

COGNITIVE ACTIVATION IN READING NON-VOCAL ARABIC TEXTS: A PSYCHO-MORPHOSYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS OF UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETATION OF MEANING

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Article Info

Received: January 10, 2026

Revised: January 26, 2026

Accepted: February 21, 2026

Online Version: March 31, 2026

Abstract

This study examines students' cognitive activation in reading non-vocalized Arabic texts through a psycho-morphosyntactic approach. Arabic texts without vowel marks require the integration of cognitive, morphological, and syntactic abilities to identify word forms, determine grammatical functions, and construct meaning from context. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method using observation and document analysis of Arabic language textbooks for Madrasah Aliyah published before and after the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum. The analysis focuses on non-vocalized text characteristics, morphological patterns, syntactic structures, and cognitive processes involved in reading comprehension. The findings indicate that successful reading of non-vocalized texts is strongly influenced by students' morphological ability to recognize wazan, word formation, and derivational relationships, as well as their syntactic ability to identify grammatical functions and sentence structures. Cognitive strategies, including meaning prediction, activation of prior knowledge, contextual interpretation, and inference, also contribute significantly to resolving textual ambiguity. Comparison of the textbooks demonstrates that non-vocalized texts provide greater opportunities for students to engage in analytical thinking and linguistic problem-solving. The study concludes that integrating linguistic and psycholinguistic perspectives is essential for developing maharat al-qirā'ah, particularly in reading non-vocalized Arabic texts. Their systematic use is recommended to sustain students' cognitive engagement, improve reading comprehension, and strengthen learning outcomes. The findings further highlight the teacher's role in designing gradual reading activities that integrate morphological analysis, syntactic interpretation, contextual reasoning, and meaning construction according to students' proficiency levels.

Keywords: Cognitive Activation, Maharah al-Qira'ah, Vocalization of Arabic Text



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How to cite: Harahap, P. (2026). Cognitive Activation in Reading Non-Vocal Arabic Texts: A Psycho-Morphosyntactic Analysis of the Process of Understanding and Interpretation of Meaning. *Qaul ‘Arabiy*, 2(1), 109–127. <https://doi.org/10.66139/jqa.v2i1.439>

Published by: Yayasan Zia Mulla Sadra

INTRODUCTION

Reading development in Arabic and the linguistic, orthographic, and sociocultural factors that shape this process have received increasing attention (Saiegh-Haddad & Schiff, 2025). Attention has also been paid to cross-linguistic differences in reading development. This is because reading ability is one of the four basic language competencies that are essential in the language learning process. It is even a benchmark for successful language acquisition. Reading ability is considered the most important activity in the learning process. The process of learning a particular language will be inadequate and inappropriate if it does not master the reading skills of the language being learned. Because current reading theories suggest that less skilled readers are more dependent on the reading context than skilled readers.

A skilled reader will use orthographic, phonological, morphological, and semantic information about each printed word to locate its lexical entry. In other words, readers use their knowledge of the letters, sounds, and meanings of words to read them. The extent to which skilled readers use each of these processes to access the lexicon varies depending on the characteristics of the language, both spoken and written (Al-Ghamdi, 2021). The decoding process requires breaking words into phonemes, the shortest sound units in language, and combining them in a systematic order to determine the correct pronunciation for each written word.

Recent research in the field of reading has revealed two fundamental insights. First, reading development relies heavily on cognitive-linguistic processes at the level of individual words. Second, efficient word processing relies heavily on the formation of accurate and robust word representations (Al-Janaideh et al., 2023). From this, it can be concluded that for proper reading comprehension, the factors involved in word representation and processing must be elucidated in detail. Although considerable knowledge has accumulated regarding the cognitive and linguistic basis of these abilities in English, as well as several other languages, little is known about how specific differences exist in sociolinguistic contexts.

The linguistic and orthographic features of the Arabic script can provide new insights into reading and phonological processing. Two key factors can be used: the speed and accuracy of reading words and pseudowords, and phonological awareness. Phonological decoding ability is essential for reading mastery (Alseraye, 2024). It has been shown that pseudoword reading and phonological awareness measures are benchmarks for phonological decoding skills. Muter states that the process of learning to read in various languages is influenced by the unique characteristics of each language's orthographic system and other factors. The importance of orthographic and phonological representations and the degree to which they are used in the process of decoding and naming written words varies from language to language. The reading process involves various strategies and skills, all of which are based on phonological decoding.

Differences between languages are largely attributed to differences in the degree of correspondence between basic letter symbols (graphemes) and language sounds (phonemes) (Alshehri, 2022). Therefore, phonological processing skills, particularly phonological awareness (which focuses on the ability to recognize sounds in words) and the Phonological Deficit Hypothesis (which are researched and often considered a by-product of phonology). On the other hand, the role of morphological awareness (i.e., "the ability to reflect on and manipulate morphemes and apply the rules of word formation in one's language," is much less researched and often considered a by-product of phonology. Therefore, readers must master the rules and knowledge of Arabic language, because when reading Arabic texts without proficiency in Arabic language rules, namely *shorof* and *nahwu*, it will lead to misunderstandings in understanding the purpose of the reading content (Sessas et al. 2023). *Nahwu* is useful for knowing the position A word, the arrangement of a word's reading, because the meaning of words can change and differ according to the word's position. Meanwhile, *shorof* is useful for understanding the *bina'* (structure) and *shighah* (tense) of a word, which can influence changes in meaning.

Referring to the achievement of Arabic language learning objectives in the Independent Curriculum, the terms reading and viewing are used. Reading is the ability to understand, interpret, and determine facts, main ideas, sequences of events, explicit and implied meanings, values, facts and opinions, solutions, benefits, reading tables, asking questions, and concluding the content of the text being read. Viewing is the ability to pay attention to, understand, use, reflect, analyze, evaluate, and appreciate the structure, content, assumptions, values, beliefs, and social functions of visual and multimodal texts according to their purpose and importance. Based on this, reading is not merely a mechanical skill in reading text, but also a skill related to language analysis. deeper and more holistic skills, such as recognizing punctuation, intonation, and understanding the text and its socio-cultural context. These skills are crucial, especially in reading religious texts such as the Quran and Hadith, which often require deeper comprehension (Fitriani & Chamidah, 2025).

Abu-Rabia explains that in other languages (English), vowels are part of the alphabet and are represented by actual letters, unlike Arabic spelling. English words are written the same for both beginning and advanced readers. This is different in Arabic: beginning readers read Arabic script with vowels, while advanced readers read it without vowels (Abu-Rabia 2021). The absence of vowels/non-vowels requires readers to guess the morphological form and function of the vowels. The syntax of words is based solely on their context and linguistic experience. Ambiguity is also more common, especially in distinguishing between verbs and nouns or in understanding the function of words within a sentence structure. As a result, semantic interpretation becomes more complex and prone to error. Thus, non-vocalist texts require a higher level of proficiency in Arabic grammar and in-depth contextual skills to ensure accurate and complete understanding.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a library research study aimed at obtaining, identifying, classifying, and analyzing data based on various written sources relevant to the research focus. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design to in-depth explore the cognitive activation process in reading non-vocalic Arabic texts (*al-nuṣūṣ al-‘arabiyyah al-mu‘jamah*) through a psycho-morphosyntactic perspective. This approach was chosen because the research object relates not only to linguistic form and structure, but also to the reader's mental processes when recognizing word forms, determining grammatical functions, connecting morphological and syntactic elements, and constructing meaning based on sentence context.

The research data sources consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary source is an Arabic Language Textbook for Madrasah Aliyah published before and after the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum. This book selection was based on the consideration that curriculum changes can affect the characteristics of material presentation, the level of text complexity, reading practice patterns, and the demands on students' linguistic competence. These books were reviewed to identify non-vocal Arabic text forms, their morphological and syntactic characteristics, and the potential cognitive demands that arise during reading. Secondary sources included scientific journal articles, academic books, research results, proceedings, and other scholarly works directly or indirectly relevant to psycholinguistics, Arabic linguistics, morphology (ṣarf), syntax (naḥw), reading comprehension, and the study of maharat al-qirā'ah.

Data collection was conducted through documentation techniques, selecting and recording linguistic data contained in the research sources. The collected data were then classified based on morphological, syntactic, semantic-contextual aspects, and cognitive processes likely activated during the reading of non-vocal texts. Data analysis was conducted thematically through several stages: data identification, data reduction and grouping, interpretation, and drawing conclusions. In the interpretation stage, the findings were linked to psycholinguistic and structural linguistic theories, specifically the concepts of language processing, word form recognition, morphological analysis, determining syntactic function, utilizing context, and constructing meaning. This analysis was used to identify patterns of cognitive activation and identify potential obstacles that hinder the understanding of Arabic texts without vowels.

Data validity was maintained through cross-checking between sources and theoretical concepts (source triangulation and theory triangulation). Data obtained from textbooks were compared with previous research findings and relevant concepts in psycholinguistics and Arabic linguistics. Through these procedures, the research is expected to yield a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between linguistic ability and mental processes in reading non-vocal Arabic texts. Ultimately, the research findings are expected to provide a theoretical and pedagogical foundation for the development of more effective strategies for learning maharat al-qirā'ah, particularly strategies that consider the integration of morphological and syntactic abilities, context utilization, and the activation of students' cognitive processes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Vocalization of Arabic Text

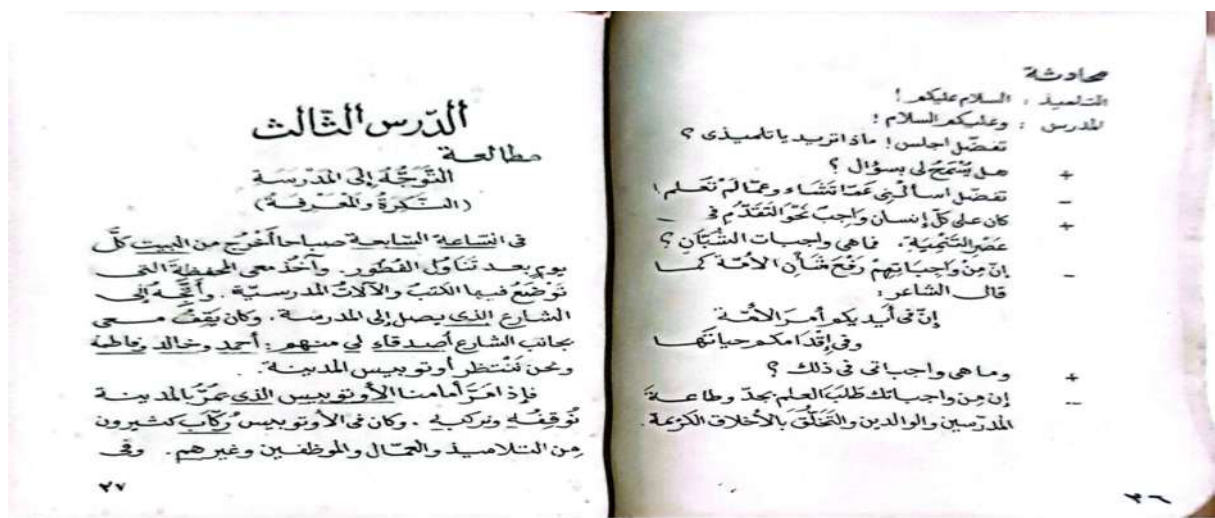




Figure 1. Arabic Language Learning Texts before Competency-Based Curriculum

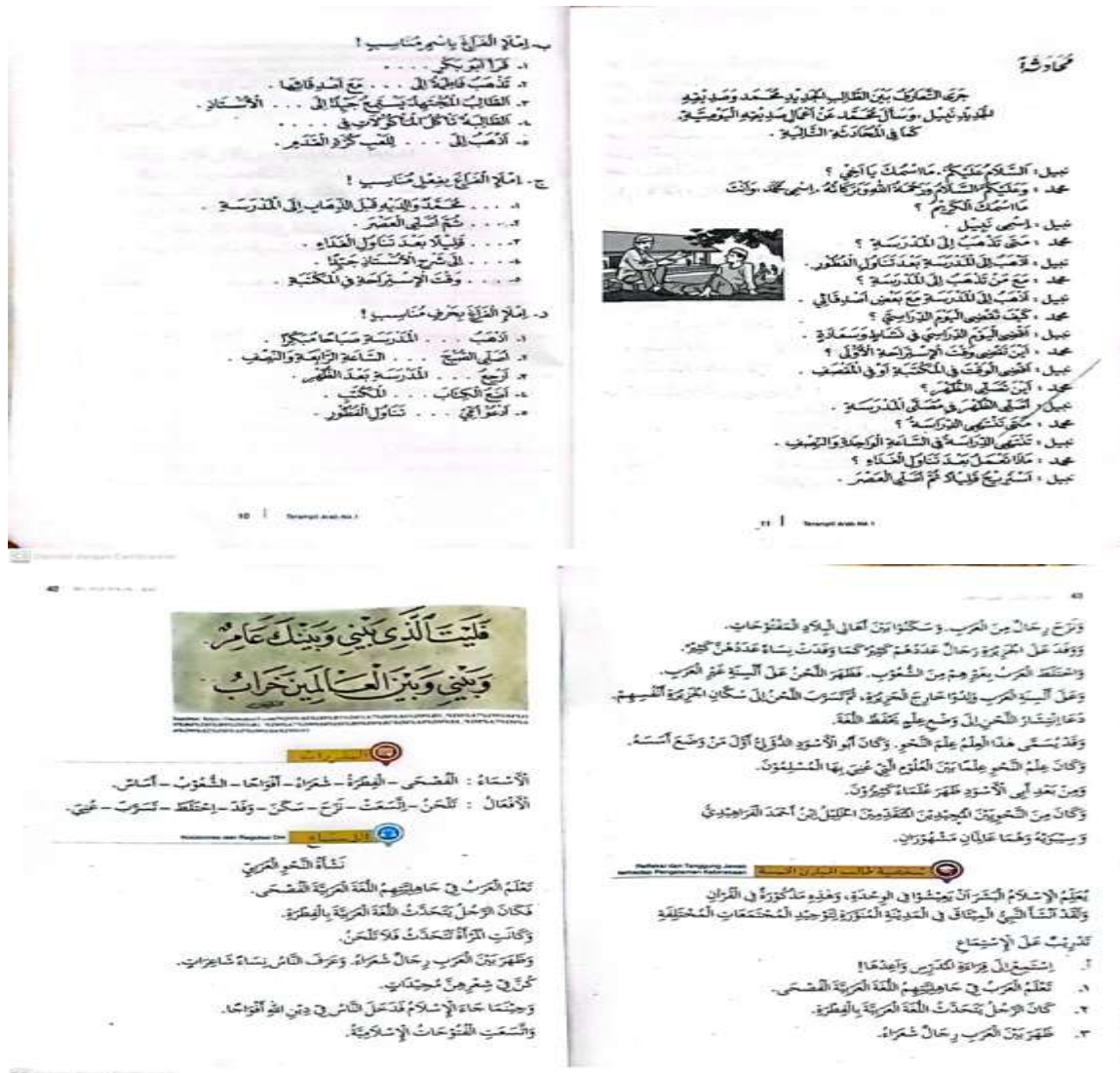


Figure 2. Arabic Language Learning Texts after Competency-Based Curriculum

The issue of vocalization, or diacritical marking, is crucial for many tasks in Arabic language processing (NLP). Arabic is typically written without short vowels, resulting in a single written form having multiple pronunciations, each with its own meaning, such as the word رأس "head" in the sentence هذه رؤوس القوم "these are the leaders of the people." The above example shows that vocalized words differ from unvocalized singular forms in word class and meaning (Asadi & Kavar, 2024). This demonstrates that vocalization implicitly marks word class and eliminates ambiguity in word meaning. It is also clear that word forms cannot be vocalized in isolation; this task is highly dependent on the context of the word.

Text phoneticization is crucial for speech synthesis and recognition, as well as other natural language processing applications. In speech synthesis, these rules are used to determine the correspondence between spelling and sounds (phonemes and phonemes or allophones). These sounds can be used individually or converted into syllables, which are then subdivided into clusters for use in speech synthesis. In speech recognition, letter-to-sound rules are used to generate pronunciation variations to improve speech recognition and generate pronunciations for new words not found in the native vocabulary of the speech recognition system. In natural language processing applications, grapheme-to-phoneme conversion (a component of the letter-to-sound conversion system) can be used for educational purposes, such as correcting spelling errors (Asadi et al., 2022).

One of the main distinguishing characteristics of non-vocal Arabic texts is the absence of a fixed vowel orthography system in standard Arabic texts, particularly in the form known as "bare Arabic"—that is, Arabic texts without punctuation or vowels. This absence of vowels makes reading Arabic not only a phonetic activity but also a complex interpretive process. A bare Arabic text is a structure of Arabic words that lacks vowels (harakat/syakaal), also known as "gundul" or "yellow" books. Gundul books are a characteristic and identity that is inseparable from the Islamic boarding school tradition. Therefore, to facilitate reading, these books that lack vowels are combined with Arabic language learning, namely Nahwu and Shorof (Gottardo, 2021).

The inability to read properly and correctly will impact linguistic interference, which includes sound structure (phonology), word formation (morphology), sentence structure (syntax), vocabulary (lexicon), and meaning structure (semantics). Furthermore, Abdul Chaer and Agustina identify five types of linguistic interference in detail: a) Phonological interference, which is the difference between utterances (sounds) in the language used by speakers; b) Morphological interference. Morphological interference occurs in word formation with affixes. Affixes of a language are used to form words in another language; c) Interference in the field of syntax Interference, in the field of syntax occurs when there is a sentence structure in the language; and d) Interference in the field of lexical Lexical meaning is the meaning that is owned or exists in a lexeme even without any context (Asadi et al., 2023).

Figure 1 shows that Arabic language texts in Arabic language textbooks for Madrasah Aliyah (Islamic Senior High School) prior to the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) were very minimal in the use of vowels (bars). This lack of vocalization is not without reason; pedagogically, it is intended to train and enhance students' cognitive abilities, particularly in the syntactic and semantic processing of Arabic. Students are required to actively construct the meaning of the text based on their knowledge of grammar and grammar rules, as well as the overall context of the sentence.

This practice of reading texts without bars encourages students to develop inferential reasoning and linguistic prediction skills, as they must independently determine how a word is read and understood. In this case, cognitive processes such as morphosyntactic parsing (decomposing the form and function of words within a sentence structure) and semantic mapping (mapping meaning based on the relationships between words) become very dominant. According to Nation, exposure to texts without vocalization can accelerate the understanding of lexical forms and language structures, provided accompanied by adequate teacher guidance.

Conversely, without proper pedagogical support, non-vocal texts can become a serious obstacle to learning, especially for beginning learners who have not yet mastered the basics of morphology (ṣarf) and syntax (naḥwu). Mistakes in differentiating active and passive verb forms, mudzakkār and muannats, or changes in meaning due to the i'rāb structure can lead to misconceptions in understanding the text's content. Exposure to Arabic texts without vowels requires a high level of metalinguistic awareness, namely the ability of students to think about language as a system, not just a means of communication. Without it, students tend to simply guess at meaning, and this can lead to confusion or even a lack of confidence in reading Arabic texts.

Cognitive Activation

Maharah al-Qira'ah

Reading is a complex cognitive activity that plays a vital role in an individual's intellectual and social development. In literacy studies, reading is understood not simply as a process of decoding linguistic symbols, but as a constructive activity for constructing meaning, broadening horizons, and accessing knowledge across dimensions of time and space. Through the process of reading, individuals are able to comprehend realities beyond their empirical experience, making reading a "window to the world" that opens horizons of thought while shaping cultural and historical awareness. More than just an academic activity, reading also functions as a medium of indirect communication between writer and reader, where messages, ideas, and values are constructed and transmitted through text.

Reading is a means of transferring knowledge and insight; it is a crucial language skill. A learner will not be able to comprehend material if they cannot read well. More specifically, in learning Arabic for non-Arabs, reading is a skill that is indispensable for learners (Joubran-Awadie & Shalhoub-Awwad, 2023). Reading not only develops insight and knowledge, but also demonstrates how one can read between the lines. As stated by Anderson in Alek and Ahmad, reading is defined as a process of understanding what is implied in what is written and discerning the thoughts contained within written words.

Furthermore, Rahim states that reading is essentially a complex activity involving many factors, not just pronunciation but also visual activity, thinking, psycholinguistics, and metacognition. As a visual process, reading is the process of translating written symbols (letters) into spoken words. As a thought process, reading includes word recognition, literal comprehension, interpretation, critical reading, and creative reading. Word recognition can take the form of reading words using a dictionary (Nassif et al., 2022). According to Anderson, reading is an active and fluid process in which readers construct meaning from reading material. Meanwhile, Urquhart and Weir state that reading is the process of acquiring and interpreting information in the form of language through media. Arabic reading skills are essential for students to develop their Arabic speaking abilities. Reading ability is a crucial indicator of student success in learning Arabic. This is because the primary goal of language learning is reading ability (Muyasiroh et al., 2024).

As part of the Hamitosemitic language family, Arabic has a morphological structure based on a trilateral root system, a basic word structure consisting of three primary consonants. This root cannot be pronounced phonetically without the addition of vowel signs (harakat/syakl) as morphological and grammatical markers. Therefore, reading Arabic texts requires a strong mastery of context, grammatical structure, and morphological patterns to accurately interpret words and sentences. Consequently, learning to read in Arabic involves more than just recognizing letters and sounds; it also involves linguistic competence and a deeper contextual understanding.

Morpho-Syntax

The Arabic morphological system is known for its richness and complexity. In linguistic studies, several researchers have suggested that morphological units, such as roots and patterns (wazan), not only form the basic structure of words but also serve as essential components in understanding Arabic orthography. In other words, morphological knowledge is considered closely integrated with orthographic knowledge, so that the ability to read and write in Arabic is strongly influenced by an understanding of its morphological structure. Further evidence suggests that morphology in Arabic is one of the organizational principles of the mental lexicon and that morphology plays a significant role in the visual recognition of words. In fact, Arabic words are derived from a combination of roots, which represent the word's meaning, and patterns, which determine its lexical and syntactic categories (Tibi et al., 2021). Most Arabic words are generated through inflectional processes on roots and patterns, as well as derivation processes on roots.

These words can consist of a number of morphemes, making them morphologically complex in the sense that a single Arabic word can correspond to a complete sentence in English. For example, the word (سَنَذْهَبُ) /sanadzhab/ derived from the root (ذَهَبَ) /dzahaba/, corresponds to the English sentence 'we will go'. In this example, the root is added by the morphemes (سَ) /s, n/, where the first morpheme determines the verb tense (سَ) /s/, for future) and the second morpheme represents the personal pronoun (نَ) /n/, for 'we') which determines the number and person of the subject. Early research suggested that morphological density slows reading speed because it requires readers to segment (Taha, 2023). Recent research suggests that the morphological richness of Arabic (and Hebrew) improves reading and spelling skills. Specifically, the authors claim that the internal morphological structure of vowelless Arabic words allows for the recovery of lost phonological information (which would otherwise be present in vowelized spellings). The authors also argue that vowelless orthography is only appropriate in Arabic due to the language's distinctive Semitic morphology, an argument that, in many respects, also applies to reading vowelless Hebrew texts.

The competence aspect relates to students' ability to read Arabic texts. This is closely related to the linguistic elements of form, function, and meaning in understanding a text. One small example is distinguishing between intransitive (اللازم)/lazim and transitive (متعدى)/muta'addiy' forms. The form of خرج which should be transitive 'muta'addiy' because it has an object (مفعول به)/maf'ul bih' so it should be read خَرَجَ/khorroja by giving a tasydid/syiddah sign (شدة) on the 'ain fi'il. By some students it is read in the intransitive form (اللازم)/lazim/khorojaa without giving syiddah on the 'ain fi'il, so that the phrase that was previously positioned as the object of 'maf'ul bih no longer has a syntactic function in the sentence. Another example is the phrase أفتح الكتاب in the sentence construction/sum أفتح الكتاب /aftah al kitab which should be read as manshub الكتاب with the vowel sound fathah (vowel sound 'a') as a marker because the status of the word الكتاب functions as an object مفعول به /maf'ul bih' by some students is read as المرفوع الكتاب with marfu' with the vowel sound dhammah (vowel sound 'u') as a marker, so that it no longer has a syntactic function in the sentence construction (Vaknin-Nusbaum & Makhoul, 2025).

Errors in reading Arabic texts, particularly in identifying morphological forms, directly impact the determination of the syntactic function of sentence constituents. Inaccuracies in analyzing sentence structure lead to a confusion of meaning, hindering comprehension of the text's content. On a broader scale, the accumulation of such errors can lead to serious misconceptions. This impact is even more significant for students without an Islamic educational background or basic knowledge of Arabic, as an inability to read Arabic texts directly impacts the understanding of Arabic-based learning materials.

As previously stated, Arabic is renowned as a cohesive language, as a simple construction (فعل الماض / fi'il madhi) already contains five pieces of speech information: form; tense; person; number; and gender. The simple construction (فعل الماض / fi'il madhi) with the additional letter 'al-zawaid' requires the addition of a new syntactic function: an object. This addition, also known as affixation in morphology, also has syntactic-semantic implications at the semantic level, namely the transitivity of تعديّة/ta'diyah, which comprehensively changes the meaning of sentence construction (Tachema, 2022).

Therefore, the syntactic function of Arabic cannot be identified using the syntactic tool of word order. This is because word order has little influence on Arabic sentence construction. Arabic syntactic function is determined by vowel/harakat markers, so the most appropriate syntactic tool for identifying function is word formation. This system makes the morphological, syntactic, and semantic processes of Arabic three things that are always fused together and impossible to separate. This makes the process of parsing Arabic sentences relatively more difficult than other languages. It is therefore not surprising that the stigma of reading and understanding Arabic texts is difficult.

This problem is not only faced by students from Islamic educational backgrounds, but also by students from Islamic educational institutions (Madrasah/Islamic boarding schools). The skill of reading "maharah al-qira'ah," as a crucial element of language skills, remains a problematic and challenging issue for students. The demands of lectures requiring students to be able to read Arabic texts fluently have not been optimally addressed (Smaila et al., 2025).

The difficulties students face in reading non-vocal Arabic texts are particularly evident from a morpho-syntactic perspective, specifically at the level of word formation (morphology) and sentence structure (syntax). Morphologically, students are required to recognize word roots and patterns (wazn) as the basis for interpreting word meaning and function. In non-vocal texts, the absence of harakat makes word forms ambiguous and difficult to identify. For example, the written form "دخل" can be read as dakhala (he entered), dukhul (entered, as masdar), or dakhkhala (entered, a form of mazid), depending on the morphological pattern and syntactic context (Shahbari-Kassem & Saiegh-Haddad, 2025).

From a syntactic perspective, the challenge that arises relates to the unclear function of words within sentence structures due to the absence of case markers (إعراب), which are usually indicated by final vowels. In Arabic, the positions of the subject (فاعل), object (مفعول به), and predicate are often determined by the final vowel, which is given the vowel dhammah, fathah, or kasrah. Without these markers, students must rely on syntactic intuition and an understanding of sentence structure to guess the function of each element. When these skills are not well developed, students tend to make mistakes in determining the relationships between elements in a sentence, which ultimately disrupts their understanding of the text (Rofi et al., 2023).

Morpho-syntactic difficulties are also evident in recognizing the constructs فعل (verb) and اسم (noun), especially in sentences beginning with verbs (جملة الفعلية/verbal sentences), which require an understanding of the doer of the action and whether the sentence requires an object. As explained earlier, the absence of vowels requires an understanding of verb transitivity (تعديّة/ta'diyah), which students often do not yet have a sufficient grasp of. For example, not all students are able to distinguish between intransitive and transitive verbs based solely on their written form without the aid of vowels or additional context (Potu et al., 2021).

Overall, the form of morpho-syntactic difficulties faced by students in reading irregular Arabic texts leads to an incomplete understanding of word and sentence structure, which results in low accuracy in interpreting the text's meaning. Although irregular Arabic texts are often considered difficult to understand, there are significant positive aspects when reviewed. From the perspective of developing students' morpho-syntactic abilities. Familiarizing yourself with texts without vowels indirectly encourages students to activate their existing morphological and syntactic knowledge in a more in-depth and integrated manner. In this

context, the ability to recognize roots, patterns (wazn), and derived forms becomes a key skill that is continuously honed, thus gradually strengthening students' morphological competence.

From a syntactic perspective, interacting with non-vocal texts requires students to develop a high level of grammatical awareness. Without explicit i'rab markings, students need to rely on their understanding of sentence structure, such as identifying subjects, objects, predicates, and interclause relationships. This process encourages the development of syntactic accuracy, which in the long term will improve accuracy in reading and understanding complex Arabic texts. Non-vocal text-based learning also provides students with the opportunity to learn to interpret meaning based on the context of sentences more holistically, rather than solely on formal instructions.

Another important benefit is the development of linguistic independence. Students who are accustomed to reading non-vocal Arabic texts generally demonstrate greater learning resilience, greater self-confidence, and a keener sensitivity to differences in meaning and grammatical functions in Arabic. This is an important foundation for mastering classical and contemporary Arabic literature, considering that most authentic sources, such as traditional books, Arabic scholarly articles, and modern Arabic news, are presented without vowels. Thus, although challenging, reading Arabic texts without vowels opens up a great opportunity to deepen students' morpho-syntactic competence in an applied way, strengthen their structural understanding of Arabic, and equip them with critical reading skills for authentic texts, which are integral to the study of Islam, literature, and Arabic language in general.

Semantics

Semantics is a major branch of linguistics that focuses on meaning in language. However, to comprehensively understand its position and role, semantics cannot be viewed as a standalone field. It is closely related and mutually influences other branches of linguistics, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics. In relation to phonology, semantics plays a role in linking linguistic sounds to their meanings. Phonemes, as the smallest sound units, can have different meanings if there are changes in distribution or articulation. Meanwhile, the relationship between morphology and semantics is evident in the process of word formation (derivation and inflection), which also determines the grammatical and lexical meaning of a language form.

The relationship between semantics and syntax is evident in sentence structure, where the arrangement of syntactic elements influences the interpretation of meaning. The meaning of a sentence depends not only on its constituent words but also on the syntactic structure that establishes the relationships between elements within the sentence. In the context of pragmatics, semantics interacts within the context of contextual language use. Although semantics discusses meaning conventionally or literally, a comprehensive understanding of meaning cannot be separated from pragmatic aspects, such as speaker intent, situational context, and implicature.

Thus, semantics is an integral branch of linguistics, not only examining meaning in isolation but also within a functional interrelationship with other linguistic components. A holistic approach to language requires this interdisciplinary understanding to enable more accurate and contextual analysis of meaning.

In linguistics, specifically the internal study of language, we find a branch of linguistics that studies meaning known as semantics, or in Arabic, al-Dilalah (the study of meaning). It is the study of the meaning of language. It is the study of the meaning of linguistic units, namely words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, or semantics as explained in Mu'jam al Musthalat al Lisaniyah:

علم يدرس اللغة من حيث أنها كلمات تدل على معاني، كما أنه يدرس العلاقة بين رمز اللغوى ومعناه، ويدرس كذلك تطور معاني الكلمات تاريخياً، ويدرس أيضاً المعاني، والمجاز اللغوى والعلاقات بين الكلمات فى اللغة الواحدة.

Semantics is also the science that studies language in terms of words that indicate meaning, also studies the relationship between linguistic symbols and their meanings, also studies the historical development of word meanings, also studies meaning, linguistic metaphors, and the relationship between words in a language (Harianto et al., 2022). Among the important points of discussion in semantics are types of meaning, meaning relations, theories of meaning, meaning change, and components of meaning (Fitriani & Chamidah, 2025). These points form the foundation of semantic study because they serve as tools or devices that can help humans find meaning in a speech event or language activity. However, semantics, which has meaning as its object of study, cannot be separated from Phonology, Morphology, and Syntax, as these three disciplines are the building blocks of meaning.

The object of semantic study encompasses a complex and in-depth analysis of how language represents and conveys meaning. Semantics not only discusses the meaning of individual words but also examines how meaning is formed through the combination of linguistic elements at the sentence and discourse levels. This study goes beyond mere lexical boundaries, as meaning is not only contained in word form but also in the syntactic structure that governs the relationships between elements within a sentence. Thus, semantics plays a crucial role in revealing how sentence structure influences the interpretation of meaning by speakers and listeners. In addition to the internal structure of language, social and cultural contexts are integral to the formation of meaning. Factors such as the speaker's background, the communication situation, and social norms contribute to the meaning understood in linguistic practices.

Furthermore, the study of semantics intersects closely with pragmatics, particularly in terms of how meaning is processed and understood in the context of actual language use. This encompasses an understanding of implicit intent, contextual meaning, and the communicative strategies employed by speakers to achieve specific goals. Thus, the object of semantic study encompasses interrelated lexical, structural, contextual, and pragmatic dimensions. This multidimensional semantic approach makes the study of meaning in linguistics a dynamic field and plays a crucial role in understanding the complexity of language as a tool for human communication.

As previously stated, the object of semantic study involves the complex analysis of how language is used to convey meaning. This involves more than just words; it also involves sentence structure, social context, and the pragmatics of communication. Word meaning is a key aspect of semantics, involving understanding how individual words have both denotative and connotative meanings. In addition to word meaning, semantics also studies meaning at the phrase and clause levels. This involves how words are combined into larger units to convey more complex meanings. For example, in the phrase "red car," the meanings of car and red combine to convey the description of the car. Semantics also encompasses the analysis of meaning within sentences. This involves understanding how sentence structure and the relationships between words in a sentence influence meaning. For example, in the sentence "Ani fed the cat," the meaning of this sentence differs from that of "The cat fed Ani." The sentence structure influences who performs the action and to whom the action is directed.

Reading meaningful Arabic texts requires comprehensive comprehension. Reading comprehension is achieved by connecting the reader's prior knowledge with new knowledge acquired during reading, thereby maximizing comprehension. In this reading process, readers utilize several types of comprehension: literal, interpretive, critical, and creative comprehension. The first level of reading comprehension is literal comprehension, which is the

ability to recognize and grasp the explicit meaning of the reading material. This means that readers only grasp the explicit or obvious information in the reading material. They do not grasp the implicit information. The elements of literal reading are: a) Word recognition skills; b) Sentence recognition skills; c) Paragraph recognition skills; d) Detail recognition skills; e) Comparison recognition skills; f) Sequence recognition skills; g) Cause-and-effect recognition skills. h) Skills in answering questions: what, who, when, and where; i) Skills in restating comparative elements; j) Skills in restating sequence elements; k) Skills in restating causal elements. Interpretive understanding is the understanding of interpretation related to the process of obtaining implicit (indirect) meaning to a text. Critical understanding is the ability to read critically, which is the ability of readers to process reading material critically, which attempts to find the overall meaning of the reading material, both explicit and implicit meanings, through the stages of recognizing, understanding, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating. Meanwhile, creative understanding means being able to apply the results of reading to everyday life, the emergence of changes in attitudes and behavior and being able to solve everyday life problems based on the results of the reading that has been read.

Considering the levels of comprehension mentioned above, a reader is required to grasp the thoughts of the author, who is, of course, not present in front of the reader. This process of gaining understanding is more difficult than gaining understanding through a conversation or dialogue involving direct interaction between the speaker (*mutakallim*) and the listener (*sami'*), where the dialogue process can involve body language, which can contribute to a good understanding between both parties. Understanding non-vocal Arabic texts often elicits diverse responses from students, particularly regarding aspects of meaning or semantics. Students' attitudes toward such texts are generally influenced by their level of lexical and grammatical competence, as well as their confidence in interpreting meaning without the aid of vowels. Due to the absence of explicit vocal cues, students are required to actively construct meaning through understanding the context and semantic structure of the sentence.

From a semantic perspective, non-vocal texts present unique challenges because a single Arabic word can have multiple possible meanings and grammatical functions depending on the context. For example, a word form like "كتب" can be interpreted as *kataba* (he has written), *kutiba* (it has been read)/(it has been determined), or *kitāb* (book), depending on the sentence structure and the semantic relationships between elements in the discourse. This uncertainty of meaning often causes anxiety, doubt, or even avoidance in some students, especially those who are still at the intermediate stage of Arabic language acquisition. However, students who have extensive exposure to authentic texts and adequate semantic training tend to exhibit positive and adaptive attitudes. They begin to view non-vocalic texts as intellectual challenges that can stimulate semantic reasoning and enhance contextual understanding (Abu-Rabia, 2021). They also learn that meaning in Arabic is not always inherent in word form alone, but lies in the relationships between elements within a sentence and the entire discourse.

Students' attitudes toward non-vocalic texts also reflect the learner's level of language autonomy. Students who possess good semantic strategies—such as the use of synonyms, sentence pattern recognition, and contextual analysis of meaning—are able to approach non-vocalic texts with greater confidence. Therefore, in the context of teaching Arabic semantics, it is important for teachers to instill that meaning is contextual and can be approached through various interpretation strategies, not simply relying on *harakat*.

Psycholinguistics

In psycholinguistic studies, attention will be focused on the motivational and interest aspects of students in reading Arabic texts that are not given vowels (non-vocal). These two aspects play a very significant role in influencing students' cognitive and affective processes when interacting with the text. Motivation acts as an internal driver that encourages students to actively engage in reading activities, while interest is a determining factor in maintaining

engagement and focus during the comprehension process. High levels of motivation and interest can improve reading strategies, persistence in interpreting meaning, and tolerance for linguistic ambiguity often found in non-vocal texts. Therefore, analysis of these two factors is important to understand how students process, interpret, and construct meaning from Arabic texts that are visually and phonologically more complex than vocal texts.

Motivation

Motivation is an internal factor that acts as a primary driver in encouraging students' active participation in the learning process. High levels of motivation tend to facilitate students' cognitive and affective engagement, encouraging them to be more enthusiastic in exploring material, understanding concepts, and completing various academic tasks. Students with strong learning motivation generally demonstrate greater persistence, even when faced with challenges or difficulties in learning. This persistence is a crucial aspect in achieving learning goals because it enables students to remain consistent in their efforts, despite obstacles. Furthermore, learning motivation is also closely related to the development of a positive attitude toward the educational process. Motivated students tend to be open to intellectual challenges and have an optimistic view of their abilities and potential. Thus, motivation not only influences academic performance but also shapes constructive long-term learning dispositions. This is also supported by the learning environment, such as parents, teachers, friends, and adequate facilities (Fitriani & Chamidah, 2025).

Based on the research results of Ishida et al., there are six main factors that influence learning motivation: psychological values, cognitive factors, social and environmental influences, demographic factors, academic background and learning habits, and educational interventions or programs. This approach highlights that learning motivation is a complex phenomenon influenced by the interaction of various elements, both intrinsic and extrinsic. This study also revealed differences in the focus on motivational factors between Eastern and Western countries. In Eastern countries, psychological values are more dominant, while in Western countries, social and environmental influences are more widely studied. Provide an in-depth look at what motivates individuals, including students, to learn. According to this theory, learning motivation can be divided into two main types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Both theories emphasize the importance of creating a supportive learning environment. Teachers need to design relevant and engaging learning experiences to encourage students to feel intrinsically motivated, while still providing appropriate external rewards to encourage those who need additional encouragement. This will ensure an effective, meaningful, and sustainable learning process (Fitriani & Chamidah, 2025).

Motivation can be understood as a psychological drive that directs and moves individuals to take action based on desires, needs, and internal and external drives. In the context of learning, motivation functions as a driving mechanism that determines the intensity, direction, and persistence of learning behavior. Motivation arises not only from physiological needs but also from cognitive and affective drives, such as the desire to achieve, gain understanding, or fulfill social and personal expectations. Thus, motivation plays a crucial role in initiating, directing, and maintaining student engagement in the learning process. Therefore, reading motivation can be defined as an individual's drive to engage in reading activities, characterized by reactions and emotions. This reading motivation will certainly help students understand simple learning processes. Furthermore, students become accustomed to and interested in reading activities in their daily lives.

Motivation is basically a theoretical concept that explains why people want or choose to participate in a particular activity, behavior, or activity, and determines whether the person continues the activity or not. Regarding the motivation to read a foreign language (Arabic), research, (Rofi et al., 2023) describes four subcomponents of reading motivation factors: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, the importance of reading, and reading

comprehension skills. According to Siagian intrinsic motivation comes from within the individual. This motivation produces the integrity of goals, both organizational goals and individual goals where both can be satisfied. Meanwhile, according to Permana, citing Nawawi, provides the opinion that Intrinsic motivation is a work driver that comes from within the worker as an individual, in the form of awareness of the importance of the work being carried out (Ichsan et al., 2024). Intrinsic motivation motivates individuals to: 1) Learn and acquire new knowledge such as happiness in learning new knowledge; 2) Experiencing physical stimulation and joy, such as enjoying engaging learning; and 3) Undertaking challenging learning activities, such as completing difficult assignments. In this context, intrinsic motivation also refers to a person's ability to feel competent in a particular activity. This has been described as a theoretical approach often used to examine the relationship between reading motivation and reading ability from the perspective of comprehension, or values and achievement.

According to Gunarsa, extrinsic motivation is anything obtained through one's own observation, or through suggestions, recommendations, or encouragement from others (Ilmiani et al., 2022). Extrinsic motivation is motivation that originates from outside oneself and also determines a person's behavior in life, known as hygiene factor theory. According to Herzberg (Potu et al., 2021). Extrinsic motivation is motivation related to the rewards a person receives after performing physical work. This is driven by external factors such as awards or recognition from others.

In relation to reading motivation, intrinsic motivation (which originates within the reader) includes the reader's language competence, interest, motivation, and reading ability. Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation (originating from outside the reader) is divided into two categories: (a) elements originating from within the reading text and (b) elements originating from outside the reading environment. The first category concerns readability and text or discourse organization, while the second category concerns facilities, teachers, teaching models, and so on. Furthermore, Yap added that a person's reading ability is largely determined by the quantity of reading.

Students' motivation to read Arabic texts without vowels, often referred to as "bare Arabic texts," tends to be low, especially at the beginner and intermediate levels. This is due to the higher level of difficulty in understanding such texts, as students lack the visual aid of vowels as phonetic and grammatical markers. When texts lack punctuation, students must rely on a deep understanding of Arabic morphological structure, vocabulary mastery, and the ability to interpret meaning based on context. This difficulty often leads to feelings of frustration, confusion, and even fear, which then directly impact students' intrinsic motivation. Rather than being a stimulating challenge to learning, texts without vowels are often perceived as obstacles that hinder progress. Factors such as a lack of contextual reading practice, the unavailability of graded materials, and the lack of adaptive learning strategies further reinforce students' negative perceptions of this type of text. Thus, students' low motivation to read "bare Arabic texts" is not only due to the linguistic characteristics of the texts themselves, but also to the lack of pedagogical approaches that support the transition from "bare Arabic texts" to "authentic" texts. Therefore, learning interventions are needed that can increase students' self-confidence and provide adequate linguistic support so that they can face non-vocal Arabic texts with more motivation and direction.

Although reading Arabic texts without vowels demands a higher level of linguistic ability, there are several positive aspects that can be observed in students' motivation in facing this challenge. For some students, the presence of unvoiced Arabic texts actually triggers intrinsic motivation, as they feel challenged to improve their reading competence and understanding of authentic Arabic language structures. Unvoiced texts are seen as a concrete representation of Arabic use in everyday contexts, particularly in religious discourse, academic

discourse, and Arabic-language media, thus encouraging students to be more serious and consistent in their learning process.

Furthermore, students who are highly motivated to learn Arabic often view unvoiced Arabic texts as an indicator of linguistic maturity. They recognize that the ability to read such texts is a crucial milestone toward literacy independence, where they no longer rely on simplified texts or texts with vowel support. Their motivation grows with the realization that mastering authentic texts will open broader access to classical and contemporary Arabic literature, including religious, scientific, and literary texts. On the other hand, appropriate learning approaches—such as the use of gradual habituation strategies, contextualization training, and the provision of authentic materials appropriate to students' levels—can further strengthen this motivation. Thus, despite the challenges of reading non-linear Arabic text, there is also a positive enthusiasm for learning, especially among students who have a long-term orientation toward comprehensive Arabic language mastery.

Interest

Individual interest or desire is also an internal factor that significantly influences students' motivation to read Arabic texts. Individual interest and desire are also directly related to individual abilities. Everyone has personal interests, passions, and inclinations toward certain activities. Reading interest is explained as a strong desire accompanied by a person's efforts to read. Anyone with a strong interest in reading demonstrates this through their willingness to obtain reading materials and read independently.

Students with a strong interest in reading are able to face more challenging situations and the various influences around them (Bin Sawad et al., 2022). Therefore, students who have a personal interest in reading, even with limited conditions and facilities, will easily face reading challenges. As previously explained, students with strong reading comprehension tend to be more motivated to read important Arabic texts, while students with low reading comprehension tend to be mediocre and less motivated. This time, reading Arabic texts will be different when it becomes an individual interest or desire. Students will not consider whether the Arabic text is difficult or not, whether it has harakat or not, or perhaps lack mastery of *Qawaid al-Lughah al-Arabiyyah* and *Mufradat*. Students will increasingly position this as a new challenge and a priority for their achievement (Rofi et al., 2023).

Students' interest in reading Arabic texts without vowels tends to vary, depending on their linguistic background, learning experience, and the teaching approach they receive. In general, interest in Arabic texts without vowels remains relatively low, especially among students who lack a basic grasp of grammar and vocabulary. This is understandable, given that texts without vowels require a higher level of interpretive skills, requiring readers to guess grammatical structure and word meaning based on context without the visual aid of vowel signs (Asadi & Kasperski, 2024). However, there is a group of students who demonstrate positive interest in this type of text. They tend to have high learning motivation, a strong background in Arabic language learning, and regular exposure to authentic texts, both through formal learning and religious activities. For them, reading Arabic texts without vowels is not only a challenge but also a means to assess their ability to understand and access a broader and more authentic range of Arabic literary sources.

Students' interest in these types of texts can also grow with the use of appropriate learning strategies, such as a gradual transition from texts with vowels to texts without vowels, providing context before reading, and intensive practice in recognizing morphological and syntactic patterns. As students gain confidence, they tend to show increased interest, especially if the material they read is relevant to their personal needs or interests, such as Islamic texts, short stories, or popular articles in Arabic (Asadi et al., 2024). Thus, although students' interest in reading Arabic texts without vowels generally faces challenges, the potential for fostering

this interest remains wide open if supported by pedagogical strategies that are contextual, tiered, and facilitate gradual learning success.

Although reading Arabic texts without vowels demands a higher level of competence, a number of positive aspects can be identified in terms of interest. Students with a strong interest in Arabic, particularly in religious contexts, classical literature, or Islamic studies, generally demonstrate a natural interest in authentic, unpronounceable texts. For them, unpronounceable Arabic texts are seen as both an intellectual challenge and a bridge to accessing primary sources in Arabic, which have traditionally been considered limited to advanced readers. Interest in these types of texts also reflects students' readiness to develop, as they are motivated to better understand language rules, expand their vocabulary, and improve their contextual reading skills. This interest is usually followed by a drive to practice independently, seek out additional reading resources, and actively engage in language activities such as text discussions or interpretations. In other words, a strong interest in bare Arabic texts often indicates a long-term commitment to learning and a keen curiosity about Arabic in greater depth (Asadi & Asli-Badarneh, 2023). Furthermore, this interest can be fostered through creative and relevant learning approaches, such as selecting texts that align with students' interests (e.g., stories of the prophets, Arabic poetry, or popular articles), integrating technology into reading instruction, and providing gradual challenges that build confidence. As students begin to experience small successes in understanding bare texts, their interest tends to increase, as reading is no longer seen as a burden but as a form of personal achievement.

CONCLUSION

Understanding vocalic Arabic texts is not as complex as understanding non-vocalic Arabic texts, which require other supporting knowledge. This can be seen from Arabic language lessons in Madrasahs, especially in 1994, which included non-vocalic texts compared to the 2004 curriculum, the Competency-Based Curriculum, which included vocalic texts. Non-vocalic Arabic texts are complex and challenging forms of discourse, as they require readers to activate their morpho-syntactic competence in depth in determining word structure and grammatical function without the aid of vowels. From a psycholinguistic perspective, the process of reading such texts involves high-level cognitive activities, such as meaning inference, schema activation, and rapid linguistic decision-making under ambiguous conditions. Meanwhile, semantically, readers must be able to construct meaning based on the discourse context, the relationships between sentence elements, and the possibility of polysemy in Arabic vocabulary. Therefore, mastery of non-vocalic Arabic texts reflects the integration of structural knowledge, mental strategies, and sensitivity to meaning, all of which are important in developing advanced reading competencies in Arabic.

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