SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROFILE OF ARAB STUDENTS AND LANGUAGE POLICY IN NORTH-EASTERN ITALY

Giacomo Iazzetta[1]

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, Italy's demographic landscape has changed significantly due to increasing migratory flows, leading to greater ethnolinguistic diversity within schools (Riccardi, Giannantoni, Le Rose, 2019). This transformation can be understood through Vertovec's (2007) concept of *superdiversity*, which underlines the increasing complexity of migrant populations in terms of variables such as country of origin, legal status, language, and socio-economic background. Among these groups, students of Arab origin represent one of the largest minorities (Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito, 2024). Their migratory backgrounds – diverse in timing, modalities, and countries of origin – deeply influence their educational experiences and identity construction. School integration for these students is a complex process in which linguistic and cultural factors play a key role. Proficiency in Italian and the use of heritage languages affect both educational success and social inclusion. At the same time, host society perceptions of their cultural and religious identity shape their opportunities for inclusion or exclusion (Mazzei, 2018). The Italian educational system – marked by varied policies and practices on diversity – offers a valuable site for examining how these students negotiate their linguistic identities.

This article explores how language practices, attitudes, and policies contribute to shape the sociolinguistic profile of students of Arab origin in Italy. Based on ethnographic research conducted in North-Eastern Italian schools, the study examines students' language use, their attitudes toward Arabic, and the dynamics of language maintenance or shift. Previous research within the field of minority language rights shows that such processes are shaped by sociocultural and institutional factors, including language-in-education policies (May, 2001, 2003, 2006; Pauwels, 2004, 2016; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, 2002), and by sociopsychological aspects like language attitudes (Gardner, Lambert, 1972; Giles, Johnson, 1987; Fishman, 1991). Depending on the support or discouragement received (Giles, Bourhis, Taylor, 1977), students' practices vary across domains of use – specific combinations of interlocutors, settings, and topics (Fishman, 1964) – ranging from language loss to forms of stable bilingualism.

A central concern of this study is the role of language policies (LPs) in shaping linguistic and identity trajectories. While language maintenance often depends on family transmission, without institutional support, a shift toward the dominant language tends to occur by the second or third generation (Fishman, Hofman, 1966; Portes, Rumbault, 1990; Fishman, 1991). Ultimately, it is the state – not families – that is responsible for implementing public policies, such as language-in-education policies (LIEPs), to support linguistic diversity (Gazzola, 2023).

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 offers a theoretical overview of language policy in the EU and Italy, particularly regarding immigrant languages. Section 3 examines

[1] Università Ca' Foscori Venezia.

the presence of students of Arab origin in Italy, followed by an overview of the North-Eastern context in Section 4. Section 5 outlines the methodology. Section 6 presents and discusses the results, and Section 7 concludes with final reflections.

2. Language policy and multilingualism in Italy

In recent years, the concept of language policy (LP) has assumed a plurality of meanings and manifestations, leading to a certain degree of conceptual ambiguity that complicates attempts at a unified definition (Johnson, 2023). A central distinction within the field lies between approaches that subsume both language practices and planning under the umbrella of LP – as articulated by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) and Spolsky (2004, 2009) – and more restrictive definitions that conceptualize LP as a form of public policy designed and implemented by institutions, as proposed by Gazzola (2023).

According to the former, LP comprises three interrelated dimensions: language practices, language ideologies (i.e., beliefs and ideas), and language management (Spolsky, 2004, 2009). Within this framework, political agency is not limited to institutions: individuals, too, exert influence over language use in everyday contexts. For instance, everyday language practices are not neutral, as they are subject to what Martín Rojo, Moustaoui and Ortega (2025) define as "language surveillance" – a pervasive process through which speakers' linguistic behaviours are constantly observed, evaluated, and regulated in interaction. By contrast, Gazzola (2023: 44) foregrounds the role of public authorities, defining language policy as «a public policy aimed at addressing a social, economic, political or organisational issue related to the management of linguistic diversity in a given territory». Although narrower in scope, this definition facilitates a more direct analysis of institutional interventions in the governance of multilingualism.

Rather than adjudicating between these perspectives – one privileging institutional, top-down approaches, and the other emphasising bottom-up language practices – this article adopts an integrative framework that considers both formal interventions and their effects on the language attitudes, behaviours, and practices of individuals and social groups. In this view, LP analysis must account for how public policies shape everyday life by enabling or constraining the intergenerational transmission and maintenance of languages.

Drawing on Gazzola's (2023) model, the effectiveness of LP may also be assessed in terms of its impact on real-world communicative practices, particularly in relation to equitable access to services, education, and information. Research in sociolinguistics (Caldas, 2012; Spolsky, 2012; Curdt-Christiansen, 2013; King, Fogle, 2013) has demonstrated that even ostensibly private decisions – such as those concerning language use within the family – are deeply embedded in broader social, political, and economic structures. In contexts where a language lacks institutional support or prestige, its intergenerational transmission becomes increasingly difficult (Caldas, 2012). Dominant language ideologies, as Heller (2007) notes, are determinant in constructing symbolic hierarchies among languages, legitimating some as resources while rendering others invisible, problematic, or redundant. These hierarchies are reproduced not only through institutional policies but also through everyday interactions, where speakers who deviate from dominant linguistic norms may be subject to correction, evaluation, or exclusion, reinforcing unequal access to social recognition and participation (Martín Rojo, Moustaoui, Ortega, 2025). As Iannàccaro (2020) points out, these LP dynamics operate across varying degrees of intentionality: even implicit or non-conscious efforts to regulate language behaviour may become effective when they align with widely shared social values

and beliefs, ultimately shaping language practices in ways comparable to explicit policy measures.

2.1. *European and Italian Language Policy Framework*

Within this theoretical framework, the Italian case – and, more specifically, that of North-Eastern Italy – offers a valuable lens for analysing how LP may reproduce or contest such hierarchies. Italian language legislation – defined here as «the set of laws and legally relevant measures issued by the state and other public actors at the supranational, national, or local level concerning linguistic matters» (translation from Orioles, 2010) – operates within the broader architecture of European Union (EU) policies. These policies ostensibly promote multilingualism and the valorisation of linguistic and cultural diversity (European Parliament, 2024), establishing general principles to be adapted by member states in line with their legal traditions and models of citizenship (Wodak, Boukala, 2015).

Nevertheless, despite official endorsements of linguistic diversity, the status of languages within the EU remains clearly hierarchical (Extra, Gorter, 2008). English retains its dominance as a lingua franca even post-Brexit, followed by the official national languages of member states, then by regionally and historically recognised minority languages, and lastly by immigrant languages (Extra, Yağmur, 2011). This hierarchy could be further nuanced by considering the geopolitical and economic capital of the countries in which these languages are spoken. Crucially, this stratified model fails to reflect the actual sociolinguistic landscape of contemporary Europe, where many immigrant languages – such as Arabic, Chinese, and Turkish – are spoken by larger number of people than several constitutionally protected regional languages. This hierarchical structuring reflects a broader paradox identified by Iannàccaro (2020): while linguistic diversity is objectively decreasing due to the erosion of smaller languages, it is simultaneously increasing in the lived experience of individuals, particularly in urban and migratory contexts. This tension contributes to ambivalent policy responses, oscillating between the protection of threatened languages and the perceived need to regulate or contain linguistic diversity.

Moreover, such hierarchies are not only structural but also enacted through everyday practices of "normalisation", whereby certain linguistic behaviours are constructed as legitimate while others are marginalised, often leading speakers to conform to dominant monolingual norms in order to avoid social sanction (Martín Rojo, Moustaoui, Ortega, 2025). Beyond questions of formal recognition, European and national policies often frame the linguistic integration of migrants through an assimilationist lens. For instance, EU initiatives emphasise the need to «promote the linguistic integration of children with a migrant background and to establish quality and comparability criteria for language tests and their assessment» (*ibidem*). These policies construct acquisition of the national language as a precondition for full civic and legal participation, including naturalisation. However, such an approach conflicts with one of the EU's own stated objectives: that «every European citizen should master two other languages in addition to their mother tongue» (*ibidem*).

A striking inconsistency emerges when the focus shifts from foreign language acquisition to the preservation of heritage languages spoken by individuals with non-European migratory backgrounds. Despite their growing presence, such languages receive neither institutional guarantees nor sustained pedagogical support at the European level. In fact, immigrant languages are explicitly excluded from the scope of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which defines eligible languages as those «traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form

a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population; and different from the official language(s) of that State; it does not include either dialects of the official language(s) of the State or the languages of migrants» (Council of Europe, 1992). This exclusion reinforces a normative dichotomy between legitimate and non-legitimate languages, thus promoting a unidirectional, assimilationist vision of integration in which multilingualism is endorsed only insofar as it serves economic productivity or cultural heritage – excluding languages associated with new migrant populations from the sphere of linguistic rights.

This EU policy landscape provides a useful entry point into the Italian context, which largely mirrors these dynamics. The Italian education system remains predominantly monolingual, with Italian as the exclusive language of instruction. English is introduced as a compulsory foreign language in the early stages of schooling, followed by a second EU language – typically French, Spanish, or German – at the lower secondary level (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, 2010). By contrast, widely spoken languages such as Romanian, or others heritage languages of students from migrant backgrounds, are rarely included in formal curricula. Their transmission is generally confined to the domestic sphere or to community-led and cultural association initiatives.

Moreover, since the late 1990s and early 2000s, Italian LP has become increasingly politicised. The promotion of regional minority languages and the constitutional designation of Italian as the national language have often been deployed as rhetorical tools during electoral campaigns, yet frequently lack corresponding legislative clarity or concrete implementation (Pizzoli, 2018). As a result, Italian LP tends to replicate the shortcomings of its European counterpart, embodying what Shohamy (2006) terms *covert policy* or *policy of non-intervention*. Iannàccaro (2020) describes this position as a *laissez-faire* approach, a seemingly neutral stance that reflects the second principle of thermodynamics, whereby large languages expand and smaller ones diminish. In this context, "size" should be understood as synonymous with status rather than with the number of speakers. In practice, this results in the systematic exclusion of immigrant languages from public education, reflecting a broader ideological orientation toward assimilation that is imbued with postcolonial residues.

3. ARAB STUDENTS IN ITALY

The sociolinguistic situation of the Arab community in Italy has recently attracted scholarly attention, with studies adopting a variety of approaches and methodologies. Among the most recent contributions, Abdelsayed and Bellinzona (2024a, 2024b) conducted a quantitative investigation into language maintenance and language attitudes among Arabic speakers in Italy. Their findings suggest that intergenerational transmission of Arabic primarily takes place within the family context. However, the absence of adequate institutional and educational support often impedes the development of comprehensive language skills – especially in reading and writing – both in regional varieties and in Standard Arabic. Other studies, including those by Salem (2017), Golfetto (2020), and Salvaggio (2021), have similarly focused on the educational domain, largely through quantitative methodologies. Notably, Salvaggio's study – at the time of writing, the only one conducted in one of the regions addressed in this research (Friuli-Venezia Giulia) – also highlights the challenges associated with heritage language literacy.

Building on this general overview, the present study examines the ethnolinguistic vitality (Giles, Bourhis, Taylor, 1977) of Arabic in Italy through the analysis of demographic data, which are key to understanding the sociolinguistic dynamics of a given

context. The focus then narrows to the north-eastern regions of Italy, an area that remains comparatively underexplored in existing literature.

According to data published by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (2024), as of January 1, 2024, approximately 720,615 individuals residing in Italy hold citizenship from an Arab country. This figure corresponds to 1.2% of the total population and 14.01% of the foreign resident population. Among these individuals, 95.24% originate from North African countries (Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia), with Moroccan citizens forming the largest group (57.6%).

In terms of territorial distribution, the majority of Arab citizens reside in Northern Italy (66.01%), with a breakdown between the North-West (43.04% across Liguria, Lombardy, Piedmont, and Aosta Valley) and the North-East (22.96% across Emilia-Romagna, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Veneto, and Trentino-Alto Adige). The three regions in which this study was carried out – Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, and Friuli-Venezia Giulia – rank second, fourth, and fifteenth respectively in terms of number of Arab citizens. These regional distributions reflect diverse migration waves, which vary in timing, modes of entry, and underlying motivations, including economic migration, family reunification, and requests for international protection from individuals fleeing conflict zones (Schmidt di Friedberg, 1998). These diverse migratory trajectories are mirrored in the school population, which includes both first- and second-generation students with heterogeneous linguistic, cultural, and identity profiles.

Focusing specifically on the school population, data from the Ministry of Education (Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito, 2023, 2024) reveal that 20.09% of students without Italian citizenship are of Arab origin. Despite the considerable internal variation within the Arabic language, this group shares a common affiliation with the Arabic macro-linguistic area. Arabic can therefore be considered the most widely spoken heritage language in Italian schools. While Romanian and Albanian nationals outnumber Arab citizens overall, this demographic pattern does not hold within the student population: Romanian students account for 16.97% and Albanian students for 12.97% of foreign students. In the three regions examined in this study, the presence of Arab-background students closely mirrors national figures, reaching 21.2% overall.

It is important to note, however, that these data are primarily based on citizenship – a criterion that presents significant limitations when attempting to capture the complexity of who may be identified as Arab. Similar issues arise in relation to other ethnolinguistic categories. As highlighted by Melotti (1998), Schmidt di Friedberg (1998), and Iazzetta (forthcoming), there is a need to adopt more nuanced classification criteria that move beyond legal status. These should take into account dimensions of identity and actual language use, thereby offering a more comprehensive and multifaceted perspective on the categorisation and lived experiences of Arab communities in Italy.

4. NORTH-EASTERN ITALY AND THE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS

North-Eastern Italy – which includes the regions of Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and Trentino-Alto Adige – is a geographically diverse and culturally layered area where sociolinguistic and sociopolitical dynamics converge in ways that are relevant to processes of immigrant integration. These territories, while unified by strong regional identities and a shared legacy of both emigration and immigration, also present distinct characteristics that significantly influence the linguistic adaptation and social inclusion of migrants and their descendants.

In such a context, local linguistic varieties are not only markers of identity and cultural heritage, but also active components of social interaction, including in relationships with

newly arrived populations. In Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia, regional languages and dialects such as Venetian, Friulian, Slovene, and –albeit to a lesser extent – German, remain widely spoken, socially relevant and officially recognised (Regione Autonoma Friuli-Venezia Giulia, 2007). These languages coexist with Italian and continue to be used in both informal and formal contexts, rural and urban alike. Friuli-Venezia Giulia, in particular, constitutes a notable example of institutional multilingualism, with state recognition and legal protections in place for Friulian, Slovene, and German (Marcato, 2021). In Emilia-Romagna, although local dialects are less dominant, they still carry symbolic weight and cultural value (Foresti, 2009; Nadiani, 2009), though their use is more uneven across territories.

The emergence of increasingly multilingual communities due to migration adds another layer of complexity to the region's linguistic fabric. Standard Italian continues to occupy a dominant role, especially within schools and language policies aimed at integration. Since the 1990s, North-Eastern Italy has seen substantial immigration flows, facilitated by a local economy oriented toward agriculture, industry, and service sectors (Cibella, 2002; Ambrosini, 2020). This demographic transformation has positioned the area as a key site for studying how schools and local institutions manage the integration of children and youth with migratory backgrounds, particularly through language.

Nevertheless, Italy's educational system faces persistent obstacles in its approach to multilingualism. Training for teachers in intercultural language pedagogy remains inconsistent and geographically patchy, and programmes supporting Italian as L2 acquisition are often sporadic, inadequately resourced, or unevenly distributed (Favaro, 2018). Consequently, heritage languages like Arabic are frequently undervalued in school settings, reinforcing a model of assimilation at the expense of recognising students' multilingual competencies (Extra, Gorter, 2008).

The broader political and social climate in North-Eastern Italy adds further challenges to the integration process. Numerous studies have highlighted how migration has become a politicised and often securitised issue in parts of this area, particularly where right-wing or populist parties hold political power (Basso, 2010). This trend has been reflected in the proliferation of municipal measures aimed at controlling or limiting immigrants' access to public services, particularly in northern and north-eastern municipalities (Perocco, 2010; Vitale, 2012). Veneto has been a stronghold for the Lega (formerly Lega Nord), whose political messaging has frequently drawn on a binary between local cultural identity and external difference (Guolo, 2002). In Friuli-Venezia Giulia, the region's geopolitical position on the north-eastern border of the country has contributed to the adoption of stricter immigration control measures, such as those codified in Regional Law no. 9 of 03/2023 (Regione Autonoma Friuli-Venezia Giulia, 2023). Although Emilia-Romagna is generally viewed as more progressive in terms of its social and educational policies, the region contains local exceptions. For instance, in one of the city where this research was conducted, Ferrara – governed since 2019 by a centre-right administration – has witnessed a shift toward positions more aligned with the political climates of Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

5. METHODOLOGY

This ethnographic study was conducted between April and December 2024, with fieldwork in schools beginning in September. The recruitment process faced challenges due to the academic calendar, including summer breaks and busy periods at the start and end of terms, as well as the availability of key stakeholders such as school principals and teachers. Before data collection, signed parental consent forms for minors were collected.

Once ethical and bureaucratic procedures were completed, several meetings took place, allowing the researcher to explore the topic using different methods.

The study employs a mixed-methods approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative techniques to capture a nuanced understanding of the linguistic and social experiences of Arab-origin students. Quantitative data were gathered through an anonymous, paper-based questionnaire administered to 102 students; the questionnaire, originally drafted in Italian and later translated into Arabic, was developed according to Spolsky's (2004) language policy model and drew on instruments used in previous research examining language attitudes and maintenance (Abdelsayed, Bellinzona, 2024; Bier, Lasagabaster, 2022; Iazzetta, 2024). The questionnaire, comprising 26 questions that probed themes ranging from sociodemographic background to language practices, attitudes, valorisation, and the role of education in both the home country and Italy. It featured various question types including Likert scales, multiple-choice, and open-ended formats, with responses tailored to include the most common languages spoken in Italy and relevant Arab Mediterranean countries, while using terms like "Italian dialect" and "Arabic dialect" for brevity yet allowing for additional specification. The questionnaire was administered during regular class hours with teacher approval; the researcher introduced the study, explained its objectives, and provided students the option to complete the survey in either Italian or Arabic, although only a small minority (15 students) chose the Arabic version, with most completing it in under 30 minutes.

Following the questionnaire, students were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews – lasting between five and eight minutes – that revisited the themes of the survey to deepen understanding of their identity perceptions, sense of belonging, and bilingual or plurilingual management strategies; here, although students could freely utilize their entire linguistic repertoire, only two opted to use Arabic while the researcher conducted the interviews in Italian. Additionally, in three instances, a focus group approach was adopted to both mitigate time limitations and to contrast group representations with individual accounts.

6. ANALYSIS

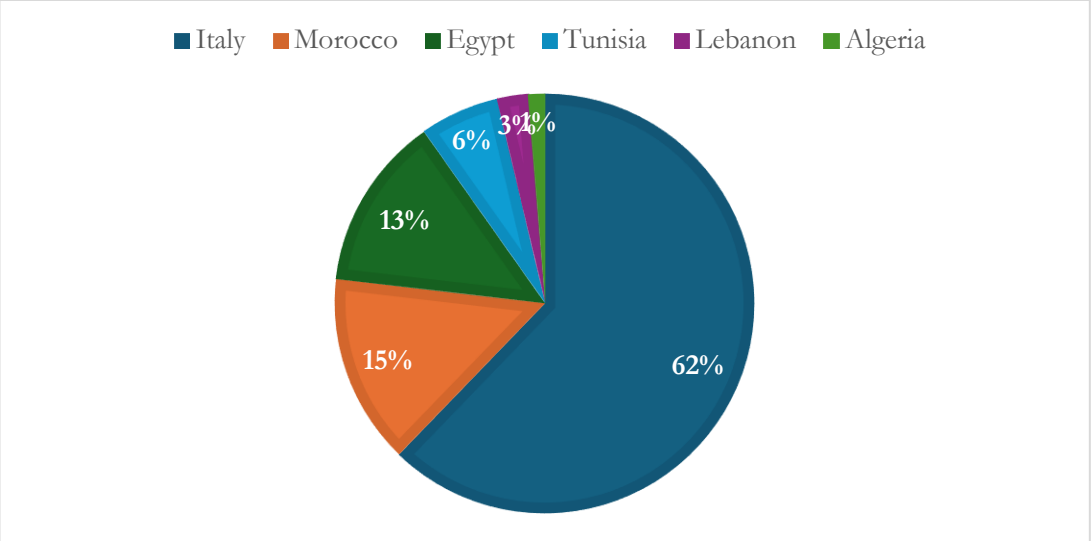
From an analytical perspective, the data were examined using a thematic approach (Clarke, Braun, 2017), which structured the interpretation of materials collected through questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. This method enabled the identification of recurrent themes and patterns that reveal how language practices, attitudes, and policies shape the sociolinguistic profiles of Arab-origin students in Italy. The quantitative data served as the foundation of the analysis and were later enriched by selected excerpts from interviews and fieldnotes gathered through observations.

6.1. *Sociodemographic data*

The research sample included 102 Arab-origin students enrolled across different educational levels – primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary – in North-Eastern Italy. The participating schools were located in the provinces of Ferrara (Emilia-Romagna), Padua, Venice (Veneto), and Udine (Friuli-Venezia Giulia). Students ranged in age and school level from the third year of primary to the final year of upper secondary, with a concentration (67.63%) between the third year of lower secondary and the third year of upper secondary school. The average age was 14.2 years. In terms of gender, 61% of participants identified as female and 39% as male.

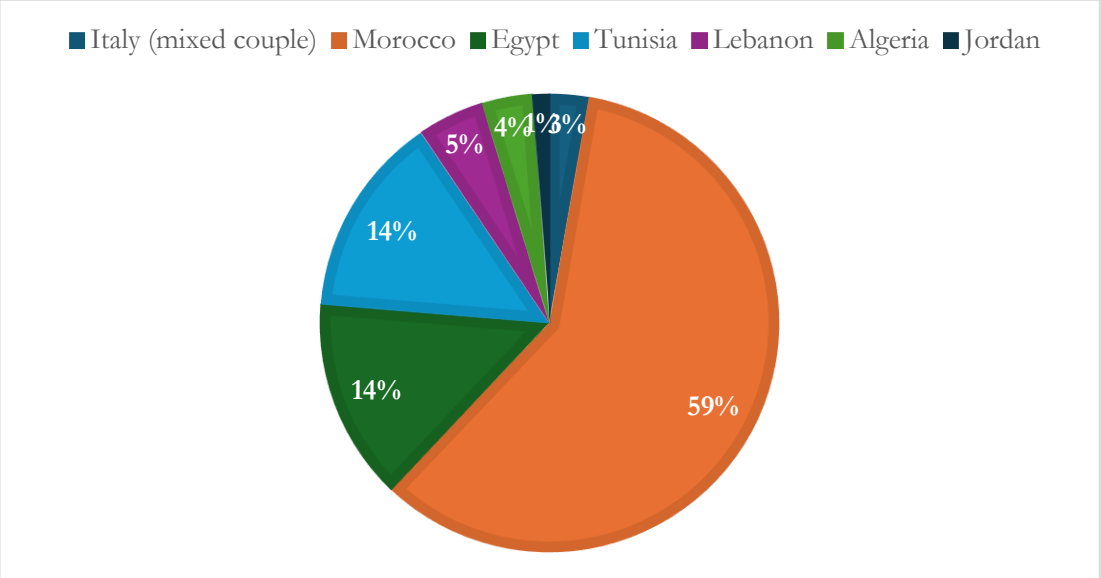
Participants were initially identified with the help of school staff, based on their own or their parents' country of origin. More than half (62.1%) of the students were born in Italy, while the remainder were born abroad, largely reflecting broader regional and national migration patterns, particularly with a prevalence of students born in North-African countries such as Morocco, Egypt, and Tunisia (Graph 1).

Graph 1. *Country of birth of the participants*



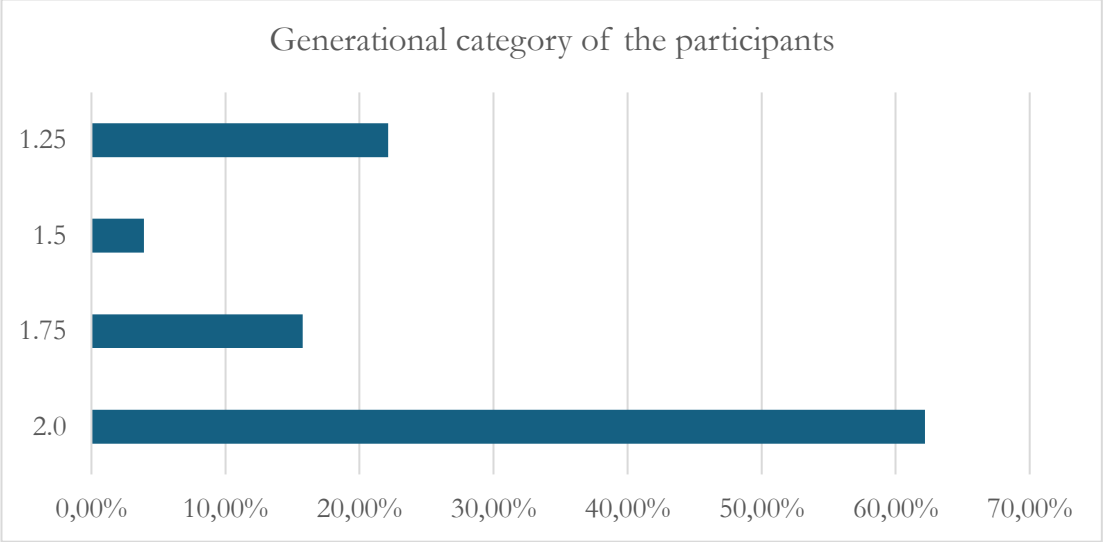
A small portion of participants (2.84%) were children of mixed couples, with one parent holding Italian citizenship, while the vast majority (97.5%) had two parents born in an Arab country. In almost all cases (98.97%), both parents came from the same country. A similar trend appears when considering grandparents' birthplaces: for nearly all participants, these coincided with the parents' country of birth, showing strong generational continuity. Only one exception was recorded, in which a participant's paternal grandfather was born in France while the father was born in Algeria (Graph 2).

Graph 2. *Country of birth of the participants' parents*



To assess participants' potential prior schooling in their country of origin, especially among those born outside Italy, the analysis drew on questionnaire responses and the migration generation model by Rumbaut (1997), as adapted to the Italian context by Salvaggio (2021). This framework identifies categories based on age of arrival and schooling: Generation 2.0 includes those born in Italy; Generation 1.75 includes those born abroad but who arrived before starting school; Generation 1.5 includes those who attended school in their country of origin between ages 6 and 12; and Generation 1.25 includes those who arrived after age 13, having completed part of their education abroad (Graph 3).

Graph 3. *Generational category of the participants*



Most students (77.95%) felt into Generations 2.0 and 1.75, meaning they received all their schooling in Italy. The remaining 22.05% had educational experiences in their country of origin, with 3.92% in Generation 1.5 and 18.13% in Generation 1.25. These sociodemographic patterns provided an essential interpretive lens for the following analysis, highlighting how students' linguistic repertoires and practices were closely shaped by their country of birth, parental origins, and time spent in the country of origin.

6.2. *Linguistic repertoire and language practices*

The linguistic repertoire and language practices of the participants were initially explored through the question: "Which language(s) did you learn first?" (author's translation). The data offer a detailed picture, highlighting the centrality of the Arabic dialect (47.51%) as the first language acquired. This finding underscores the crucial role of the family environment in language acquisition processes – not only as a privileged site for the intergenerational transmission of the heritage language, but also as a primary context for daily exposure and use (Montrul, 2016). This result is particularly significant considering that additional participants reported having learned Arabic in general (15.85%) or Standard Arabic (3.62%) as their first language. Others indicated that, alongside the Arabic dialect (12.19%) or Arabic (1.21%), they also acquired Italian as one of their first languages. In total, 80.38% of participants indicated an Arabic variety as their

first acquired language, while 17.07% cited only Italian or other languages (Tamazight 1.21%, English 1.21%).

These findings must be contextualised in relation to the distinction between language and dialect, as well as the participants' meta- and sociolinguistic awareness. Given their young age and level of linguistic competence, several participants displayed some confusion between these two categories. However, this uncertainty can itself be seen as meaningful, as it reflects divergent conceptions and perceptions of Arabic, as noted by one participant during a focus group (Excerpt 1):

> Excerpt 1. Student in Focus Group 2: *Darija non è una lingua, per me è più facile dell'arabo standard perchè è la lingua che parlo sempre, mentre l'arabo si impara a scuola.* (Darija is not a language, for me it's easier than Standard Arabic because it's the language I always speak, while Arabic is learned at school).

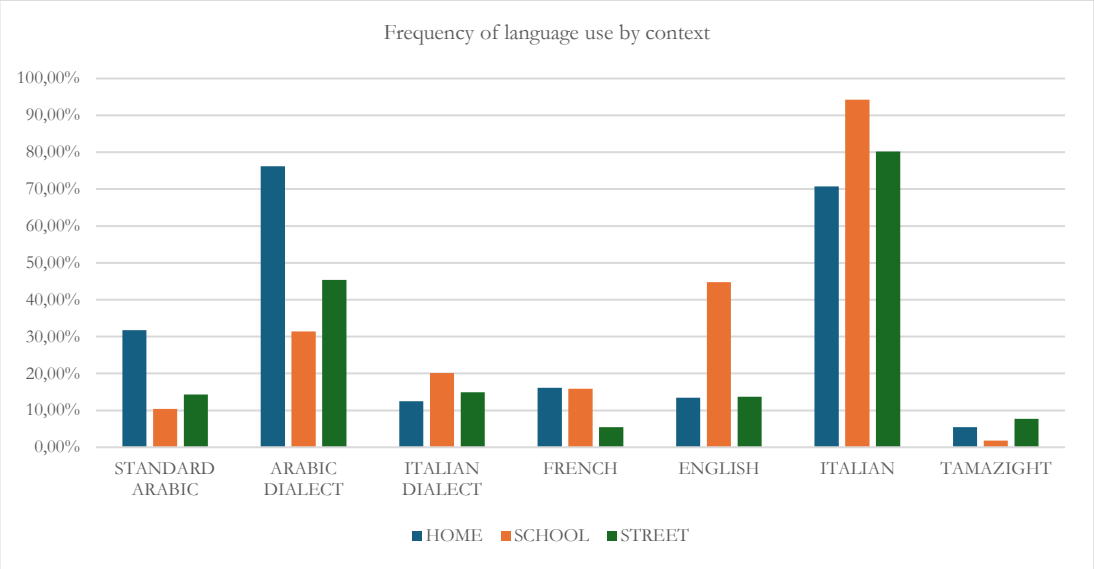
This reflection prompted a broader discussion among participants about the very concept of *learning a language*, raising questions about what it means to acquire a mother tongue. A key distinction emerged between the implicit, natural acquisition of a language in family and daily contexts, and the formal act of learning a language, which was more closely associated with school-based education or foreign languages. As Ochs and Schieffelin (2008) argue, language acquisition is shaped by social, cultural, and educational practices; children may perceive their family language as something *natural* rather than something formally acquired.

This phenomenon must also be understood within the framework of Arabic diglossia, where Standard Arabic is linked to prestige and formality, while the dialect functions as the home language and is often seen as *inferior*. This issue has been explored from early works by Ferguson (1959) to more recent contributions by Ech-Charfi (2023), both of whom emphasise how the prestige gap between standard and dialectal forms affects language perceptions and attitudes – factors often shaped by educational experience. The students involved in the focus groups belong to the 2.0 and 1.75 generations, meaning they were either born in Italy or arrived at preschool age and thus did not attend school in their country of origin. While they were aware that Standard Arabic is taught in schools in Arab countries, they had either not had the opportunity to study it or had only encountered it intermittently in Italy.

The frequency of use of participants' first language(s) was notably high: 84.25% reported always using their mother tongue. This suggests favourable conditions for language maintenance, further supported by the fact that no respondent indicated never using their first language(s). An analysis of the frequency of use of various linguistic resources shows that the mother tongue was predominantly used in familial and community settings, with its use varying according to context and interlocutors.

As illustrated in Graph 4, the most frequently used language was typically shaped by geographical context. Italian emerged as the dominant language in non-family environments. Here, dominance can also be interpreted through the lens of "language surveillance" (Martín Rojo, Moustaoui, Ortega, 2025), whereby more formal contexts such as school operates as a space in which certain linguistic practices – notably the use of Italian – are implicitly enforced as the norm, while others are marginalised or discouraged. Within the family, however, Arabic dialects remained the primary languages of communication. In school – a central focus of this research – Italian was the dominant language, used by 94.21% of respondents. Nonetheless, other languages were also used in this context: English ranked second (44.81%), followed by Arabic (41.77%), which included both Standard Arabic (10.36%) and Arabic dialects (31.41%).

Graph 4. *Frequency of language use by context*



Another noteworthy finding concerns the use of Italian dialects, with 20.12% of participants reporting their use (without specifying which variety). This result may seem surprising in light of the dominant ideology of the standard language (Milroy, 2001), which has historically framed dialect use in schools as negative (Bourdieu, 1991). Yet this use was corroborated by classroom observations and interview data, as illustrated in the following student comment:

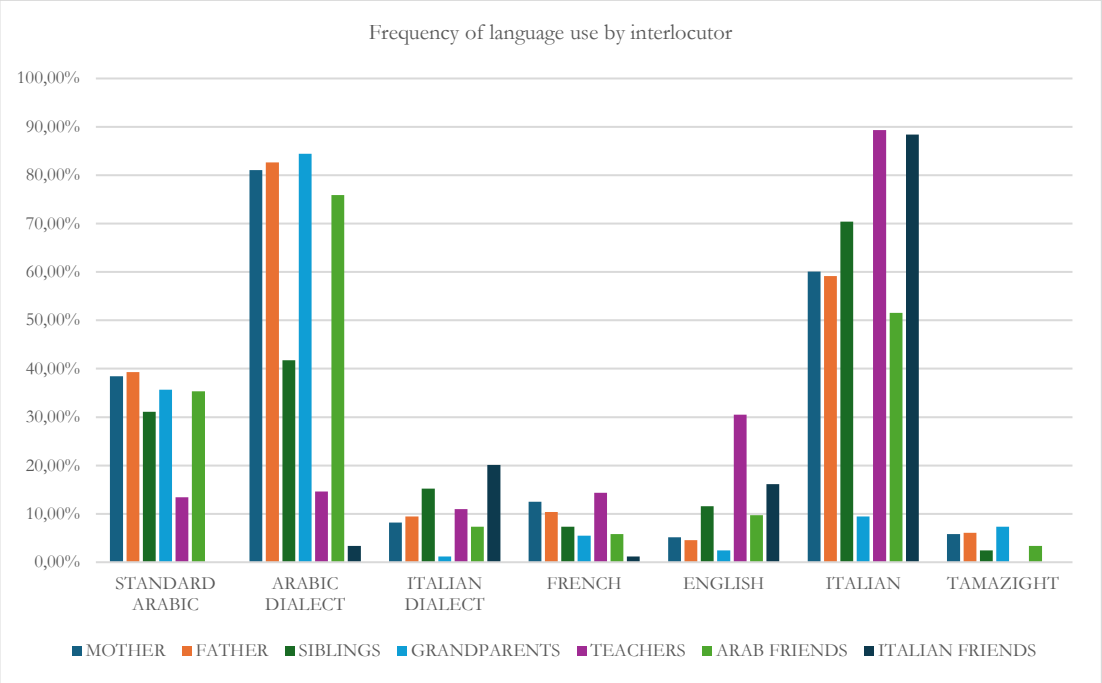
> Excerpt 2. Student in Interview 22: *I prof parlano spesso in dialetto friulano, soprattutto quando si arrabbiano.*
> (Teachers often speak in Friulian dialect, especially when they get angry).

This observation underscores how the linguistic and identity-related specificities of the North-Eastern Italian territory – particularly Friuli Venezia Giulia – are reflected in school environments. As noted by Salvaggio (2019) in a study involving Afghan and Pakistani students in Carnia, and confirmed by several participants in this study, it is not so much the active use of Friulian dialect by students with a migrant background that stands out, but rather their recognition and partial understanding of dialectal terms used by teachers. As shown in Graph 5, language use between students and teachers largely reflects prior data, with Italian being the primary medium (89.32%), followed by English (30.48%).

Arabic, including both Standard Arabic (13.41%) and dialects (14.63%), was represented in the data – but this was influenced by participants who considered their prior schooling in their countries of origin. Direct classroom observations and interviews provided clear evidence that Arabic-speaking teachers were extremely rare in the Italian school system. One Moroccan-born student reported:

> Excerpt 3. Student in Interview 15: *Non ho mai incontrato un prof (in Italia) che parlasse in arabo, magari in francese … e mi aiutava perché io lo so un po'.*
> (I've never had a teacher (in Italy) who spoke Arabic – maybe French… and he/she helped me because I know it a bit).

Graph 5. *Frequency of language use by interlocutor*



As previously noted regarding the use of Standard and dialectal Arabic in different communicative contexts, Standard Arabic was not widely used among students and shows limited variation based on the interlocutor (mother, father, siblings, grandparents, Arab friends). By contrast, Arabic dialects were generally used more frequently with all these figures – except siblings. Among siblings, usage dropped significantly (41.76%). This finding invites reflection on sociolinguistic dynamics linked to age, setting, and identity. For example, the reduced use of Arabic dialects with siblings may be attributed to the fact that, having grown up in a context where Italian dominates, siblings often share experiences primarily conducted in Italian. The school context could play a central role in this shift, functioning as a site of linguistic socialisation and contributing to processes of language shift (Rindstedt, Aronsson, 2002). This trend underscores the essential role of parents and grandparents in maintaining the heritage language.

> Excerpt 4. Student in Interview 4: *A casa parlo darija, con mia sorella più italiano, con mio papà più arabo, ma con mia mamma quasi solo darija, a volte mischiando, anche con italiano e francese.*
> (At home I speak Darija, with my sister, more Italian, with my dad, more Arabic, but with my mom, mostly Darija, sometimes mixing, even with Italian and French).

This pattern changed significantly in interactions with Arab friends, where dialectal Arabic was the predominant medium of communication. In these interactions, language use extended beyond communication to function as a marker of identity. The choice to speak the heritage language enables socialisation and signals membership in a shared community (Fuller, 2007). This is especially relevant in multicultural contexts, where language loyalty can reinforce collective identity (Gumperz, 2009). When friends share a similar geographical origin – such as a North African background – the dialect serves as a cohesive force, fostering mutual understanding and solidarity. Even in cases where different varieties were spoken (e.g., Moroccan vs. Tunisian Arabic), speakers often

adopted accommodation strategies to maintain communication and a shared sense of belonging.

While Arabic dialects served as a powerful tool for identity-building and cohesion among Arab friends, this did not imply that Italian was absent. As with sibling interactions, code-switching – i.e., alternating between two or more languages based on context, topic, or emotional tone – was common. Nearly all participants (97.56%) reported engaging in language mixing, with the home identified as the most frequent setting for these practices (40.23%). The most alternated languages were Italian and Arabic dialects (80.48%). One student remarked:

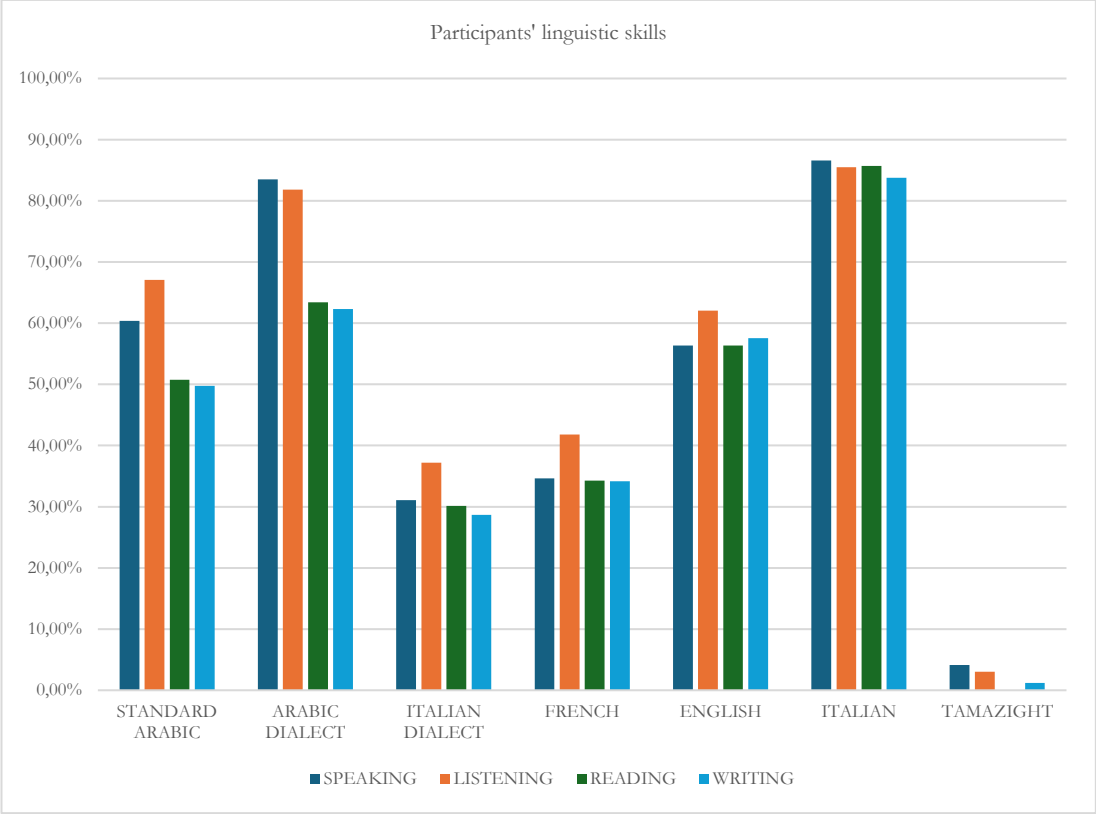
> Excerpt 5. Student in Interview 12: *Mescolo sempre, sia con i miei amici arabi ma più con mio fratello … poi dipende da cosa stiamo parlando, ma alcune parole mi vengono meglio in arabo, riesco a esprimermi meglio. A casa sono io a volte che … è lei (la mamma) che mi chiede cosa ho detto in italiano e lo spiego in arabo. Mentre a scuola solo Italiano.*
> (I always mix, with my Arab friends but even more with my brother… it depends on what we're talking about, but some words come more easily to me in Arabic – I can express myself better. At home I sometimes... it's my mom who asks what I said in Italian, and I explain in Arabic. At school, only Italian).

These linguistic practices were often perceived by the speakers as spontaneous or simply functional. Similarly, Moussaid (2022) shows that Italian–Arabic bilinguals frequently engage in code-switching and code-mixing with a relatively low level of metalinguistic awareness, often without explicitly recognising when or how they alternate between linguistic systems. However, their frequency in domestic spaces suggests that bi- and plurilingualism was more openly accepted in settings where restrictive language policies are absent – unlike schools or public spaces, which tend toward monolingualism. The home thus emerged as a key *translanguaging space* (Li Wei, 2011), where speakers enjoyed the freedom to draw from their full linguistic repertoires to achieve effective communication and negotiate their identities.

The analysis of participants' plurilingual repertoires was complemented by a self-assessment of linguistic proficiency across four skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. As shown in Graph 6, participants reported relatively high and similar levels of proficiency in both Italian and Arabic dialects for speaking and listening. However, this pattern did not extend to reading and writing, where Italian stands out as the language with the highest self-assessed proficiency. Although Arabic dialects still ranked prominently, there was a marked decline in reported reading and writing skills compared to oral competencies. Standard Arabic and English displayed comparable self-ratings overall, with Standard Arabic slightly ahead in speaking and listening, and English in reading and writing.

Disparities in language proficiency across different skills were shaped by a range of contextual factors, particularly the participants' migratory trajectories and their exposure to each language in specific settings. Notably, prolonged exposure to the dominant language in everyday contexts appeared to significantly enhance proficiency, especially given that 77.95% of participants have spent more time in Italy than in an Arab country. This trend was further reinforced by formal language instruction in school, which has played an important role in supporting the development of Italian.

Graph 6. *Participants' linguistic skills*



6.3. *Perceptions, attitudes, and language maintenance*

As noted in Section 6.2, research participants often exhibited a particular understanding of the Arabic language, frequently not differentiating between the dialectal variety and Standard Arabic. Questionnaire data revealed that 20.76% of respondents did not perceive significant differences between these two varieties. More importantly, these perceptions reflected distinct identity and symbolic associations linked to each variety. The dialectal variety was strongly connected to the family domain (76.82%) and the country of origin (51.21%), whereas the more generic term *Arabic* invoked a collective, supralocal dimension tied to Arab identity (52.43%) and, even more prominently, Muslim religious identity (65.85%). Notably, fewer respondents explicitly associated Standard Arabic with these values. This may be explained by the fact that the term *Standard Arabic* is primarily a construct of Western linguistic discourse rather than a commonly used category in Arabic-speaking contexts. This aligns with the view of Arabic as a linguistic continuum (Hary, 1996), encompassing a range of varieties from informal dialects to formal Standard and Classical Arabic. Qualitative data confirmed this tendency: interviewees used the term *Standard Arabic* mainly when prompted by the researcher, as illustrated in the following excerpts:

> Excerpt 6. Researcher in Interview 18: *Conosci l'arabo standard?*
> (Do you know Standard Arabic?)
> Student in Interview 18: *Arabo standard intende quello che si scrive? Sì, un po' so leggere, poco scrivere.*

(Standard Arabic means the one used in writing? Yes, I can read a little, but not write much).

In more neutral contexts, participants referred simply to *Arabic*, underlining its symbolic and communal significance:

Excerpt 7. Researcher in Interview 16: *Cosa studiavi alla scuola Coranica? Anche la lingua?*
(What did you study at Quranic school? Also the language?).
Student in Interview 16: *Sì, arabo, mi insegnavano il Corano e un po' la lingua, la grammatica.*
(Yes, Arabic, they taught me the Quran and a bit of the language, the grammar).

Perceptions and attitudes toward different Arabic varieties were thus central to understanding language maintenance in migratory settings (Zhang, Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). The data suggested that Standard Arabic – particularly in terms of reading and writing – was the variety with the greatest educational need. Even more telling is that 84.14% of participants viewed knowledge of Arabic as advantageous, especially regarding employment opportunities (70.73%). This supports Blackledge and Pavlenko's (2001) argument that minority languages are more likely to be maintained intergenerationally when they are seen as valuable for social integration or economic mobility.

Given the participants' young age, it was important to explore parental practices supporting Arabic maintenance, as reported by students. Almost all parents (97.56%) wished their children to retain Arabic proficiency. Common strategies occured mainly in private or community settings, including daily conversational use (68.29%), participation in religious activities (47.56%), and listening to Arabic music (30.48%). Furthermore, 65.85% of participants have attended Arabic language schools. Among these, 40.24% received religious instruction (e.g., Quranic schools), whereas 25.61% attended non-religious Arabic courses. Religious instruction predominantly focuses on Standard Arabic through reading and memorisation of sacred texts, with materials largely religious in nature. While these practices help preserve Arabic, they largely remain confined to private and community domains, often disconnected from public spheres such as mainstream schools or institutional settings.

This separation of private and public domains is reflected in an unequal distribution of language skills: immersed in an educational system favouring the dominant language, students typically develop stronger Italian proficiency compared to their heritage language. Such asymmetry may hinder full bilingual development and, over time, contribute to the gradual erosion of the minority language (Edwards, 2009). The lack of institutional support for Arabic further limits its formal use, diminishing its prestige and intergenerational transmission. These linguistic dynamics extend beyond language competence, potentially undermining cultural identity formation and communication with older generations (Tannenbaum, Howie, 2002).

The final phase of data collection – comprising questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups – explored students' experiences in the Italian educational system, focusing on impacts for migrant pupils, particularly of Arab origin. Most students (64.63%) reported no major difficulties in schooling. Among those who did, the primary challenges were related to Italian language proficiency and cultural differences between the country of origin and Italian schools (both cited by 17.07%).

Despite generally smooth educational pathways, a majority (69.15%) felt Italian schools could do more to support and value students of Arab origin. This suggests that

insufficient recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity may lead to symbolic exclusion even when overt learning difficulties are not apparent. Perceived discrimination or negative stereotyping emerged in some narratives, as illustrated below:

> Excerpt 8. Student in Interview 7: *Penso che siamo visti in maniera un po' troppo… ehm…maleducati, che non abbiamo rispetto per gli occidentali, ma non è così, ci sono anche studenti italiani maleducati.*
> (I think we're seen as a bit too... um... rude, like we don't respect Westerners, but that's not true, there are also rude Italian students).

This perception aligns with broader ethnic and group identity processes often reinforced in migration contexts through intra-group solidarity (Berry, 2011). Narratives indicated entrenched stereotypes affecting school experiences, contributing to marginalisation and negative cultural self-perceptions. Regarding possible interventions, many students emphasised the need for greater cultural recognition: 60.97% supported the introduction of lessons on Arab history and culture, compared to 29.26% favouring Arabic language instruction, and 25.61% advocating for teachers capable of using Arabic.

The importance of cultural representation also emerged strongly in focus groups:

> Excerpt 9. Student in focus group 3: *Più che la lingua, la religione. Ad esempio, durante l'ora di religione i miei compagni e la prof mi hanno chiesto delle cose sull'Islam, sul Ramadan, e a me ha fatto piacere spiegargli.*
> (More than the language, it's the religion. For example, during religion class, my classmates and the teacher asked me things about Islam, about Ramadan, and I was happy to explain it to them).

> Excerpt 10. Student in focus group 3: *Sì, mi piacerebbe magari si studiasse un po' di più la storia, la storia del Marocco, ad esempio, non c'è praticamente niente nel programma e se c'è se ne parla sempre male.*
> (Yes, I'd like it if we studied a bit more history – like the history of Morocco, for example. There's basically nothing about it in the curriculum, and if there is, it's always talked about negatively).

These testimonies revealed a latent demand for curricular inclusion that transcends mere tolerance of diversity, advocating instead for the genuine valorization of marginalized knowledges and narratives. Banks (2008) argues that multicultural education should critically revise curricula to include historically marginalized voices, fostering more equitable and inclusive citizenship from a decolonial perspective.

Finally, the study highlighted students' views on the role of Arabic as a vehicular language in education. A slight majority (56.09%) reported they would not feel more competent if instruction were delivered in Arabic. Though modest, this majority raises important questions about how an Italian-centered monolingual school policy may shape students' perceptions of heritage languages, diminishing their legitimacy and prestige (Cummins, 2000).

7. Conclusions

This study has explored how language practices, perceptions, and language policies influence the sociolinguistic profile of students of Arab origin in Italy, with a specific focus on the school context in the North-East of the country. The investigation adopted an ethnographic approach, combining quantitative and qualitative tools, which enabled a

nuanced understanding of the linguistic and identity-related experiences of these students within their educational and social environments.

The findings confirm that the dynamics of language maintenance and identity construction are situated at the intersection of family practices, educational settings, and institutional policies. The participants' linguistic repertoires are characterized by bi- or plurilingualism in which Arabic dialects – acquired and predominantly used in family and community contexts – are dominant, while Standard Arabic is less commonly known or used and is often learned in formal religious settings such as Quranic schools. This differentiation in use and competence between dialectal and standard varieties partially reflects the diglossic nature of the Arabic language and is further influenced by the low levels (or absence) of schooling in the country of origin for the majority of the students (Ech-charfi, 2023). The students exhibited a form of linguistic awareness that, although not always fully developed, revealed an interest in maintaining, consolidating, or in some cases acquiring Standard Arabic for both identity-related reasons and practical purposes, such as employment opportunities.

Pizzoli (2018) notes that numerous scholars have criticized the language policies of the EU and its member states, which ostensibly promote plurilingualism and multilingualism but in practice result in a de facto monolingualism system shaped by specific linguistic hierarchies (Extra, Gorter, 2008) that are disconnected from the actual sociolinguistic realities of European societies. This research highlights how, in the Italian context, the school system reinforces this tendency by failing to systematically support the maintenance and valorization of Arabic – one of the most widely spoken languages in the territory – thus reflecting a monolingual approach that leans more toward assimilation than inclusion, ultimately marginalizing the language and its speakers (Berry, 1997).

European and Italian language legislation, as well as the marginal status of Arabic in the school system – even in areas with a high concentration of Arabic-speaking populations – suggest the existence of a covert language policy (Shohamy, 2006), which de facto excludes immigrant languages from the educational project, thereby weakening their prestige and intergenerational transmission. While many students reported not experiencing explicit difficulties in their school careers, a significant portion expressed that the Italian school system could do more to acknowledge and value their heritage languages and cultures, indicating a broader need for greater integration. The educational context also contributes to the erosion of the translanguaging space (Li Wei, 2011), in which individuals with a migratory background draw upon multiple linguistic and cultural resources to produce meaningful and coordinated performances, as seen for instance in code-switching practices within family and peer settings.

Such marginalization becomes even more pronounced in the sociolinguistic and political context of North-Eastern Italy, an area where a strong sense of local identity is deeply rooted and reinforced through the frequent use of regional varieties. This identity-driven perception of languages often results in a sharp division between *local* minority languages and immigrant languages, reinforcing the construction of a highly hierarchical linguistic marketplace in which languages such as Arabic are perceived as foreign – if not hostile – and thus lack legitimacy in public and institutional domains.

Despite being a central institution in the processes of socialization, the Italian school system still appears ill-equipped to accommodate and enhance the multilingualism of students from migrant backgrounds. In light of these findings, there is an urgent need to revise language-in-education policies beyond the sole focus on Italian L2 instruction, to include structured forms of recognition and promotion of heritage languages – through curriculum integration, teacher training, and collaboration with migrant communities. As emphasized in the literature (May, 2001; Spolsky, 2004; Pauwels, 2016), language maintenance cannot be left solely to the family or community but must be supported by

inclusive public policies. A truly intercultural language education, grounded in linguistic justice and plurilingual citizenship, could not only enhance the well-being of students of Arab origin but also strengthen social cohesion and the recognition of linguistic diversity as a valuable asset for the entire educational system.

REFERENCES

Abdelsayed I., Bellinzona M. (2024a), "Language attitudes among second-generation Arabic speakers in Italy", in *Languages*, 9, 8, 262, pp. 1-20.

Abdelsayed I., Bellinzona M. (2024b), "Family language policies for maintaining Arabic as a home language in Italy: The AHLI Project", in *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie Orientale*, 60, pp. 5-40.

Ambrosini M. (2020), *L'invasione immaginaria: l'immigrazione oltre i luoghi comuni*, Laterza, Roma-Bari.

Banks J. A. (2008), *An introduction to multicultural education*, Pearson, New York.

Basso P. (2010), *Razzismo di stato. Stati Uniti, Europa, Italia*, FrancoAngeli, Milano.

Berry J. W. (1997), "Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation", in *Applied Psychology*, 46, 1, pp. 5-34.

Berry J. W. (2011), "Integration and multiculturalism: Ways towards social solidarity", in *Papers on Social Representations*, 20, 1, pp. 2.1-2.21.

Bier A., Lasagabaster D. (2022), "Language use and attitudes of prospective teachers: A comparison of the Basque and Friulian multilingual contexts", in *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, pp. 1-16.

Blackledge A., Pavlenko A. (2001), "Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts", in *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 5, 3, pp. 243-257.

Bourdieu P. (1991), *Language and symbolic power*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, (MA).

Caldas S. (2012), "Language policy in the family", in Spolsky B. (ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of language policy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, pp. 351-373.

Cibella N. (2002), "Immigrazione ed Integrazione", in *Affari Sociali Internazionali*, 4, pp. 1000-1008.

Clarke V., Braun V. (2017), "Thematic analysis", in *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12, 3, pp. 297-298.

Council of Europe (1992), *European charter for regional or minority languages*, European Treaty Series, 148, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.

Corte Costituzionale (1996), *Sentenza n. 15/1996*, Corte Costituzionale, Roma.

Cummins J. (2000), *Language, power, and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon-Buffalo-Toronto-Sydney.

Curdt-Christiansen X. (2013), "Family language policy: Sociopolitical reality versus linguistic continuity", in *Language Policy*, 12, 1, pp. 1-6.

Ech-Charfi A. (2023), "The symbolic power of Fuṣḥā and Darija in Morocco", in *The Journal of North African Studies*, 28, 4, pp. 860-885.

Edwards J. (2009), *Language and identity: An introduction*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

De Mauro T. (1965), *Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita*, Laterza, Roma-Bari.

Extra G., Gorter D. (2008), "The constellation of languages in Europe: An inclusive approach", in Extra G., Gorter D (eds.), *Multilingual Europe: Facts and Policies*, De Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 3-60.

Extra G., Yağmur K. (2011), "Urban multilingualism in Europe: Mapping linguistic diversity in multicultural cities", in *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43, 5, pp. 1173-1184.

European Parliament (2024), "Language policy." *Fact Sheets on the European Union*, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/142/language-polic.

Favaro G. (2018), "Le Lingue, le Norme, le Pratiche: Il contesto, i dati, i riferimenti della scuola multiculturale e plurilingue", in *Italiano LinguaDue*, 10, 2, pp. 1-41: https://riviste.unimi.it/index.php/promoitals/article/view/11283.

Ferguson C. A. (1959), "Diglossia", in *Word*, 15, pp. 325-340.

Fishman J. A. (1964), "Language maintenance and language shift as a field of inquiry: A Definition of the field and suggestions for its further development", in *Linguistics*, 2, 9, pp. 32-70.

Fishman J. A., Hofman J. E. (1966), "Mother tongue and nativity in the American population", in Fishman J. A. *et al.* (eds.), *Language loyalty in the United States: The maintenance and perpetuation of Non-English mother tongues by american ethnic and religious groups*, Arno Press, New York, pp. 34-50.

Fishman J. A. (1991), *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*, Multilingual Matters, Bristol.

Foresti F. (2009), *Profilo linguistico dell'Emilia-Romagna*, Laterza, Roma-Bari.

Fuller J. M. (2007), "Language choice as a means of shaping identity", in *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 17, 1, pp. 105-129.

Gardner R. C., Lambert W. E. (1972), *Attitudes and motivation in second-language learning*, Newbury House Publisher, New York.

Gazzola M. (2023), "Language policy as public policy", in Gazzola M., Gobbo F., Johnson D. C., Leoni de León J. A. (eds.), *Epistemological and theoretical foundations in language policy and planning*, Springer International Publishing, Cham, pp. 41-71.

Giles H., Bourhis R. Y., Taylor D. M. (1977), "Towards a theory of language in ethnic group relations", in Giles H. (ed.), *Language, ethnicity and intergroup relations*, Academic Press, New York, pp. 307-348.

Giles H., Johnson P. (1987), "Ethnolinguistic identity theory: A social psychological approach to language maintenance", in *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 68, pp. 69-99.

Golfetto M. A. (2020), "Towards Arabic for specific purposes", in *Ibérica*, 39, pp. 371-398.

Gumperz J. J. (2009), "The speech community", in *Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader*, 1, 66, pp. 66-73.

Guolo R. (2002), "Immigrazione, etnicismo, crescita zero. La Lega e il Nord Est", in *Il Mulino*, 51, 5, pp. 886-892.

Heller M. (2007), "Bilingualism as ideology and practice", in Heller M. (ed.), *Bilingualism: A social approach*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 1-22.

Iazzetta G. (2024), "Understanding the role of language policy in the construction and maintenance of inequalities in Tunisia and Morocco", PhD dissertation, University of Essex, Colchester.

Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (2024), *Stranieri Residenti al 1° Gennaio – Cittadinanza*: http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCIS_POPSTRCIT1.

Johnson D. C. (2023), "Critical empirical approaches in language policy and planning", in Gazzola M., Gobbo F., Johnson D. C., Leoni de León J. A. (eds.), *Epistemological and theoretical foundations in language policy and planning*, Springer International Publishing, Cham, pp. 15-40.

Kaplan R. B., Baldauf R. B. (1997), *Language planning from practice to theory*, Multilingual Matters, Bristol.

King K. A., Fogle L. (2013), "Family language policy and bilingual parenting", in *Language Teaching*, 46, 2, pp. 1-13.

Li Wei (2011), "Moment analysis and translanguaging space: Discursive construction of identities by multilingual Chinese youth in Britain", in *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43, pp. 1222-1235.

Marcato C. (2021), *Ricerche su Plurilinguismo e Neoplurilinguismo nel Friuli Venezia Giulia*, Forum, Udine.

Martín Rojo L., Moustaoui A., Ortega A. (2025), "Voicing experiences of language surveillance to challenge social inequality", in *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 291, pp. 81-111.

May S. (2001), *Language and minority rights: Ethnicity, nationalism and the politics of language*, Longman, London.

May S. (2003), "Rearticulating the case for minority language rights", in *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 4, 2, pp. 95-125.

May S. (2006), "Language policy and minority rights", in Ricento T. (ed.), *An introduction to language policy: Theory and method*, Blackwell, New York, pp. 255-272.

Mazzei S. (2018), "La minoranza arabofona nel sistema scolastico italiano. Analisi e proposte operative: l'Erasmus Plus Enable–Self-Learning for Arab Speaking Refugee Children", in *Occhialì*, 3, pp. 97-118.

Melotti U. (1998), "Gli immigrati arabi in Europa", in Operti L. (ed.), *Cultura araba e società multietnica. Per un'educazione interculturale*, IRRSAE Piemonte, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, pp. 75-91.

Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca (2010), *Schema di Regolamento Recante "Indicazioni nazionali riguardanti gli obbiettivi specifici di apprendimento concernenti le attività e gli insegnamenti compresi nei piani di studi previsti per i percorsi liceali di cui all'Articolo 10, Comma 3, del Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica 15 Marzo 2010, n. 89, in Relazione all'Articolo 2, Commi 1 e 3, del Medesimo Regolamento"*, Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, Roma.

Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito (2023), *Gli alunni con cittadinanza non italiana a.s. 2021/2022*, Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito - Ufficio di Statistica, Roma.

Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito (2024), *Gli alunni con cittadinanza non italiana a.s. 2022/2023*, Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito - Ufficio di Statistica, Roma.

Montrul S. (2016), *The acquisition of heritage languages*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Moussaid Y. (2023), "Il contatto linguistico tra identità e consapevolezza: uno studio su bilingui italo-arabofoni", in *DILEF*, pp. 275-292.

Nadiani G. (2009), "Nuovo millennio, vecchia lingua? Strategie di sopravvivenza per il dialetto", in *I Quaderni del Cardello*, 18, pp. 9-32.

Ochs E., Schieffelin B. B. (2008), "Language socialization: An historical overview", in *Encyclopedia of Language Education*, 8, pp. 3-15.

Orioles V. (2010), "Legislazione linguistica", in *Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana*, Treccani, Roma, pp. 769-771.

Orioles V. (2014), "Il rapporto tra italiano e lingue minoritarie: il punto di vista del linguista", in *Lingue e Diritti*, 2, pp. 77-96.

Pauwels A. (2004), "Language maintenance", in Davies A., Elders C. (eds.), *The handbook of applied linguistics*, Blackwell, New York, pp. 719-737.

Pauwels, A. (2016), *Language maintenance and shift*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Perocco, F. (2010), "L'Italia, avanguardia del razzismo europeo", in Basso P. (ed.), *Razzismo di Stato: Stati Uniti, Europa, Italia*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, pp. 387-422.

Pizzoli L. (2018), *La politica linguistica in Italia*, Carocci, Roma.

Portes A., Rumbaut R. G. (2006), *Immigrant America: A portrait*, University of California Press, Berkeley.

Presidenza della Repubblica (2001), "Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica 2 maggio 2001, m.345, Regolamento di attuazione della Legge 15 dicembre 1999, n.482, recante norme di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*.

Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia (2007), Legge Regionale 18 dicembre 2007, n. 29, Norme per la tutela, valorizzazione e promozione della lingua friulana, *Bollettino Ufficiale della Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia*.

Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia (2023), Legge Regionale 3 marzo 2023, n. 9, Sistema integrato di interventi in materia di integrazione, *Bollettino Ufficiale della Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia*.

Riccardi V., Giannantoni P., Le Rose G. (2019), "Educational expectations of migrant students in Italy: Second-Class destiny or integration's opportunity?", in *Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies (ECPS Journal)*, 20, pp. 83-102.

Rindstedt C., Aronsson K. (2002), "Growing up monolingual in a bilingual community: The Quichua revitalization paradox", in *Language in Society*, 31, 5, pp. 721-742.

Rumbaut R. G. (1997), "Assimilation and its discontents: Between rhetoric and reality", in *International Migration Review*, 31, 4, pp- 923-930.

Salem A. (2018), "Prima lingua e identità: Il caso della seconda generazione degli arabofoni in Italia", PhD dissertation, Università La Sapienza di Roma, Roma.

Salvaggio F. (2019), "Afghani e pakistani in Carnia. Contatti linguistici e culturali", in Marcato C. (ed.), *Italiano L2/LS in Friuli*, Lint, Trieste, pp. 145-163.

Salvaggio F. (2021), "La lettoscrittura in arabo lingua d'origine: un'indagine nelle scuole del Friuli Venezia Giulia", in Marcato C. (ed.), *Ricerche su plurilinguismo e neoplurilinguismo nel Friuli Venezia Giulia*, Forum, Udine, pp. 53-69.

Schmidt di Friedberg O. (1998), "La componente araba nell'emigrazione in Italia: Elementi per un confronto con altre realtà", in Operti L. (ed.), *Cultura araba e società multietnica. Per un'educazione interculturale*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, pp. 92-100.

Shohamy E. (2006), *Language policy: Hidden agendas and new approaches*, Routledge, New York.

Skutnabb-Kangas T. (2000), *Linguistic genocide in education – or worldwide diversity and human rights?*, Routledge, London.

Skutnabb-Kangas T. (2002), "Marvelous human rights rhetoric and grim realities: Language rights in education", in *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 1, 3, pp. 179-205.

Spolsky B. (2004), *Language policy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Spolsky B. (2009), *Language management*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Spolsky B. (2012), "Family language policy – the critical domain", in *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 33, 1, pp. 3-11.

Tannenbaum M., Howie P. (2002), "The association between language maintenance and family relations: Chinese immigrant children in Australia", in *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 23, 5, pp. 408-424.

Vedovelli M., Bagna C., Barni M. (2007), "Italiano in contatto con lingue immigrate: nuovi modelli e metodi per il neoplurilinguismo in Italia", in Consani C., Desideri P. (eds.), *Minoranze linguistiche. Prospettive, strumenti, territori*, Carocci, Roma, pp. 270-290.

Vertovec S. (2007), "Super-Diversity and its implications", in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30, 1, pp. 1024-1054.

Vitale T. (2012), "Conflitti urbani nei percorsi di cittadinanza degli immigrati: una introduzione", in *Partecipazione e conflitto*, 5, 3, pp. 5-20.

Wodak R., Boukala S. (2015), "(Supra) National identity and language: Rethinking national and european migration policies and the linguistic integration of migrants", in *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, pp. 253-273.

Zhang D., Slaughter-Defoe D. T. (2009), "Language attitudes and heritage language maintenance among Chinese immigrant families in the USA", in *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 22, 2, pp. 77-93.