulana, 2025). However, successful reading is strongly influenced by the basic phonological system (*al-ashwat*). Inaccurate pronunciation may systematically hinder word recognition and reading comprehension (Amrulloh & Hasanah, 2019).

Mastery of *maharah qira'ah* is closely related to learners' phonological abilities, particularly their accuracy in producing Arabic sounds. In this context, *makharijul huruf* is fundamental because each Arabic letter has a specific place of articulation (*makhraj*) and distinct phonetic characteristics. Differences in articulation and sound features may cause learners to confuse letters with similar characteristics, resulting in pronunciation errors such as omission, addition, or substitution. Accurate pronunciation of *makharijul huruf* is therefore essential for developing Arabic reading skills and understanding texts. Identifying pronunciation errors is important for designing instructional strategies that correspond to learners' needs (Maylafisa & Wardhani, 2024). In madrasah education, Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation (KMA) No. 450 of 2024 also emphasizes learning and authentic assessment according to students' characteristics (Ramdhani et al., n.d.).

Previous studies have examined pronunciation and phonological errors in Arabic learning. Firdaus (2022) analyzed phonetic errors in university students' *maharah qira'ah* and found that such errors affected reading fluency. Mahbubah and Maulana (2025) investigated language errors in *maharah qira'ah* among students at MTs Sabilul Ihsan Pamekasan and identified various forms of reading errors. Meanwhile, Nasution and Lubis (2023) specifically examined *makharijul huruf* errors in the pronunciation of Arabic sentences among eighth-grade students at MTs Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah Tembung. These studies are relevant to the present research because they similarly focus on Arabic pronunciation or phonological errors among Arabic language learners.

Previous studies have identified and classified Arabic pronunciation errors, but most have focused on describing what errors occur rather than explaining why they occur. Firdaus examined university students, while Mahbubah and Maulana focused broadly on errors in *maharah qira'ah*. Nasution and Lubis are more closely related to this study because they examined *makharijul huruf* errors among MTs students. However, previous research has not comprehensively connected substitution patterns with *makhraj* proximity, phonetic features, error frequency, and possible Indonesian phonological transfer.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrated analysis of pronunciation errors among seventh-grade students at MTsN 4 Gunungkidul. It combines the identification and frequency of errors with phonological classification and analysis of the relationship between target and substituted letters. This approach is intended to identify whether pronunciation errors are systematic and related to *makhraj* similarity, differences in phonetic features, or Indonesian phonological transfer.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the forms and frequency of *makharijul huruf* pronunciation errors, classify their phonological patterns, and analyze their possible causes among seventh-grade students at MTsN 4 Gunungkidul. The findings are expected to provide a deeper understanding of Arabic pronunciation errors and support teachers in developing more targeted and diagnostic pronunciation instruction.

METHOD

This study employed field research using a mixed-methods approach with a Sequential Explanatory design. The research was conducted in two sequential stages: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative stage aimed to identify the types and frequency of *makharijul huruf* pronunciation errors, while the qualitative stage explored the patterns and underlying factors of these errors. The quantitative findings were used to determine the focus and informants for the qualitative stage, after which both datasets were integrated during interpretation (Dr. Juriko Abdussamad et al., 2024). This approach was selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of *makharijul huruf* pronunciation errors in Arabic vocabulary among seventh-grade students.

The population consisted of all seventh-grade students at MTsN 4 Gunungkidul in the 2025/2026 academic year. The research subjects included the Arabic language teacher as the key informant and seventh-grade students. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, representing three different class specializations: Class VII B (Research), VII C (Tahfidz), and VII F (Academic) (Admin, 2022). A total of 21 students participated, with seven students selected from each class based on high, moderate, and low pronunciation abilities, as recommended by the Arabic language teacher.

Primary data were collected through oral reading tests (*qirā'ah jahriyyah*), observation, and interviews. The reading test served as the main instrument for identifying the types and frequency of *makharijul huruf* pronunciation errors. Students' pronunciations were digitally recorded and transcribed for further analysis (Giawa, 2022). Each student completed an individual reading test lasting approximately seven minutes by reading a prepared list of Arabic vocabulary. With 21 participants, the total testing time was approximately 147 minutes (2 hours and 27 minutes), excluding preparation and participant transitions.

Observation was conducted to examine students' learning processes and pronunciation abilities, while interviews with the teacher and selected students were conducted to explore factors contributing to pronunciation errors. Secondary data were obtained through documentation, including school profiles, student data, textbooks, and relevant literature.

Data were analyzed using Error Analysis based on Corder's framework, consisting of data collection, error identification, classification, and explanation of error causes (TricaHYO, n.d.). Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages of error occurrence, while qualitative data were analyzed to explain the factors underlying the identified errors. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation, as well as member checking to confirm the accuracy of the data and research interpretations (Alfansyur & Mariyani, 2020).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Forms and Patterns of Makharijul Huruf Pronunciation Errors

The pronunciation test involving 21 seventh-grade students at MTsN 4 Gunungkidul revealed several forms of *makharijul huruf* errors in reading Arabic vocabulary. The errors mainly occurred in letters that have relatively difficult articulation points, similar *makhraj*, or phonetic characteristics that are difficult for students to distinguish. The errors were primarily found in the form of **substitution**, in which a target letter was pronounced as another letter, as well as omission or weakening of certain sounds.

The findings indicate that students' difficulties were not evenly distributed across all Arabic letters. Instead, several letters showed recurring patterns of errors. The most prominent substitutions included ك → ق, س → ث, ح → خ, ص → ز, د, ط → ت, and ش → س. In addition, the letter ع was frequently omitted or pronounced too weakly. These findings indicate that pronunciation difficulties were particularly evident when students had to control subtle differences in articulation or produce sounds that were less familiar to them.

Pronunciation Error of ق (Qaf)

The highest proportion of pronunciation errors was found in the letter ق. Of the 21 students who participated in the test, **9 students (42.86%)** mispronounced this letter. The dominant error was substitution of ق with ك, as observed in words such as مَقْصَفٌ, الصَّيْدِيُّ, and قِرَاءَةٌ.

The substitution indicates difficulty in controlling the articulation of *qaf*. The two letters have relatively close articulation areas, although *qaf* is produced from the back of the tongue, while *kaf* is produced from a somewhat more forward position. Students who have difficulty maintaining the appropriate position of the tongue may therefore shift the target sound toward ك. The interview data also supported this finding, as students reported that ق was difficult to pronounce because its articulation felt challenging.

Pronunciation Error of ع (Ain)

The second prominent difficulty involved the letter ع. The error generally appeared as omission or weakening of the sound, causing it to resemble an ordinary vowel. This occurred in words such as مَع, شَارِع, and وَاسِعَةٌ. Because ع is produced from the middle of the throat, students who are not accustomed to using the throat as an articulatory organ may have difficulty producing the sound clearly.

The interview findings reinforced this observation. One student explained that ع felt difficult because its articulation was heavy in the throat. This suggests that the problem was related not simply to recognizing the letter, but to the students' ability to physically produce and control the required articulation. The finding is consistent with previous research indicating that letters originating from *makhraj al-halq* are among those that commonly create pronunciation difficulties for Arabic learners.

Pronunciation Error of ث (Tha')

The letter ث was generally substituted with س, particularly in the word كَثِيرٌ. This error indicates that students tended to replace a relatively difficult sound with a more

familiar sound. The correct production of ث requires the tip of the tongue to be positioned between the upper and lower teeth. However, some students did not place the tongue in this position, resulting in a pronunciation closer to س.

This finding indicates that the students' difficulty was associated with precise control of the articulatory position. Rather than producing the target sound through the required tongue position, students appeared to rely on a more familiar articulation pattern. This suggests the importance of repeated practice in producing Arabic sounds that are less familiar within students' everyday phonological experience.

Pronunciation Error of خ (Kha')

The letter خ was mispronounced by 6 of 21 students (28.57%), primarily through substitution with ح, as in أَخْنِي and مَخْرَجٌ. Although both letters are produced in the throat region, they differ in their articulatory characteristics and sound quality. The substitution therefore indicates that some students were able to produce a sound from the general throat region but were not yet able to maintain the specific characteristics required for خ.

The qualitative data support this interpretation. Several students reported that خ was difficult because they were not accustomed to producing the sound through the relevant articulatory mechanism. Thus, the error appears to involve both articulatory experience and the ability to distinguish the specific characteristics of neighboring throat sounds.

Pronunciation Error of ص (Sad)

The pronunciation error involving ص occurred in 5 students (23.81%) and was primarily realized as س → ص, as in فَصْلِي. Both sounds involve articulation near the tip of the tongue and the teeth, but they differ in their phonetic characteristics. The letter ص requires a heavier sound, whereas س is produced as a lighter sound.

Observation during the pronunciation test showed that students who made this substitution tended to produce an articulation similar to س but failed to maintain the heavier quality of ص. One student also reported confusion between the two sounds. These findings suggest that the main difficulty was in producing and maintaining the phonetic characteristics of the target sound rather than necessarily a lack of declarative knowledge about *makharijul huruf*.

Pronunciation Error of ط (Ta')

The letter ط was commonly substituted with ت, particularly in words such as نَطَقَ and طَالِبٌ. The two letters have relatively similar articulation areas, but ط requires a heavier sound than ت. Some students were unable to maintain this distinction and consequently produced ت instead of ط.

The interview data further indicate that students perceived ط as difficult to pronounce accurately. This finding suggests that the problem is related to the ability to maintain specific phonetic characteristics during articulation, particularly when two letters have relatively similar points of articulation.

Pronunciation Errors of ذ (Dhal) and ش (Shin)

The letter ذ was generally substituted with د or ز, as observed in words such as تَلْمِذٌ and هَذَا. The error occurred because students did not consistently position the tip of the tongue at the appropriate location near the upper incisors. When the tongue position was inaccurate, the resulting sound shifted toward another sound that was easier to produce.

Meanwhile, the letter ش was substituted with س, particularly in الشَّيْءُ and مَشْغُولٌ. The findings indicate difficulty in distinguishing and producing the articulatory characteristics of ش and س. Students tended to produce the more familiar س when they encountered ش, suggesting that pronunciation errors may emerge when students have difficulty maintaining the specific articulatory configuration of the target sound.

Frequency of Makharijul Huruf Pronunciation Errors

The quantitative analysis shows different levels of pronunciation errors across the eight identified letters. The frequency was calculated based on the number of students who made an error on a particular letter out of the total 21 participants. Therefore, the percentages represent the proportion of students experiencing an error, rather than an error rate calculated from all occurrences of each letter in the test.

No.	Letter	Frequency	Percentage
1	ق	9 students	42.86%
2	ع	8 students	38.10%
3	ث	6 students	28.57%
4	خ	6 students	28.57%
5	ص	5 students	23.81%
6	ط	5 students	23.81%
7	ذ	4 students	19.05%
8	ش	4 students	19.05%

The table indicates that ق had the highest proportion of students experiencing pronunciation errors, followed by ع. The lowest proportions were found for ذ and ش. However, these percentages should be interpreted cautiously because the number of occurrences of each letter in the test vocabulary was not completely proportional. Thus, the high frequency of errors in ق, for example, does not automatically mean that ق is universally the most difficult Arabic letter; rather, it reflects the conditions found among the participants and within the test instrument used in this study.

Phonological Patterns of Pronunciation Errors

The overall findings indicate that pronunciation errors formed several identifiable phonological patterns. First, some errors involved letters with relatively close articulation areas, particularly ق → ك. Second, other errors were associated with difficulties in maintaining differences in phonetic characteristics, as seen in س → ص and ت → ط. Third, errors involving ع and خ reflected difficulties in producing sounds that require effective control of the throat as an articulatory organ.

These patterns indicate that students' pronunciation errors were not entirely random. Instead, they tended to occur when students encountered sounds that were articulatorily close, phonetically distinct but difficult to differentiate, or relatively unfamiliar in their previous language experience. Thus, the findings provide evidence that

the analysis of *makharijul huruf* errors needs to consider not only the frequency of errors but also the relationship between the target sound and the substituted sound.

Factors Related to Pronunciation Problems

Limited Understanding of *Makharijul Huruf*

The first factor identified from teacher and student interviews was limited understanding of the articulation points of Arabic letters. The Arabic teacher explained that some students frequently confused the *makhraj* of particular letters and therefore required additional correction and assistance. Students also reported difficulty controlling the position of their tongue and other articulatory organs when pronouncing letters such as س, ح, ع, ق, ط, ص.

This finding suggests that theoretical knowledge about *makharijul huruf* needs to be accompanied by direct articulatory practice. Knowing the name or characteristics of a letter does not necessarily guarantee that students can produce its sound accurately. The pronunciation test demonstrates that some students still experienced difficulties translating their knowledge into actual phonetic production.

Differences in Students' Educational Backgrounds

The second factor was variation in students' previous educational experiences. The participants came from both Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) and non-madrasah backgrounds. Some students reported that they had previously attended general elementary schools and had less regular experience with Qur'anic reading or Arabic pronunciation practice.

These differences were reflected in variations in students' pronunciation abilities. Students who had been exposed to Qur'anic or Arabic reading from an earlier stage tended to have greater familiarity with Arabic articulation, whereas students with more limited previous exposure experienced greater difficulty with certain sounds. Thus, students' prior learning experiences formed an important contextual factor in their current pronunciation performance.

Limited Reading Practice

The third factor was insufficient intensive practice in reading Arabic texts. Classroom instruction already employed *qira'ah jahriyyah*, in which the teacher modeled the reading and students followed. However, limited instructional time prevented the teacher from providing detailed individual pronunciation correction to every student.

As a result, students who continued to experience pronunciation difficulties did not always receive sufficient opportunities for repeated individual practice. Repeated reading is particularly important because students need to coordinate several processes simultaneously: recognizing written letters, identifying their *makhraj*, producing the appropriate sound, and maintaining reading fluency. Limited practice may therefore make it more difficult for students to perform these processes automatically.

Psychological Factors

The fourth factor concerned students' psychological conditions during oral reading. Interviews indicated that **11 students** reported feeling nervous or under pressure when asked to read aloud, particularly when their voices were recorded. Some students stated that fear of making mistakes disrupted their concentration during pronunciation.

Classroom observations also showed that some students hesitated, paused for relatively long periods, or pointed to the text with their fingers when encountering difficult letters.

These findings suggest that nervousness and lack of confidence may influence students' performance during oral reading. However, the psychological factor should be interpreted as a contextual factor reported by the participants, rather than as a statistically established causal factor, because the study did not employ a specific psychological instrument to measure anxiety.

Overall Synthesis of the Findings

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that *makharijul huruf* pronunciation problems among seventh-grade students at MTsN 4 Gunungkidul occur primarily in three interconnected areas: articulatory proximity, differences in phonetic characteristics, and difficulty controlling specific articulatory organs. The most prominent examples are ق → ك, ص → س, and ط → ت, while ع and خ represent difficulties associated with throat articulation.

The findings also show that students' pronunciation performance is influenced by their previous learning experiences, opportunities for repeated practice, understanding of *makharijul huruf*, and psychological conditions during oral reading. Importantly, the results suggest that the errors cannot be understood solely by identifying which letters were mispronounced. The relationship between the target letter, the substituted sound, and the articulatory characteristics provides a clearer picture of the pronunciation patterns observed among the students.

Overall, the research indicates that *makharijul huruf* errors among the participants have systematic phonological tendencies rather than being entirely individual or random errors. This finding provides a basis for developing more targeted Arabic pronunciation instruction, particularly through direct demonstration of articulation points, repeated pronunciation drills, individualized correction, and audio-visual support.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that errors in the articulation of Arabic letters *makharijul huruf* among 7th-grade students at MTsN 4 Gunungkidul follow specific patterns, particularly regarding letters that require precise articulator positioning and the differentiation of sound characteristics. The predominant errors involve substitutions, such as ط → ت, س → ص, ك → ق, and ش → س. The study's contribution lies in integrating error frequency with an analysis of substitution patterns and articulatory characteristics, utilizing a Sequential Explanatory mixed-methods design.

Through this approach, the study not only maps the letters most frequently mispronounced but also identifies patterns of relationships between target letters and substitute sounds that require attention during instruction. Qualitative data further indicate that articulatory difficulties, learning experiences, practice habits, and psychological conditions are cited by informants as contributing factors, although the study does not test these factors for causal relationships.

Consequently, this research contributes to the study of articulation errors by offering an analysis that links error frequency, substitution forms, phonetic

characteristics, and the context of students' learning experiences; this allows error identification to serve as a more targeted basis for developing Arabic pronunciation instruction.

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