



## Article

# Language Attitudes among Second-Generation Arabic Speakers in Italy

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**Abstract:** This research explores the language attitudes of second-generation Arabic speakers in Italy, examining their perspectives on both Italian and Arabic. The study assesses these attitudes within the complex sociolinguistic environment of Arabic, which is heavily influenced by a diglossic view between Standard Arabic and Arabic dialects. The findings highlight nuanced attitudes toward Italian, Standard Arabic, and Arabic dialects, influenced by factors such as social integration, communicative utility, and cultural identity. Italian is perceived as a tool for social advancement and integration. In contrast, Arabic dialects are essential for maintaining cultural and familial ties, yet they often face marginalization in formal education settings and encounter social stigma. Conversely, Standard Arabic is esteemed in formal and religious settings despite its limited everyday use. This analysis reveals a dynamic interplay of attitudinal responses to these languages, illustrating a rich mosaic of multilingual and multicultural identities. The results call for policies that acknowledge and promote linguistic diversity in Italy, aiming to enhance social integration and protect linguistic rights. These policies should include educational reforms that treat Standard Arabic and Arabic dialects equitably, supporting their role in fostering inclusive and comprehensive linguistic-cultural integration.

**Keywords:** language ideologies; language attitudes; family language policy; second-generation immigrants; Arabic; home language; Italy



**Citation:** Abdelsayed, Ibraam, and Martina Bellinzona. 2024. Language Attitudes among Second-Generation Arabic Speakers in Italy. *Languages* 9: 262. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages9080262>

Academic Editors: Anastassia Zabrodskaia, Natalia Ringblom and Jeanine Treffers-Daller

Received: 13 May 2024

Revised: 15 July 2024

Accepted: 16 July 2024

Published: 29 July 2024



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## 1. Introduction

The objective of this study is to examine the language attitudes of the second-generation Arab population in Italy towards the languages in their repertoire. The presence of Arabic-speaking communities in Italy is significant in quantitative terms. The presence of Arabic-speaking communities in Italy is significant in quantitative terms. According to data provided by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) in 2022,<sup>1</sup> there are 711,309 individuals (equivalent to 14.1% of the foreign population) with citizenship of an Arab country. Despite this, and even though it has been a stable presence for decades, there is a significant gap in scientific research regarding the diffusion and vitality of the Arabic language in the country, the strategies for intergenerational language transmission and, above all, the attitudes of the speakers themselves towards their own languages (but see [D'Anna 2017](#)). Language attitudes, understood as a set of emotional orientations, prejudices, and stereotypes that individuals acquire through direct or indirect experiences with the attitudinal object ([Dołowy-Rybińska and Hornsby 2021](#); [Dragojevic 2017](#); [Li and Wei 2022](#)), are a multifaceted, nuanced, and unstable construct. They are closely connected with ideological systems (prevailing in a community as well as in the individual). In migratory settings, attitudes assume a central importance. For instance, positive attitudes towards the Home Language (HL) can be the driving force behind its maintenance. Conversely, negative attitudes can lead to a shift of the language out of the repertoire ([Garrett 2010](#); [Pauwels 2016](#)), with severe consequences in terms of valuing societal multilingualism and, especially, protecting individual plurilingualism ([Council of Europe 2018, 2022](#)).

To gain an understanding of language attitudes, it is essential to consider the sociolinguistic situation. This is particularly pertinent when examining the Arabic language,

which exhibits a remarkable degree of internal variation (Abdelsayed 2021; Al-Wer and Horesh 2019). Typically, a distinction is made between *fuṣḥā* (from *faṣāḥa* ‘purity of language’, ‘clarity’, and ‘eloquence’) and *‘āmmiyya* (from the adjective *‘āmmiyy* ‘popular’) or *dāriġa* (from the adjective *dāriġ* ‘circulating’ and ‘current’). In this paper, we will refer to *fuṣḥā* (encompassing both so-called Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic) as Standard Arabic (SA), and *‘āmmiyya* / *dāriġa* as Dialectal Arabic (DA). Generally, DA refers to the language of daily oral communication, which is characterized by strong internal variation. Not only has each Arab country developed its own variety of DA, but each DA also assumes different configurations, for example, based on geographical space (diatopic variation), social strata (diastratic variation), and depending on the context and situation (diafasic variation) (Haeri 1996).

In this paper, as mentioned above, our aim is to explore the attitudes of second-generation Arabic speakers in Italy towards the languages in their repertoire. In particular, we focus on attitudes towards Italian (IT), DA, and SA. To achieve these goals, we draw on data collected within the AHLI project (acronym for Arabic as Home Language in Italy), an interdisciplinary and multi-method initiative aimed at exploring family language policies for the maintenance of Arabic as HL in Italy (for further details, see Abdelsayed and Bellinzona 2024).

The article is structured as follows: We will start by outlining the theoretical framework on ideologies and language attitudes (Section 2.1), followed review of the literature on attitudes towards the Arabic language(s) (Section 2.2). Next, we will provide an overview of the AHLI project (Section 3), with specific focus on the research context (Section 3.1), design (Section 3.2), and methodology (Section 3.3). We will then introduce the research participants (Section 4). Subsequently (Section 5), we will present the results from various analyses—quantitative, qualitative, and lexical—and discuss these findings in relation to the literature review (Section 6). Finally, the conclusions (Section 7) will address the implications and future perspectives of the project.

## 2. Language Attitudes and Ideologies

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

The AHLI project is grounded in the theoretical framework proposed by Spolsky (2004) regarding language policies, including family language policies (Curdt-Christiansen 2018). Within this perspective, interpreting language policies requires an examination of management, practices, and ideologies. According to Spolsky, ‘[I]anguage ideology or beliefs designate a speech community’s consensus on what value to apply to each of the language variables or named language varieties that make up its repertoire’ (2004: 14). These ideologies not only stem from language practices, but also have the capacity to influence them in turn, forming the basis of managerial choices within the family (King et al. 2008; Schwartz 2008; Spolsky 2004; Spolsky and Shohamy 2000).

While the terms ‘beliefs’ and ‘ideologies’ may appear interchangeable based on the citation, Spolsky recently delineated a subtle distinction between the two: ‘[t]he second component of my model is either beliefs (a looser term) or ideology (suggesting a more organized system supported by a movement)’ (Spolsky 2021, p. 202).

McGroarty (2010), building on the pioneering work of Silverstein (1979), underscores the social intricacies and the multifaceted nature of language ideologies, defining them as ‘the abstract (and often implicit) belief systems related to language and linguistic behavior that affect speakers’ choices and interpretations of communicative interaction’ (McGroarty 2010, p. 3).

Recognizing the intricacies of investigating language ideologies is paramount, as it is not a straightforward task, but rather a multifaceted, challenging, and thorny one. The complexity of this task arises from the fact that these ideologies often ‘operate at a subconscious level and that people may not be aware of their existence’ (Dołowy-Rybińska and Hornsby 2021, p. 106). However, despite this subtlety, ‘ideologies can become apparent through people’s attitudes towards a given language or language variety. Language attitudes are

the explicit evaluations of particular languages and language varieties' (Dołowy-Rybińska and Hornsby 2021, p. 106). These attitudes serve as crucial entry points for exploring language ideologies. By scrutinizing them, we gain insights into the underlying beliefs and social constructs that shape perceptions and ideologies about languages.

From this perspective, as Albury argues, '[I]anguage ideologies are a socially-constructed reference point for how things ought to function in society, whereas language attitudes are subjective evaluations of whether, in what way, and to what extent, a specific language, language practice, or other language matter, is favorable' (Albury 2020, p. 369). Therefore, analyzing language attitudes offers a lens through which to understand the broader framework of language ideologies and their implications for social dynamics.

The study of language attitudes within multilingual contexts is deeply rooted in social psychology. A key framework for examining language attitudes is the tripartite model, initially conceptualized in social psychology and later adapted to sociolinguistics (Allport 1935). This model includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Dragojevic 2017; Garrett 2010). Li and Wei (2022, p. 17) explain that the cognitive aspect of language attitudes involves beliefs and judgments concerning languages. The affective component reflects feelings and emotions towards languages, influencing how favorable or unfavorable certain language features are perceived. The behavioral aspect pertains to the predisposition to act in certain ways, aligning with cognitive and affective evaluations.

Building on the theoretical framework outlined previously, this study conceptualizes language ideologies as predominantly subconscious, with their explicit expressions observed through language attitudes. These attitudes reflect individual evaluations and distinguish them from the broader societal norms encapsulated within ideologies. The research will focus on the cognitive component of language attitudes to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics involved in language maintenance and shift, while acknowledging the close connections this component has with the affective and behavioral components.

## 2.2. Language Attitudes towards Arabic(s)

Extensive research within the Arab world has explored language attitudes, revealing their complexity influenced by historical, cultural, and social dynamics. There is generally a positive attitude towards SA, often attributed to its close association with the Quran, its historical importance, and its symbolic significance across Arab societies. Furthermore, perceptions of SA are shaped by its deep ties to tradition, rich literary heritage, articulate expression, and role in fostering a unified pan-Arab identity. Consequently, SA enjoys high esteem and admiration among Arabs, transcending religious affiliations (Albirini 2016; El-Dash and Tucker 1975; Suleiman 2004).

Albirini's (2016) study surveyed 639 university students across Arab regions, exploring attitudes towards SA, colloquial varieties (QAs), and other languages. The study employed a mix of methodologies, including questionnaires, interviews, and observations, revealing SA's consistent favorability on the affective scale, despite cognitive competition with English. Additionally, further qualitative findings corroborated Albirini's results, emphasizing SA's cultural significance, albeit with a minority preference for QA's perceived simplicity (Al-Muhannadi 1991; Chakrani 2010; Ennaji 2007; Haeri 1997, 2000, 2003; Hussein and El-Ali 1989; Murad 2007; Saidat 2010; inter alia).

Nevertheless, these attitudes are not uniform and are influenced by various factors, including educational background and social context. These factors significantly shape individuals' perspectives on the practical utility of SA compared to other languages (Al-Wer 2002; Murad 2007). Furthermore, the global spread of other languages, particularly English, and the pervasive influence of Western cultural hegemony are reshaping language attitudes, altering perceptions of language prestige and modernity (Albirini 2016).

Despite these trends, there is a growing acceptance of colloquial Arabic for daily use and in settings traditionally reserved for SA. This shift towards valuing the practical utility of colloquial Arabic reflects broader changes in language attitudes and practices (Albirini 2016). Moreover, the portrayal of SA in the media as cumbersome and less beneficial may

negatively impact public perceptions (Bassiouney 2014). Nevertheless, a profound respect for Arabic as a symbol of identity and heritage remains strong among Arabs, even among those with limited proficiency in SA (Shalaby 2018).

In the context of language shift and maintenance, attitude stands as a crucial factor influencing these dynamics (Gardner 1985; Holmes and Harlow 1991). Research indicates that family and community attitudes, especially in migration contexts, profoundly influence language practices. For example, Sofu (2009) revealed how family perspectives and external factors shape language practices across three generations within Turkish-Arabic bilingual families, highlighting the pivotal role of family context in language retention. Similarly, Dweik et al. (2014) focused on Muslim Arabs in Vancouver, finding universally positive attitudes towards Arabic, largely due to its sacred status associated with the Quran. This reverence not only positions Arabic as a prestigious language but also as an essential marker of identity and cultural heritage. Arabic-speaking parents, reflecting their commitment to preserving this heritage, often ensure their children attend Arabic schools to become proficient in the language.

Al-Sahafi's studies (Al-Sahafi 2015, 2018) in New Zealand show that family language policy significantly influences Arab immigrant children, fostering positive bilingual attitudes and underscoring the role of language in identity formation and cultural cohesion. Eid and Sallabank (2021) explore these dynamics among Lebanese families in the UK, noting that maintaining Lebanese Arabic strengthens cultural identity and belonging. However, perceptions towards SA are mixed, reflecting a complex interaction of values in multilingual settings. Furthermore, Hassan (2023) examines the language policies of Libyan families in the UK, noting a discrepancy between positive attitudes towards Arabic maintenance and actual language use at home. This often results in language attrition due to inconsistencies between language ideology and language management.

Collectively, these studies highlight the complexity of language maintenance in the diaspora, shaped by a web of individual, family, and community factors. They underscore the urgent need for focused research on the language attitudes of Arabic-speaking communities in diasporic contexts like Italy. Addressing this gap is crucial for developing effective language maintenance strategies and supporting educational and community initiatives. The data collected for the AHLI project, which will be discussed in the following pages, provide the opportunity to meet this need.

### 3. The AHLI Project

#### 3.1. Research Context

The AHLI project was conducted in Italy, a country characterized by a rich and complex 'linguistic space' (Berruto 1987; De Mauro 1980), which historically includes the Italian language and its varieties, languages of historical minorities, Italo-Romance dialects, and other international languages. In light of the considerable influx of immigrants, Bagna et al. (2003) proposed the concept of 'neo-plurilingualism', an updated model that incorporates immigrant languages as a pivotal element of the 'global Italian linguistic space' (Vedovelli 2017).

In 2022, the number of immigrant citizens in Italy was 5,050,257, accounting for 8.6% of the population (IDOS 2023). The predominant immigrant groups come from Romania (21.5%), Morocco (8.4%), Albania (8.3%), China (6.0%), and Ukraine (4.5%). Regarding Arabic-speaking communities, the data from ISTAT 2022 show that approximately 14.1% (711,309 individuals) of immigrants in Italy originate from Arab countries. The three largest Arabic-speaking communities are those from Morocco (420,172 individuals), Egypt (140,322 individuals), and Tunisia (99,002 individuals), collectively representing approximately 93% of the total Arabic-speaking population in the country. Apart from certain historical concentrations, such as the Tunisian community in Mazara del Vallo, Sicily (Colucci 2018; D'Anna 2017), most Arabic-speaking communities are concentrated in the central-northern regions, particularly in Lombardy (212,407; 29.86%), Emilia-Romagna (92,883; 13.06%), Piedmont (69,456; 9.76%), and Veneto (56,321; 7.92%).

The vitality of immigrant languages, including Arabic, is contingent upon the attitudes of the host society. Although studies on Italian attitudes towards immigrant languages are limited, existing data reveal a complex and contradictory set of perceptions. As [Barni \(2008, p. 230\)](#) observed, '[a] generally closed attitude was also observed towards immigrant languages and plurilingualism on the part of Italians, gradually growing stronger as we observed pupils from higher grades within the schools'. [Abdelsayed and Machetti \(2023\)](#) found that school teachers predominantly positive views of Arab people but less positive perceptions of the Arabic language and Arab countries. In their study of socialization processes and language shift in Moroccan adolescents, [di Lucca et al. \(2008\)](#) observed that the persistence and manifestation of negative attitudes from the Italian population towards their origin and the Arabic language itself were major reasons behind the language shift. Numerous studies on linguistic landscapes, which examine municipal ordinances in various Italian cities that regulate the use of immigrant languages on bottom-up signs (mainly shop signs), also provide tangible evidence of distrustful and generally negative attitudes towards these languages (for an overview on Italian linguistic landscape studies, see [Bellinzona 2021](#)).

A significant issue is the lack of a comprehensive language policy that recognizes and values immigrant languages. There is no specific law aimed at recognizing or protecting immigrant languages; rather, there are isolated actions driven by specific political orientations ([Vedovelli et al. 2009](#)) or school guidelines that, however, lack normative power.

Of particular concern is the situation of Arabic. A preliminary survey conducted by [Abdelsayed \(2023\)](#) revealed that Arabic language courses are virtually absent in Italian schools. In Lombardy, for instance, only two upper secondary schools offer curricular courses in Arabic, exclusively focusing on SA. While individual schools have the autonomy to offer extracurricular courses, opportunities remain scarce and frequently fail to include DAs. Consequently, families seeking courses in Arabic as a heritage language must rely on non-formal learning contexts, such as mosques and cultural associations.

### 3.2. Research Design

The AHLI project aims to comprehensively explore family language policies concerning the maintenance of Arabic, in all its varieties, as a HL in Italy. The term 'AHLI', derived from Arabic *ahl-ī*, means 'my family'.

Since the project's scope is broad and multidimensional, and it draws on various theoretical frameworks, employing heterogeneous research tools was considered useful and appropriate. Positioned within the pragmatic paradigm ([Mertens 2005](#)), the project employed mixed methods with an explanatory design ([Creswell and Plano Clark 2011](#); [Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003](#)). This integrated and versatile approach combines quantitative and qualitative aspects to allow for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. In particular, the explanatory design focuses on the sequential collection and analysis of data, where a quantitative phase precedes and informs the subsequent qualitative phase, aiming to fill any gaps and provide more detailed and contextualized explanations.

In our research, the initial phase involved distributing a questionnaire (Q-AHLI) to first- and second-generation Arabic speakers in Italy. The second phase consisted of focus group sessions with Arabic-speaking families, including parents and/or children. Due to space limitations and the specific focus of this contribution, we will confine our discussion to the findings from the first research instrument, the Q-AHLI.

### 3.3. The Q-AHLI

The questionnaire Q-AHLI was based on a careful review of the literature, regarding family language policy, language attitudes, language maintenance, and studies on bi-/multilingualism. It also considered the peculiar sociolinguistic situation of Arabic and Arabic-speaking communities in Italy ([Abdelsayed 2021](#); [Bialystok 2001](#); [Colucci 2018](#); [Curdt-Christiansen 2018, 2022](#); [Li and Wei 2022](#); [Pauwels 2016](#); [Protassova 2018](#); [Sorace 2010](#); [Spolsky 2004](#); *inter alia*).

The questionnaire was created in two linguistic versions, in Arabic (SA) and Italian, to allow participants to complete it in the language they felt most confident and competent. For the practical implementation, we used Google Forms, adhering to technical standards and scientific guidelines for formulating the items (Brown 2001; Dörnyei 2002; Ruliyanti et al. 2021). We also ensured compliance with ethical research principles and privacy regulations (EU Regulation 2016/679), maintaining the anonymity of responses and ensuring that the data are processed in aggregated form.

The introductory page of the Q-AHLI included the researchers' contact information and provided a detailed description of the study, its objectives, and data management strategies. Participants were required to confirm a digital consent statement before participating in the research.

After piloting an initial version with 20 informants, the questionnaire was validated by a panel of three experts, who evaluated its clarity, coherence, relevance, and sufficiency (Escobar-Pérez and Cuervo-Martínez 2008). Cohen's Kappa statistics, calculated following the second round of evaluation, revealed a significant and excellent interrater agreement among experts,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $k > 0.80$  (Hernández-Nieto 2011).

In the final version distributed to participants, the Q-AHLI consists of five sections, totaling 101 items, which can be activated in different ways and numbers depending on certain responses provided by the informants themselves. The sections are composed as follows:

- Section 1 'Sociodemographic and sociolinguistic data'—25 items: parents and children,
- Section 2 'Language practices'—24 items: parents and children,
- Section 3 'Language management'—17 items: only parents,
- Section 4 'Language ideologies related to bilingual parenting'—16 items: only parents,
- Section 5 'Language ideologies related to the different languages in the repertoire'—19 items: only children.

Further details about the questionnaire structure are provided in Abdelsayed and Bellinzona (2024). In this study, we will focus in particular on the responses to Section 5 of the questionnaire, which consists of various items aimed at investigating the attitudes of second-generation Arabic speakers towards IT, DA and SA.

As the Q-AHLI is a direct method, it is assumed that the responses, being the result of reflective thinking, are particularly reliable for exploring the cognitive dimension (Garrett 2010; Ryan and Giles 1982). However, cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of language attitudes are interrelated, making it difficult to draw clear boundaries between them. Through the data obtained from the questionnaire, we aim to outline an overarching understanding of language attitudes in their various nuances, gaining insights into the affective and behavioral dimensions as well (Albirini 2016; Li and Wei 2022).

The Q-AHLI was distributed to the target population using various channels, primarily including direct contact, word of mouth, and especially social media networks (Kayam and Hirsch 2012; Noy 2008). In total (excluding pilot subjects), 168 Arabic speakers participated in the survey, divided into the following groups: first-generation immigrants with children (46; 27%); first-generation immigrants without children (37; 22%); and second-generation immigrants (85; 51%). In the next paragraph, we will briefly present the characteristics of the second-generation immigrants, who will be the focus of the subsequent discussion on language attitudes.

#### 4. Study Participants

To investigate language attitudes towards the languages in the repertoire, we considered individuals from the so-called 'second generation'. By this term, used broadly, we mean all those who were either born in Italy (to Arab parents or mixed couples) or arrived there during their school years.<sup>2</sup>

In total, as mentioned previously, 85 participants in this category took part in the AHLI project, comprising 69 females (81%) and 16 males (19%). The sample included

55 informants aged 18–24 years (64.7%), 21 informants aged 25–30 years (24.7%), and 9 informants over 30 years old (10.6%).

Of these, 53 informants (62%) stated they were born in Italy, while 32 (38%) were born in an Arab country. Among those born outside Italy, the majority arrived at a young age, with 75% (24 informants) reporting that they received their entire education starting from elementary school within the Italian school system. The remaining 8 informants completed their middle school education in Italy.

Most participants (70 informants; 82%) are children of Arab couples from the same Arab country. Additionally, there are 14 informants (16%) from mixed couples, including 2 cases where the mother was Arabic-speaking, and 12 cases where the father was Arabic-speaking. Only one participant reported having parents from two different Arab countries.

Regarding the county of origin, 44 participants are from Morocco, 16 from Tunisia, and 12 from Egypt, totaling 71 participants, which constitutes 85% of the sample. Most participants reside in the central-northern regions of Italy, with Lombardy accounting for 44 (52%) and Emilia-Romagna for 10 (12%). The only exception is Sicily, where 12 participants (15%) are located. This distribution aligns with the national demographic trends as outlined in Section 3.1.

## 5. Results

In this section, we will explore the attitudes of second-generation Arabic speakers in Italy. Before proceeding, however, it is appropriate to provide an overview of the sample's characteristics in terms of Arabic language maintenance and family language policies, as revealed by the analysis of the Q-AHLI.

The linguistic repertoires of the informants are highly plurilingual, with a minimum of two declared languages and a maximum of ten ( $M = 5.12$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ). Among the most known languages are Italian (85; 100%) and English (79; 92.9%), followed closely by DA (78; 92%). This suggests strong family language policies oriented towards the intergenerational transmission of the HL. SA, on the other hand, is indicated as part of the repertoire by 56 participants, 65.9% of the sample. It is also noteworthy to consider the self-declared proficiency data for these languages. Italian, on average, is rated  $M = 4.89$  ( $SD = 0.27$ ) on a scale ranging from 1 to 5. DA, on average, is rated  $M = 3.77$  ( $SD = 1.22$ ), while SA is rated  $M = 3.00$  ( $SD = 1.16$ ). However, as highlighted by [Abdelsayed and Bellinzona \(2024\)](#) elsewhere, the most critical skills for DA, which negatively affect proficiency, are those related to literacy, including reading and writing. In contrast, for SA, the skills that most negatively impact proficiency are those related to production, specifically speaking and writing.

Regarding social contexts and interpersonal relationships, the collected data highlight a substantial division. There is prevalent use of DA within the family (with parents and relatives), sometimes alternated or mixed with Italian. Siblings alternate between DA and, more frequently, Italian. Outside the home environment, Italian is almost exclusively used with friends and acquaintances, and in activities such as study and work. For intimate activities, such as thinking and dreaming, participants report using both DA and Italian in most cases. Only in relation to religious activities is there a predominant use of SA.

All of this indicates a good degree of maintenance of the HL, namely DA, albeit with strong criticisms related to the lack of educational opportunities in this language. These opportunities, on the contrary, are often available for SA. However, SA, although learned in formal (mostly universities) or non-formal learning/teaching situations (language courses at local associations or Quranic schools), lacks proficiency in the productive sphere, emphasizing its scarce, if not null, usage in social interactions ([Abdelsayed and Bellinzona 2024](#)).

Given this context, we can now delve deeper into the language attitudes of the participants in the AHLI project. The ensuing sections will each focus on different types of analysis: quantitative, lexical, and qualitative.

### 5.1. Controlled Association and Quantitative Analysis

To establish a general overview of the languages within the informants’ multilingual repertoire, the Q-AHLI questionnaire was instrumental. It incorporated two specific questions that actively engaged the participants in articulating their associations with IT, SA and DA.

The first item asks participants to select their favorite language from the options: ‘IT’, ‘SA’, ‘DA’, ‘I don’t know’, or ‘other’. The second question employed a controlled association technique, which, unlike the broader scope of free association, provided participants with narrowly defined prompts. This question, partially inspired by established linguistic research methods (Garrett 2010; Giles and Billings 2004), required individuals to link the three languages under study with specific words. This approach proves valuable for uncovering associations that might remain hidden in less structured survey methodologies. The primary aim of this test was to investigate the cognitive elements influencing language attitudes. Participants were prompted to relate each language to various culturally and socially relevant dimensions. The question was framed as follows: For you, which language (IT, SA, and DA) is:

- (1) Most associated with religion,
- (2) Most associated with culture,
- (3) Most associated with identity,
- (4) Most associated with origin,
- (5) Most difficult,
- (6) Easiest to learn,
- (7) Least important,
- (8) Most useful,
- (9) Of greatest prestige,
- (10) Most beautiful.

Table 1 summarizes the responses to the question regarding language preference, revealing significant insights. For instance, approximately 32% of participants indicated ‘I don’t know’, suggesting an ambivalence or lack of reflection on their linguistic preferences and possibly indicating an equal preference for the languages in their repertoire. Roughly 30% chose Italian as their favorite language. About 18% preferred SA, reflecting its significant role despite limited use. In contrast, despite being widely mastered and used, only 11% favored DA, indicating less favorable attitudes compared to IT and SA.

**Table 1.** What is your favorite language?

	N.	%
IT	25	29.4
SA	15	17.6
DA	9	10.6
I don’t know	27	31.8
Other	9	10.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100</b>

As depicted in Figure 1, in response to the second question, the data revealed that SA was predominantly associated with religion (66 informants), considered the most difficult (65), most prestigious (60), most beautiful (47), and partially most useful (31) language. IT was deemed the most useful (35) and easiest to learn (60), while DA was most associated with culture (46), identity (36), and origin (63).

Furthermore, two noteworthy trends emerge from the data. Firstly, despite DA being the most used language for communication in family settings, it was deemed the most useful by only two informants. Conversely, a substantial number of 31 informants



considered it the least important language. Secondly, it is observed that IT, much like DA, was identified by many informants as the language associated with culture (21) and identity (32). However, IT is distinguished from DA by being less connected to origins, suggesting a complex interplay between language usage, practicality, and the multifaceted nature of cultural identity.

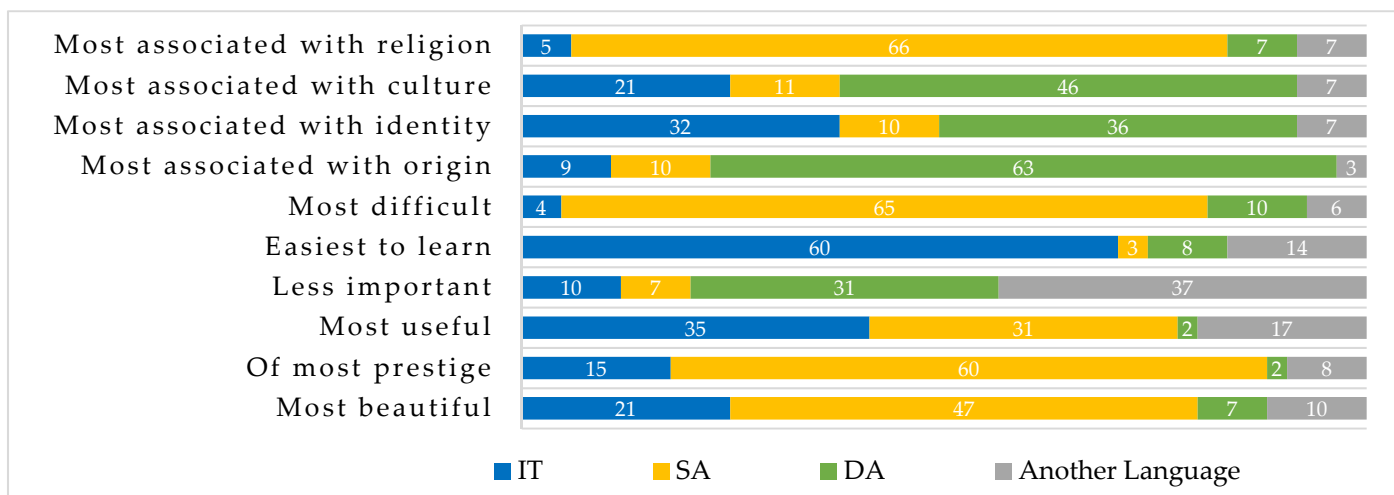


Figure 1. Controlled association of repertoire languages.

5.2. Free Response Experiment and Lexical Analysis

The second analysis conducted to explore attitudes towards IT, DA and SA consisted of a Free Response Experiment (Grondelaers and van Hout 2010; De Pascale and Marzo 2016). This experiment involved asking participants, within the questionnaire, to spontaneously list three words that they associate with IT, SA, and DA. The question was formulated as follows: ‘How would you describe IT/SA/DA with three words? (e.g., beautiful, ugly, etc.)’. Once the responses were obtained, the corpus, divided into sub-corpora (each related to the three languages), was explored through SketchEngine.<sup>3</sup>

Excluding responses that deviated from the request (for example, entire sentences, as in the following case, produced in reference to DA ‘It passively influences the standard language and slows its evolution’<sup>4</sup>), participants provided 600 words, classified into 155 different lemmas.

In Table 2, we report the list of the 10 most frequently used lemmas<sup>5</sup> and their respective frequencies, both overall and for the individual languages.

Table 2. The 10 most frequent lemmas in the corpus.

	Lemma	IT	SA	DA	Overall Frequency
1	Beautiful <sup>6</sup>	50	35	37	122
2	Difficult	5	23	7	35
3	Fascinating	11	18	4	33
4	Complex	8	12	1	21
5	Rich	16	4	0	20
6	Elegant	4	9	4	17
7	Complicated	8	9	0	17
8	Musical	7	6	2	15
9	Simple	6	2	5	13
10	Poetic	2	10	0	12

Table 3, on the other hand, lists the 10 lemmas with the highest association coefficient for each language. To extract the lemmas, we used the Word Sketches function in SketchEngine and as an association coefficient we used the logDice score (Rychlý 2008).

**Table 3.** The 10 lemmas with the highest logDice score t for each language.

IT			SA			DA		
Lemma	Fr.	logDice	Lemma	Fr.	logDice	Lemma	Fr.	logDice
Rich	16	12.6	Difficult	23	11.9	Fun	9	10.6
Elegant	8	11.8	Fascinating	18	11.6	Familiar	7	10.3
Complex	8	11.6	Poetic	10	10.9	Difficult	7	10.1
Romantic	6	11.4	Elegant	9	10.7	Simple	5	9.8
Language	4	10.8	Interesting	6	10.2	Complicated	4	9.5
Complicated	4	10.7	Musical	6	10.2	Direct	4	9.5
Varied	3	10.5	Rich	4	9.61	Expressive	4	9.49
Business suit	3	10.4	Prestigious	4	9.61	Useful	4	9.48
Useful	2	9.91	Melodic	3	9.2	Fascinating	4	9.37
Comfortable	1	8.93	Useful	3	9.17	Raw	3	9.09

Out of the 155 words reported by the participants, 19 are common to all three languages (fascinating, beautiful, harmonious, complex, complete, complicated, difficult, direct, fun, sweet, expressive, interesting, language, melodic, musical, normal, simple, unique, useful), while others are common only between two languages:

- DA and SA: six words—attractive, familiar, incomprehensible, particular, historical, utilized;
- SA and IT: six words—ancient, elegant, exhaustive, wonderful, poetic, rich;
- IT and DA: eleven words—nice, comprehensible, effective, easy, mine, patriotic, pleasant, daily, varied, fast, close.

However, many words were used exclusively in reference to one of the languages. We observe a greater lexical variety in reference to DA (49 words), followed by SA (33) and IT (31).

A review of the vocabulary employed exclusively in the context of DA reveals a spectrum of both positive and negative connotations. The positive attributes include words such as welcoming, warm, delicate, fluent, and special. Conversely, the negative connotations include words such as aggressive, chaotic, confusing, disharmonic, raw, naive, influenceable, and blunt. A number of terms used by participants are indicative of characteristics typically associated with orality (singsong, colloquial, discursive, dialect, popular, strong, fluid, guttural). Other terms relate to the manner of use (automatic, conventional, integrative, practical) and the intrinsic variety of the language itself (different, multicultural, variable, variant, mixed, mix). Moreover, terms associated with its status or personal opinions were not lacking (for example: neutral, free, underestimated, unmistakable, indescribable, colorful, original, passionate). Finally, participants associated the DA with their origin, including words like home, family, childhood, native, original, and identifying.

A closer examination of the words exclusively used to describe IT reveals a preponderance of positive associations, particularly those related to the language’s sonority (sang, melodious, musicality, captivating, catchy) and its social functions and aspects of daily life (sociable, comfortable, natural, domestic, personal, historical). In numerous instances, participants referenced the linguistic characteristics of the language itself (articulated, refined, clear, verbose, irregular, intricate, vast, flexible), which were also related to the sphere of knowledge (erudite, refined, sophisticated). Moreover, in many instances, reference was

made to emotions, feelings, and personal opinions (adorable, loved, fascinating, intense, exceptional, magnificent, tranquil).

Finally, with regard to SA, the positive connotations are dominant (exciting, fine, immense, majestic, mysterious, precious, profound, refined, romantic, wonderful, suggestive, mysterious, exciting). The language is related to religious and spiritual aspects (divine, religion, sacred) and to the history of the language itself (old, secular). References to the sphere of orality are not lacking (harmonic, rhythmic, relaxing), but are accompanied by words related to the sphere of writing (aesthetic, graphic, literary, grammar). In reference to the uses and characteristics of the language, we find negative (unused, empty, redundant), positive (international, prestigious, clean), and usage context-related (formal, lofty) characterizations.

A comprehensive analysis of the data reveals several noteworthy trends that illuminate the language attitudes of the participants. First, it is notable that a significant proportion of individuals expressed a positive attitude towards SA, which they perceived as the most prestigious and fascinating variety. The prestige of the language appears to be primarily associated with its centuries-old history and its usage in high-status social contexts. A notable contrast can be observed between the aesthetic appreciation of SA and DA. While SA is almost exclusively associated with positive words, DA is sometimes explicitly stigmatized in this regard. Furthermore, there is a discrepancy in the perception of the appropriateness of utilizing the two languages. SA is more commonly associated with formal and religious contexts, whereas DA is more frequently employed in popular or everyday life contexts. Concurrently, discrepancies emerge in the perception of the two varieties with regard to the perceived ease of use and learning. SA is perceived as particularly challenging, whereas DA is perceived as more natural, straightforward, and spontaneous, representing the most practical means of communication, particularly in domestic and family settings.

It is noteworthy that IT shares commonalities with both varieties of Arabic. On the one hand, it is associated with vocabulary pertaining to the private, intimate sphere, such as that found in DA, which allows us to recognize signs of a relatively balanced and harmonious bilingualism between the two 'mother tongues', namely IT and DA. Conversely, a significant proportion of the vocabulary associated with IT is of an aesthetic nature, reflecting its historical and social status, as is the case with SA.

### 5.3. Open-Ended Questions and Reflexive Thematic Analysis

The third analysis, used to explore the language attitudes towards IT, SA, and DA, involves the use of open-ended questions. This approach allows informants to freely express their personal reflections on what the use of each language means to them. Specifically, the question posed to the participants was: 'What does the use of IT/SA/DA mean to you?'

These three inquiry questions provide key insights into the subjective meanings and values that speakers attach to each language. Open-ended questions are particularly effective in language attitude research as they offer participants the flexibility to express nuanced thoughts and emotions that closed-ended questions might not capture (Mackey and Gass 2005; Ryen 2004; Pavlenko 2006). This technique aligns with qualitative research methodologies that emphasize participants' perspectives and experiences as central to understanding complex social phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln 2011).

Respondents provided a total of 189 answers over 64 responses to the question regarding IT, 63 to the question regarding SA, and 62 to the question regarding DA. These responses were analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun and Clarke 2019, 2021), supported by NVivo 11 Pro software.

The adoption of RTA, a dynamic and iterative process of data analysis, enabled us to continuously reflect on the data. This approach has fostered a deep engagement with the content and ensured a rigorous examination of the emergent themes and patterns. According to Braun and Clarke (2021), RTA differs from other forms of thematic analysis by emphasizing the researcher's active role in constructing meanings within the data, rather than solely identifying them. This reflexivity involves recognizing and critically evaluating

the researcher’s biases, perspectives, and influences throughout the analytical process, thereby enhancing the depth and integrity of the interpretation (Terry et al. 2017).

This iterative interplay between the researcher’s insights and the data not only enriches the analysis but also elucidates nuanced understandings that might otherwise remain obscured.

In this study, the RTA process followed the six phases identified by Braun and Clarke (2021). Initially, researchers individually engaged with the data through reading and reflection (Phase 1: ‘familiarization’), identifying one or more codes in each response (Phase 2: ‘coding’) that pertained to a specific aspect of the attitudinal dimension for each language. Subsequently, still working individually, the researchers organized these codes into potential themes (Phase 3: ‘initial themes generation’), continuously questioning their interpretations. They created conceptual and explanatory maps, which are not included here due to space limitations.

In the next phase, researchers engaged in joint reflection, comparing their analysis results and refining the codes and their organization into thematic nodes (Phase 4: ‘development and review of themes’). This collaborative effort ensured an accurate representation of the data, with ongoing reflection. Each theme was clearly defined and named, considering the impact of these names on interpretation (Phase 5: ‘redefinition and naming of themes’). The final phase, presented in this article, involved producing a coherent narrative that integrates the themes, supported by data extracts (Phase 6: ‘writing the report’).

This analysis resulted in the identification of 332 codes, which were organized into 29 broader thematic containers of nodes, leading to the conceptualization of four major analytical output themes (see Figure 2).

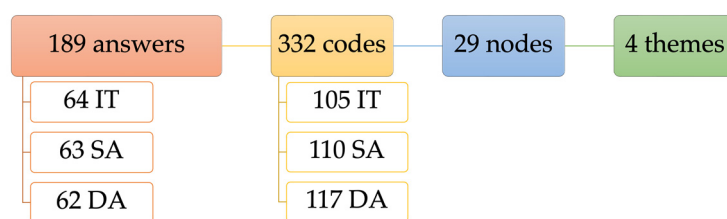


Figure 2. Data organization through RTA.

Table 4 delineates a detailed synthesis of data gleaned from the RTA. The findings are organized into four overarching themes, each encompassing a series of nuanced tree and child nodes that underscore the multifaceted relationship between language and sociocultural identity.

Notably, the theme of ‘Functions and practices’ stands out, with 146 instances recorded, signifying its prominence in the collective consciousness of the respondents. This theme is bifurcated into two tree nodes: ‘Uses and Registers’ and ‘Language Marketability’.

Within ‘Uses and Registers’, SA is linked to stylistically formal applications and, along with IT, is connected to academic settings. Both IT and, to a certain extent, DA are associated with spontaneous and intimate use, reflecting their integration into personal and familiar spheres. For example, participant responses about SA suggest that it has a ‘very formal significance, as it is a language much in demand in the professional world’,<sup>7</sup> and is used in ‘formally stringent contexts that are less accessible to the majority’.<sup>8</sup> This is supported by remarks such as: ‘I seldom use Standard Arabic, almost only for reading (books or articles)’.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, IT is described as ‘the language with which I can best express my emotions and feelings’,<sup>10</sup> and DA is valued for its ease and familiarity in everyday interactions, as one respondent notes, ‘I mostly use it because it is the most commonly used, the easiest, and the closest in dealings’.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 4.** Overview of findings from RTA.

Themes	Tree and Child Nodes		IT	SA	DA	Total	
<b>Personal Identification</b>	Origin		1	3	29	33	
	Religion		0	19	0	19	
	Identity		6	5	7	18	
	Culture		0	5	11	16	
<b>Judgments on Language</b>	General Importance		2	4	3	9	
	Prestige		0	8	0	8	
	Aesthetic Values		1	4	1	6	
	Neutral Position		2	1	2	5	
<b>Functions and Practices</b>	Uses and Registers	High	Formal	2	11	0	13
			Academic	3	2	0	5
		Familiar	Spontaneous	7	0	2	9
			Intimate	2	0	1	3
		Areal	Territorial Limitation	2	0	7	9
			Universality	1	8	0	9
	Language Marketability	Social	Communicative Effectiveness	19	7	22	48
			Everyday Use	20	0	2	22
			Sociability	7	2	4	13
			Social Inclusion	7	0	2	9
Future Prospects			1	4	1	6	
<b>Linguistic Repertoire</b>	Mother Tongue		15	1	12	28	
	Complementarity		6	8	4	18	
	Foreignness from the Linguistic Space		0	12	4	16	
	Difficulty in Learning		0	4	2	6	
	Linguistic Enrichment		1	2	1	4	

In the dimension of ‘Language Marketability’, there are two levels to consider: areal and social. At the areal level, there is a stark distinction in how different languages are perceived concerning their geographic versatility. The analysis shows that DA and, to a lesser extent, IT, are often viewed as having a territorial marketability—indicating a strong association with specific regional or local identities. In contrast, SA transcends geographical limitations and is embraced as a language with universal applicability, enhancing its perceived value on a broader scale. Participant responses provide tangible examples of this: DA is articulated as enabling ‘communication in the country of my parents’ origin’,<sup>12</sup> and IT as facilitating the ability to ‘communicate with people in Italy’,<sup>13</sup> while SA is prized for allowing individuals to ‘communicate with the entire Arab Muslim world through this shared foundational language’.<sup>14</sup>

Specific testimonies highlight IT as providing ‘the opportunity to express myself fully’<sup>15</sup> and as a ‘language for communication and integration into the Italian society’.<sup>16</sup> DA is considered ‘essential for communicating with my generation and beyond’,<sup>17</sup> indicating its significance across various age groups. Meanwhile, SA is approached with a utilitarian perspective, with individuals considering its acquisition for ‘work-related purposes’.<sup>18</sup>

The ‘Personal Identification’ theme, with 86 codes, emerges as the second most significant. This theme captures the personal cognitive elements that the informants associate with each language, specifically ‘origin’, ‘religion’, ‘identity’, and ‘culture’. The findings highlight a predilection for associating DA with ‘origin’ and ‘culture’, signifying a deep-rooted connection to one’s heritage and traditions, whereas SA is more intimately associated with ‘religion’, reflecting its centrality in religious expression. The responses underscore the pivotal role of the three languages—IT, DA, and SA—in the construction of identity.

Illustrative responses include DA being described as ‘essential for communicating with part of my family, excluding the use of English, ensuring full integration and naturalness in conversation. It also reminds me of my origins, and it’s the only medium that would make me feel “at home” in that country’.<sup>19</sup> Other responses include ‘Moroccan culture is mostly passed down orally; learning Moroccan dialect means also learning Moroccan culture’<sup>20</sup> and ‘it’s the primary criterion that defines me as Moroccan’.<sup>21</sup> SA is described as ‘a connection to my culture, religion, and identity’,<sup>22</sup> ‘very important to me as the language

of Islam, my religion',<sup>23</sup> and 'it carries cultural significance since I primarily use it to gain a perspective distinct from the Italian 'Western' one, such as accessing different media information or reading authors with styles different from European ones'.<sup>24</sup> IT is 'part of me',<sup>25</sup> and 'forms a part of my identity'.<sup>26</sup>

The third most frequently coded theme in the data is 'Linguistic Repertoire', with 72 codes, where informants ascribe specific roles to languages. IT and DA are both identified as 'mother tongues', indicative of a bilingual environment. In contrast, SA is associated with a sense of 'foreignness from the linguistic space', a perception attributed partly to the challenges encountered in its acquisition. All three languages—IT, DA, and SA—are uniformly linked to 'complementarity' in their uses, thus constituting a resource for 'Linguistic Enrichment'.

Testimonies about IT include remarks that 'It is my mother tongue, so I use it for everything';<sup>27</sup> for DA, 'It is the language I use most with my closest people (mom, dad, and relatives), the language to which I listen to music, it is a part of me'.<sup>28</sup> SA, however, is described as 'somewhat distant from my personal identity because I have always found it difficult to learn'.<sup>29</sup> Concurrently, the perspective that all three languages offer opportunities for enrichment is captured by comments that IT is associated with 'communication and a broader linguistic repertoire',<sup>30</sup> the use of SA 'increases my cultural baggage',<sup>31</sup> and the DA is 'a beautiful addition'.<sup>32</sup>

Lastly, the 'Judgments on Language' theme, with 28 codes, delves into cognitive attitudes towards languages. This theme is marked by two distinct trends. The first trend associates SA with a high degree of 'prestige' and specific 'aesthetic values'. The second trend involves all three languages—IT, DA, and SA—which are linked to a 'general importance' or hold a 'neutral position' within the linguistic repertoire. Comments regarding these languages often describe them simply as 'a language' or 'normal'.

SA is particularly noted for its 'religious significance and necessity for understanding and studying religious texts, in addition to being more elegant and formal compared to the dialect',<sup>33</sup> as one respondent notes, 'it represents everything because the Holy Quran is in *fushḥā*, and everything beautiful from the past was in *fushḥā*'.<sup>34</sup>

## 6. Discussion

The analysis of the language attitudes of second-generation Arabic speakers in Italy reveals a complex and nuanced reality regarding their interactions with the languages in their repertoire. This study focuses particularly on their perceptions of Italian and various forms of Arabic, including SA and DA, exploring the relationships among these languages. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that these languages are part of broader and more complex repertoires, indicating the participants' belonging to a globalized and super-diverse society (Blommaert 2010; Gumperz 1964; Vertovec 2007). In this context, traditional linguistic categories such as 'first language', 'second language', 'mother tongue', and 'native speaker' become less relevant, converging towards personal and community linguistic identities that are continuously evolving.

Focusing on IT, SA, and DA, this analysis sheds light on the complex linguistic representations and the diverse, albeit intertwined, attitudinal dispositions towards these languages, denoting different degrees of integration of the languages themselves in the daily lives of the participants, and allows for the recognition and identification of stereotypes and prejudices widespread in society (Dołowy-Rybińska and Hornsby 2021; Garrett 2010).

In particular, we can observe certain trends related to each language. Regarding IT, it is often observed as the favorite language of the participants. This suggests a strong sense of personal identification with the language and a sign of successful social integration. As observed elsewhere, IT, as the dominant language in society, is deemed useful for daily interaction and social advancement (King and Fogle 2006). It is perceived as a prestigious, illustrious, and poetic language—traits it shares with the associations also attributed to SA. Nonetheless, IT is also appreciated for its ease of learning and its usefulness in interpersonal relationships, even in a domestic and family context. Like DA, IT is also recognized as a

‘mother tongue’, reflecting a substantial situation of active bilingualism in the perception of second-generation Arabic speakers.

DA is perceived as a practical language, essential for daily and family communication. These representations confirm once again that the true HL is DA, not a generic Arabic and SA even less so. Not only do the language practices themselves clearly demonstrate this (Abdelsayed and Bellinzona 2024), but the analysis of attitudes highlights how second-generation Arabic speakers are aware of this, although they sometimes may deny this reality. This finding, although seemingly trivial, has significant implications. Indeed, it is true that this has been a known fact for some time. However, educational offerings in DA, in both formal and non-formal contexts in Italy, continue to be virtually nonexistent (Abdelsayed 2023). This is very serious, considering that all European language policy documents emphasize the need to ensure language maintenance (Candelier et al. 2012; Council of Europe 2018, 2022). In this sense, there is a short-circuit where the linguistic data (supported by attitudinal dispositions) do not translate into practical interventions that effectively protect the linguistic rights of users.

This situation also has an extremely negative impact on the language attitudes of the speakers themselves. Indeed, DA is often rated as the least important language, highlighting a certain social stigmatization that views the true HL as something crude, useless, and popular. At the level of personal identification, DA is valued for its connection to cultural belonging and origin and remains crucial for family interactions and the maintenance of traditions (D’Anna 2017). Outside the family context, however, it loses social significance, and its utility is underestimated (Albirini 2016).

Conversely, SA, although less frequently learned in informal settings and representing only a minor component of the linguistic repertoires of second-generation Arabic speakers in Italy in terms of knowledge and proficiency, still occupies a central role in the collective consciousness. SA is highly valued for its prestigious connotations, particularly in formal contexts and as a crucial element of religious practices, playing a significant role in shaping a Pan-Arab identity (Bassiouny 2014). This esteem is further enhanced by the rich heritage of Arabic literature, which leads individuals to describe SA using words that emphasize its aesthetic qualities, such as beauty, elegance, charm, and lexical richness.

Despite comprehensive efforts from both top-down (educational systems) and bottom-up (family initiatives) approaches to teaching SA within the Arab diaspora, mastering the language presents numerous challenges. From an attitudinal perspective, participants perceive SA as somewhat alien to their daily linguistic environment, emphasizing the difficulties they face in learning it. The data indicate that, unlike IT and DA, SA is less connected to the everyday practical and communicative functions typically associated with a ‘mother tongue’, yet it remains a vital component of the Arab linguistic identity.

Beyond the value associations of the individual languages, this study delineates the complex ways in which IT, SA, and DA interrelate at an attitudinal level among the second generation of Arabic speakers in Italy. Paradoxically, the findings reveal that SA and DA share fewer similarities than expected. Interestingly, IT is perceived as the most functional language, capable of fulfilling its roles in all social contexts. In contrast, SA and DA, according to the speakers’ perceptions, are relegated to specific settings. Notably, IT maintains a more neutral position, integrating characteristics of both SA and DA: IT and SA are associated with positive aesthetic values, while IT and DA are considered facilitators of everyday communication. Despite this, it is important to emphasize once again that all three languages—SA, DA, and IT—play significant roles not only in shaping the linguistic identity but also in the broader personal identity of the second-generation Arab diaspora in Italy.

## 7. Conclusions

This paper explores the complex and nuanced language attitudes of second-generation Arabic speakers in Italy. The data collected within the AHLI project, particularly through the specifically developed questionnaire, allowed for delineating the diverse preferences

Arabic speakers have towards the languages in their repertoire. The focus was on Italian, the language of society and essential for social integration, and Arabic, both SA and DA. The data highlight the complementarity of these languages in the participants' identity representations.

To foster linguistic diversity and social integration, this study recommends advancing language policies that recognize and value immigrant languages, including Arabic. Specifically for Arabic, it is crucial to enhance the teaching of both SA and DA, and, importantly, appreciate the practical utility of DA. Reducing the stigmatization of DA and promoting its cultural significance can strengthen collective identity and improve attitudes towards the languages.

Furthermore, it is important to implement targeted actions and measures to raise awareness among Arabic speakers about the role of their DAs, the HL. Such initiatives can improve attitudes towards DA, ensuring that it is recognized not only as a crucial element of cultural heritage but also as a valuable part of their linguistic repertoire. Increasing awareness can be achieved through educational programs, community workshops, and media campaigns that highlight the linguistic, cultural, and social importance of DA, alongside SA, in a framework that values the entire Arabic linguistic space. These efforts can contribute to a more positive perception of the HL, fostering an environment where multilingualism is valued and supported, and promoting a more inclusive society (Carbonara and Scibetta 2020; Cummins 2000; García and Wei 2014; King and Fogle 2006; May 2014).

It is important to acknowledge that this study has certain limitations, primarily that it focuses on the cognitive dimension of language attitudes and employs data from a single direct method, the Q-AHLI questionnaire. The selected methods indicate that a more thorough investigation of the components of language attitudes would be enhanced by the use of indirect techniques, such as matched-guise procedures and participant observation. The exclusive reliance on questionnaires is a limitation, as they are susceptible to response bias, whereby respondents may report what they believe is expected or what they think, rather than their actual behavior. The use of indirect methods can either serve to either corroborate the findings presented here or, alternatively, to reveal deeper and more complex insights.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the variety of proposed items and analyses conducted (quantitative, but also lexical and qualitative) enabled the acquisition of a global understanding of attitudes towards the languages in the repertoire to be acquired. Therefore, the framework established by this study provides valuable data for future research on language attitudes among second-generation Arabic speakers in Italy. The data obtained from the present study should be used to analyze in greater detail the cognitive, affective and behavioral components of language attitudes using a variety of methods.

The AHLI project, in its entirety, and this study in particular, constitute a pioneering contribution to the Italian context. In light of the aforementioned limitations, the findings should be regarded as a pivotal initial step towards a more comprehensive and profound understanding of the transmission and maintenance of Arabic as a HL in Italy and the associated language attitudes. As a work in progress, the AHLI project will continue to contribute in this field, with a commitment to overcoming the limitations faced and expanding its scope.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, I.A. and M.B.; methodology, I.A. and M.B.; formal analysis, I.A. and M.B.; investigation, I.A. and M.B.; resources, I.A. and M.B.; data curation, I.A. and M.B.; writing—original draft preparation, I.A. and M.B.; writing—review and editing, I.A. and M.B.; visualization, I.A. and M.B. The structure of the paper reflects their collaborative efforts. I.A. is responsible for Section 2.1, Section 2.2, Section 3.3, Section 5.1, Section 5.3, and Section 7, while M.B. is responsible for Section 1, Section 3.1, Section 3.2, Section 4, Section 5, and Section 5.2. Both authors jointly contributed to the composition of Section 6 and the References section. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.



**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed digital consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** Data is unavailable due to privacy and ethical restrictions. However, the Q-AHLI is available in Italian at this link: <https://forms.gle/iK1aPjV52tBcGgKi6> (accessed on 1 July 2024) and in Arabic at this link: <https://forms.gle/R2M4L9pXCZUHTGB8> (accessed on 1 July 2024).

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.istat.it> (accessed on 1 July 2024).

<sup>2</sup> We include in the same label, therefore, different groups among those identified by Rumbaut and Ima (1988) and Rumbaut (2004).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sketchengine.eu> (accessed on 1 July 2024).

<sup>4</sup> Translated from Italian: “Influenza passivamente la lingua standard e ne rallenta l’evoluzione”.

<sup>5</sup> The terms were provided in both Italian and Arabic. For the purposes of the analysis they have all been translated into Italian but, to facilitate reading of the article, they are reported here in the English translation.

<sup>6</sup> We are aware that the term “beautiful”, having been provided in the question, should be excluded. Nonetheless, we believe it is useful to show how it has been associated with all languages, but mostly with Italian.

<sup>7</sup> Translated from Italian: “ha un significato molto formale, in quanto è una lingua molto richiesta nel mondo del lavoro”.

<sup>8</sup> Translated from Italian: “uso per contesti formali poco accessibili alla maggioranza”.

<sup>9</sup> Translated from Italian: “uso poco l’arabo standard quasi solo nella lettura (libri o articoli)”.

<sup>10</sup> Translated from Italian: “è la lingua con cui so esprimere meglio le mie emozioni e i miei sentimenti”.

<sup>11</sup> Translated from Arabic: “استعملها غالبا لأنها الأكثر استعمالا والاسهل والأقرب في التعامل”.

<sup>12</sup> Translated from Italian: “comunicare nel paese di origine dei miei genitori”.

<sup>13</sup> Translated from Italian: “poter comunicare con le persone in Italia”.

<sup>14</sup> Translated from Italian: “poter comunicare con tutto il mondo arabo musulmano grazie a questa lingua di base comune”.

<sup>15</sup> Translated from Italian: “la possibilità di esprimermi al 100%”.

<sup>16</sup> Translated from Arabic: “لغة للتواصل والاندماج في المجتمع الايطالي”.

<sup>17</sup> Translated from Italian: “fondamentale per comunicare con le persone della mia generazione e non”.

<sup>18</sup> Translated from Italian: “lo imparerei solo per scopi lavorativi”.

<sup>19</sup> Translated from Italian: “necessario per la comunicazione con una parte della mia famiglia escludendo l’uso dell’inglese, capace di garantire la massima integrazione e naturalezza nel parlato. Inoltre ricorda una parte delle mie origini, e si tratta dell’unico mezzo che mi farebbe sentire “a casa” in quel paese”.

<sup>20</sup> Translated from Italian: “la cultura marocchina passa per la maggior parte oralmente, imparare il dialetto marocchino vuol dire anche apprendere la cultura marocchina”.

<sup>21</sup> Translated from Italian: “è Il primo criterio per definirmi marocchino”.

<sup>22</sup> Translated from Italian: “una connessione con la mia cultura, religione e identità”.

<sup>23</sup> Translated from Italian: “è una lingua a me molto importante in quanto è la lingua dell’Islam, la mia religione”.

<sup>24</sup> Translated from Italian: “ha un significato culturale, dal momento che lo utilizzo principalmente per avere un’altra prospettiva rispetto a quella italiana “occidentale”, ad esempio per vedere altre informazioni nei media o leggere autori con stili differenti da quelli europei”.

<sup>25</sup> Translated from Italian: “fa parte di me”.

<sup>26</sup> Translated from Italian: “fa parte della mia identità”.

<sup>27</sup> Translated from Italian: “è la mia lingua madre, quindi la uso per tutto”.

<sup>28</sup> Translated from Italian: “è la lingua che uso di più con le persone più care (mamma, papà e parenti), la lingua con cui ascolto più musica, è parte di me”.

<sup>29</sup> Translated from Italian: “è una lingua un po’ lontana da quella che è la mia persona perché ho sempre riscontrato diverse difficoltà nel volerla imparare”.

<sup>30</sup> Translated from Italian: “comunicazione e bagaglio linguistico maggiore”.

<sup>31</sup> Translated from Italian: “l’uso dell’arabo standard aumenta il mio bagaglio culturale”.

<sup>32</sup> Translated from Italian: “un qualcosa bello in più”.

<sup>33</sup> Translated from Italian: “valenza religiosa e necessaria alla comprensione e allo studio dei testi religiosi, oltre ad essere formalmente più elegante e formale rispetto al dialetto”.

<sup>34</sup> Translated from Arabic: “يمثل كل شيء لأن القرآن الكريم بالفصحى، وكل شيء جميل من الماضي كان بالفصحى”.

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