

# **Environmental Approach to language Situations and Bilingual Development of Children in Heteroethnic Families: A Comparative Study of Russia and the Arabian Gulf Countries<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

The increasing mobility of the population makes the study of language situations in heteroethnic families a critical focus for modern pedagogy and sociolinguistics. This study aims to identify specific linguistic dynamic situations in heteroethnic families in Russia and the Arabian Gulf and to evaluate the potential of the environmental approach for children's upbringing and their bilingual development. The study's novelty lies in adapting Manuilov's 'environmental approach' to the specific socio-cultural dynamics of heteroethnic families in the Arabian Gulf, a context previously unexplored in this theoretical framework. The research employs a theoretical and descriptive approach, including a comparative analysis of sociolinguistic models and a review of pedagogical theories regarding the role of the environment in personality formation. The study identifies and classifies key language practice models – 'one parent, one language' (OPOL), 'minority language at home' (MLH), and 'common family language' (CFL) – within the context of regional language policies. It highlights how dominant environments can create 'bifurcation points' where bilingualism may weaken without

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<sup>1</sup> *The work was carried out within the framework of the state assignment of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, in order to conduct applied scientific research "Formation of a multicultural educational and upbringing environment in the context of Arabic-Russian bilingualism by means of the Russian language and culture of Russia (based on cultural and educational institutions with a Russian-language component in the Arabian Gulf countries)" No. 125052906514-2*

active support. The study concluded that the environmental approach offers a flexible framework for developing a bilingual personality by transforming the family setting into a tool for language acquisition. Recommendations focus on the conscious organization of 'places of behavior' to optimize children's language growth.

**Keywords:** heteroethnic family, language situation, bilingualism, environmental approach, Russian as a heritage language.

## Introduction

Today's intensifying global migration and unprecedented population mobility have pushed the study of language dynamics within heteroethnic families to the forefront of pedagogical concern. As international contacts proliferate, intercultural marriages are becoming a structural norm, bringing together parents who embody divergent, and sometimes conflicting, linguistic and cultural lineages. Navigating the friction between these traditions is no longer just a private family matter; it is a vital puzzle for modern sociolinguistics and educational theory. However, this linguistic friction cannot be resolved through generic educational strategies, as family dynamics are inextricably linked to the broader geopolitical and legal landscapes in which they exist. To untangle these influences, a robust analytical lens is required—one that moves beyond mere description to evaluate the structural forces at play. Consequently, the present research pivots from the general phenomenon of global mobility to a rigorous theoretical exploration of specific regional ecosystems.

Given the complexity of the socio-cultural environments in the selected regions, this research adopts a theoretical research design. The study focuses on a qualitative comparative analysis of the environmental approach as applied to bilingual development. We aim to bridge the gap between abstract pedagogical theory and its practical application. The novelty of this study lies in the adaptation of Yu. S. Manuilov's 'environmental approach' concept to the specific conditions of heteroethnic families within the Arabian socio-cultural context, a perspective that has not been previously presented in the literature. To guide this analysis, the study addresses the following Research Questions:

RQ1: How do the distinct language policies of Russia and the Arabian Gulf shape the environmental conditions for bilingual development in heteroethnic families?

RQ2: What are the conceptual differences in the application of language practice models (e.g., OPOL, MLH) when transitioning from the Russian to the Arabian sociolinguistic milieu?

RQ3: How can the 'environmental approach' be systematically integrated into a pedagogical framework to prevent heritage language loss in diverse socio-cultural settings?

## **Research Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative comparative research design. Moving beyond the limitations of primary data collection (such as surveys or interviews), this work focuses on the systematic analysis and synthesis of existing academic literature, and established pedagogical models.

The methodological framework is structured around three pillars:

1. Comparative Analysis. A contrastive study of language policies and sociolinguistic landscapes in Russia and the Arabian Gulf.

2. Conceptual Mapping. The integration of the environmental approach (milieu approach) into the specific context of bilingual upbringing, treating the family setting as a structured educational space.

3. Theoretical Modeling. The construction of a systematic framework of language practice models (e.g., OPOL, MLH) adapted to the divergent regional socio-cultural conditions.

This approach allows for a high-level conceptualization of how external environmental factors shape internal family language dynamics.

## **Literature review**

The theoretical foundation of this research rests on a multifaceted analysis of the linguistic environment and the mechanisms of bilingual personality formation. In Russian pedagogical science, the environmental approach developed by Manuilov (2002) is fundamental to our work. Manuilov views the environment not merely as surroundings, but as an effective tool for managing the process of upbringing and personal development through a system of "opportunities" and "restraints".

The complexities of heterogeneity within the bilingual linguistic consciousness has been extensively covered in recent years. The intricate nature of bilingual consciousness often manifests as a form of linguistic heterogeneity – a

phenomenon dissected by Sverdlova and Mariasova (2023). By establishing rigorous criteria for this internal diversity, their work provides a granular classification of proficiency levels specifically within the domestic sphere of mixed families. This sociolinguistic granularity aligns with the broader arguments of Clark (2012), who advocates for a radical reconfiguration of language pedagogy. Clark maintains that instruction can no longer ignore the "messiness" of heterogeneous environments, suggesting that traditional, monolithic teaching methods fail to address the fluid multilingual realities of modern students.

Parallel to these structural questions is the issue of the "self" within the environment. Sedykh (2021) anchors linguistic identity in the deep-seated influence of national archetypes, suggesting that the socio-cultural setting acts as a crucible for these formative symbols. This cultural perspective finds a psychological counterpart in the research of Boltaeva (2020) and Muskhanova (2020). Their joint inquiries transition from abstract archetypes to the immediate, lived experience of adolescents, framing the heteroethnic family not merely as a home, but as a critical psychological engine for ethnic self-identification. Together, these scholars suggest that in a mixed environment, identity is not a static trait but a dynamic process negotiated between internal heritage and external social pressures. They rightly note that within heteroethnic families, the psychological component of upbringing becomes decisive for forming a stable identity.

The sociolinguistic context of globalization and its impact on language practices is presented in the works of John and George (2024), who analyze the dominance of the English language as a contemporary global challenge. The processes of language contact and variation are described in detail in the studies of Ravindranath (2015), while the theoretical foundations of second-language acquisition in multilingual settings are systematized in the fundamental work of Butler (2012).

Comparative and transcultural studies hold particular significance for this research. Savchenko (2021) interprets bilingualism as a phenomenon of transcultural communication, which is highly relevant for foreign language pedagogy. The practical aspects of bilingual functioning in specific regional conditions are reflected in the latest research by Hazaymeh (2025), focusing on Jordanian-Russian families.

Finally, the research base was significantly supplemented by the work of Betilmerzaeva, Buralova, and El-Bezhzhani (2025). These authors provide a detailed analysis of cultural and educational practices for preserving the Russian language in

heteroethnic families within the Arabian Gulf and Russia. By filling a gap in the existing literature, they propose specific mechanisms for implementing the environmental approach within the unique sociolinguistic landscape of the Middle East.

### **The role of the environment in human development: three perspectives on the problem**

The question of the role of the environment in human development still has no clear answer in science, there are three main approaches, each of which explains the relationship between personality and environment in its own way: environmental determinism, indeterminism, and their synthesis. Environmental determinism asserts that the environment completely shapes human behavior and consciousness (Manuilov, 2002, pp. 14-24). This idea has ancient roots and is reflected in folk proverbs ("You are who you hang out with"). This view includes cosmological and astrological determinism, which links a person's fate and character to the position of the stars and planets at the moment of their birth; geographical determinism, which considers that natural factors (climate, landscape) shape the lifestyle and character of a people; economic and social determinism, which asserts that a person's consciousness and behavior depend on their economic conditions, social status and environment; informational and technological determinism, according to which the media and technology completely change our thinking and perception of the world.

Indeterminism, on the contrary, insists that humans are free beings who create themselves. They are capable of overcoming the influence of their environment and choosing their own path.

Proponents of this view (e.g., existentialists) believe that the "image of the self" and self-awareness are the main keys to understanding human behavior.

The dual role of the environment, or synthesis, offers a compromise, arguing that the environment plays both a formative and developmental role. To do this, it is necessary to distinguish between two aspects of personality: formation and development. Formation refers to typical, or socially conditioned, personality traits. The environment limits human freedom and directs it towards a certain type of behavior (for example, it shapes the 'average American' or the 'new Russian'). This process dominates during periods of stability. Development refers to individual, or unique, traits. The environment develops personality by providing it with freedom of choice and opportunities. This process is most pronounced at points of bifurcation (turning points, moments of crisis), when even insignificant factors can lead to large-

scale and unpredictable changes. Thus, the environment is not just a passive backdrop, but a dynamic factor capable of both limiting and expanding human possibilities.

### **The emergence of the semantic field of the concept of "environment"**

While the "environmental approach" is a modern term, its roots trace back to antiquity. Marcus Fabius Quintilian (1st century AD) was among the first to systematize the role of the linguistic environment in personality formation. In *Institutio Oratoria*, he argued that a child's language culture is determined by their immediate surroundings rather than innate inability. Quintilian emphasized that education begins within the family, advocating for a "pure" linguistic environment and learning through play to prevent an aversion to study. Quintilian's early emphasis on the "purity" of the linguistic atmosphere and the pedagogical weight of mentors did more than provide practical advice; it established a primitive yet enduring blueprint for modern environmental theories of language acquisition. This classical seed found fertile ground during the 17th and 18th centuries, as the Enlightenment shifted the philosophical focus from divine predestination to the transformative power of human experience.

Among the pioneers of this shift was Thomas Hobbes, whose rejection of innate ideas paved the way for a more rigorous, empirical methodology. Hobbes (1989) posited that human intellect is not a static gift but a product of induction and constant interaction with the external world. He identified a complex constellation of influences—ranging from innate temperament and subjective self-perception to the potent "authority of others"—that coalesce to sculpt the individual. Of particular relevance to modern family pedagogy is Hobbes's observation on the "firm rooting" of habits. By asserting that the impressions gathered in youth are the most resilient, Hobbes effectively identified the family and the immediate social circle not just as a backdrop, but as the primary engine of personality development.

A crucial element of Hobbes's theory for our study is his distinction between the "immediate environment" and "social conditioning". While the environment – consisting of family, mentors, and personal experience – shapes individual inclinations and habits, Hobbes identified the State as the highest, universal level of the environment. According to his framework, the State transforms chaotic individual influences into an orderly system of social conduct through laws and common measures of virtue. Thus, Hobbes established that a person's linguistic and moral

development is a socially conditioned process, where the State acts as the ultimate legitimate environment determining the "good" for communal life (Hobbes, 1989).

John Locke further expanded the environmentalist paradigm in his seminal work, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Proposing the metaphor of the *tabula rasa* (blank slate), Locke argued that the human soul possesses no innate moral or intellectual principles at birth; instead, all knowledge and character traits are acquired through experience and interaction with the environment (Locke, 1985). He contended that moral rules are social constructs approved for their utility to public welfare rather than their inherent divinity.

Central to our study is Locke's explanation of how the environment shapes a child's mind from an early age. He asserted that ideas instilled by parents, educators, and authorities are accepted as absolute truths because they are introduced before a child develops critical reflection. This early environmental "imprinting" is so profound that individuals often mistake learned habits for innate nature. Locke concludes that habit possesses more power than nature, and what is perceived as a "voice of conscience" is, in fact, a reflection of the upbringing and customs prevalent in one's specific socio-cultural milieu. This perspective underscores the decisive role of the family setting as the primary environment for linguistic and moral development.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau fundamentally challenged the empiricist view of the child as a *tabula rasa*. In *Emile, or On Education*, Rousseau argued that children possess innate goodness and individuality that must be protected from the corrupting influence of civilization (Rousseau, 1981). He proposed a "negative education", which focuses on slowing down formal instruction to prevent the premature introduction of social norms. For Rousseau, the ideal environment is nature itself, where physical activity and sensory experience foster a harmonious development of both body and mind. This marked a shift from the environment as a tool for "writing" knowledge to the environment as a context for "preserving" natural potential.

Building upon Rousseau's naturalist principles, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi shifted the pedagogical focus from isolated nature back to the family environment. In works such as *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children*, Pestalozzi identified the domestic sphere – and the mother's role specifically – as the most vital educational environment (Pestalozzi, 1981). He advocated for "naturalness" in learning, emphasizing that cognitive development should begin with simple sensory impressions (*Anschauung* or contemplation) rather than abstract book knowledge.

By linking language acquisition to concrete experience and practical labor within the home, Pestalozzi provided a bridge between Rousseau's naturalism and the modern environmental approach.

Friedrich Froebel transitioned environmental theory into early childhood institutions by establishing the kindergarten. He viewed the educational environment as a "garden" where children's divine essence unfolds through play and "gifts" (geometric didactic materials). Froebel's primary contribution was the systematization of play as the highest form of development, where a specially organized physical setting facilitates the harmony between the child and nature (Knyazev, 2025).

This concept was further revolutionized by Maria Montessori, who introduced the "prepared environment". Moving away from traditional teacher-led instruction, Montessori argued that a child possesses an innate "spiritual fire" and an absorbent mind capable of self-education if provided with the right conditions. The prepared environment is characterized by: adaptability (furniture and materials scaled to the child's physical needs), didactic materials (self-correcting tools that allow for independent error-correction), the educator as guide (the teacher shifts from a source of authority to an observer and "guide for spontaneous work") (Montessori, 1912).

John Dewey transformed the environmental approach into a fundamental principle of modern democratic education. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (2000) argued that we do not educate directly, but rather through the medium of the environment. He distinguished between mere "training" (external behavioral responses) and true "learning" (internalizing shared social values through joint activity). For Dewey, the environment is a tool for transmitting beliefs and aspirations. He identified the school as a "special environment" designed to fulfill three functions that the spontaneous home environment often cannot: simplification (selecting and organizing the complex elements of modern culture), purification (filtering out negative social influences to create a "worthy" space for growth), integration (balancing the diverse influences of family, street, and state into a unified social outlook).

### **Summary of the historical evolution**

The development of environmental theory from antiquity to the early 20th century represents a clear trajectory of increasing complexity:



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Quintilian: the environment as a local physical and linguistic setting.

Hobbes & Locke: the environment as the state-level regulator and the source of all empirical knowledge.

Rousseau & Pestalozzi: the environment as a protective, natural, and domestic context.

Froebel & Montessori: the environment as a scientifically prepared, didactic space for self-unfolding.

Dewey: the environment as a social institution (the school) that mediates between the individual and the complexities of modern society.

This historical progression establishes that the environment is not a passive backdrop but a formative force that "leads a person to see and feel" according to the values of their community (Dewey, 2000). This foundational logic provides the necessary framework for applying Yu. S. Manuilov's modern environmental approach to the contemporary challenges of bilingualism in heteroethnic families.

To further refine your literature review and align it with the "narrow down" requirement, we will synthesize the contributions of the 20th-century giants: Makarenko, Vygotsky, Lewin, and Bronfenbrenner. This section transitions from the "prepared environment" of the early 1900-s to the socio-ecological systems that underpin modern research.

### **The collective and socio-cultural turn: Makarenko and Vygotsky**

In the early Soviet period, Anton Makarenko shifted the focus from the individual to the collective environment. In his *Pedagogical Poem*, he argued that personality is forged within a "living organism" of a group governed by shared goals and discipline (Makarenko, 1984). For Makarenko, the environment is a tool for social reintegration, where the collective's norms exert a corrective pressure far more effective than individual instruction.

This social focus was given psychological depth by Lev Vygotsky. His cultural-historical theory posits that the social environment is the primary source of development, rather than a mere backdrop. Vygotsky (2005) emphasized that higher mental functions, such as thinking and speech, emerge through social interaction. He introduced the concept of the environment as a "social situation of development", where external stimuli – tasks, requirements, and goals – act as the necessary "sociotypes" that transform a child's biological potential into cultural reality.

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**Field theory and the ecology of development: Lewin and Bronfenbrenner**

Kurt Lewin moved environmental theory toward a dynamic, mathematical model with his Field theory. He proposed the formula  $B = f(P, E)$ , stating that behavior (B) is a function of the Person (P) and their Environment (E), which together form the "life space" (Lewin, 2001). Lewin's work highlighted that the environment is subjective; it is a field of psychological forces (vectors) and "valences" (attractions or repulsions) that determine a child's cognitive structure and social belonging.

Finally, Urie Bronfenbrenner integrated these perspectives into a comprehensive Ecological systems theory. Influenced by both Vygotsky and Lewin, Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that child development is nested within four levels of environmental influence:

Microsystem: the immediate setting (family, school).

Mesosystem: the connections between microsystems (e.g., home-school interaction).

Exosystem: external social structures (e.g., a parent's workplace).

Macrosystem: the overarching cultural values, laws, and ideologies.

**Conclusion: toward the modern environmental approach**

The evolution of these theories demonstrates a consensus: the environment is an active, multi-layered, and formative force. From Makarenko's collective discipline to Vygotsky's cultural mediation, Lewin's psychological field, and Bronfenbrenner's ecological hierarchy, the scientific community moved toward a holistic understanding of how external contexts shape internal development. This theoretical trajectory culminates in the environmental approach of Yu. S. Manuilov, which provides the specific methodology for our study. By synthesizing these historical insights, we can now analyze how the specific "life spaces" of heteroethnic families in Russia and the Arabian Gulf function as complex ecosystems that either support or hinder bilingual growth.

**Yu. S. Manuilov's environmental approach as a methodological foundation**

The modern environmental approach, developed by Yu. S. Manuilov, integrates classical pedagogical ideas into a functional framework for analyzing the educational process. The novelty of this study lies in the adaptation of this model to

the specific conditions of heteroethnic families within the Arabian socio-cultural context.

Manuilov defines the environment through a system of key variables: niches, elements (elements/forces), and mediators. *Niches* are spaces of opportunity (family, school, digital environment) from which a child draws developmental resources. *Elements* (elements / forces) are dynamic social currents (language fashion, the dominance of English, cultural traditions) that propel the child toward specific behaviors. *Mediators* are individuals (parents, teachers) or tools (gadgets, books) that connect the child to niches and manage the impact of social elements.

In the context of our research, the environmental approach allows us to observe how the "element" of global English in the Gulf countries transforms the family "niche," requiring parents to act as proactive "mediators" to preserve their heritage language.

### **The environmental approach in pedagogy as an evolution of views on the role of the environment in education**

Traditional approaches in pedagogy (activity-based, personality-based) recognized the importance of the environment, but viewed it as a condition or factor. The environment could be either favorable or unfavorable for the realization of the potential of these approaches. Education was managed directly through the organization of activities, and the environment remained secondary. With the introduction of the formula "environment, heredity and education" and an emphasis on interaction, the environmental approach, which viewed the environment as a means of education, was lost. Pedagogy focused on managing the process of interaction between the child and the environment, rather than managing the environment itself.

Interest in the environment as a means of education is returning, as noted by Manuilov, due to several factors: the ineffectiveness of direct approaches when the environment conflicts with the educational system; the development of the environmental movement in related fields (architecture, design, psychology); the spread of synergetic and structural-functional analysis, which allow complex systems to be managed indirectly (Manuilov, 2002, pp. 3-4). The environmental approach is not just a new view of education, but a full-fledged theory and technology of indirect management, in which it is possible to design and produce educational results by influencing not the child directly, but through the organization of their environment.

According to Manuilov, there are two main approaches to understanding the environment in education, which the author conditionally calls "molecular" and "factorial." These approaches differ in how they define and analyze the environment, as well as in the methodological possibilities they offer (Manuilov, 2002, pp. 7-14).

"Molecular" models of the environment view the environment as consisting of "molecules" or integral units. Authors who adhere to this approach believe that the environment is not just a set of disparate elements, but an organized structure that influences humans. For example, Mati Heidmets defines the environment as that part of the world with which the subject interacts. It does not exist on its own, but arises only in the relationship between "subject-environment" relationships. Heidmets divides the environment into physical, social and spiritual, and argues that they are all interconnected. He also distinguishes between the objective and subjective environments, emphasizing that both are important. He considers the units of the environment to be "places of activity" and "spheres of influence" (Manuilov, 2002, pp. 7-8).

For Glazychev, the "molecule" of the environment is "place." He criticizes traditional urban planning, which divides territory into functional zones, and argues that this destroys the "spirit of place." A place is not just a territory, but a unique, unrepeatable unit that has its own name and spirit, determined by the interaction of people (Manuilov, 2002, pp. 8-9).

Gibson also believes that the environment consists of "places" rather than points in space. The main idea of his concept is the "possibilities" that the environment provides. He rejects the concept of "stimulus" as inadequate because it is short-lived. Opportunities, on the contrary, are invariant and always exist, regardless of the observer's needs. Human perception boils down to seeing these opportunities (Manuilov, 2002, pp. 9-10).

Roger Barker's "molecule" is a "place of behavior" (PB). He argues that human behavior depends more on place than on individual traits. Each PB functions according to its own laws and has a program (sequence of actions). Places of behavior are self-regulating ecosystems that strive for self-preservation (Manuilov, 2002, pp. 11-12).

"Factor" models of the environment view the environment as a set of individual factors that influence a person. Markovich and others believe that the environment is divided into natural (natural factors) and artificial (man-made). Buieva describes the environment as a set of material and spiritual components

consisting of many factors: public consciousness, mass media, group psychology, values, etc. (Manuilov, 2002, p. 12).

One can certainly agree with Manuilov that "molecular" models are more useful for a holistic perception of the environment, allowing us to see it as a convergence of different places and find optimal solutions, while "factorial" models are important for in-depth study of specifics and details. Despite their differences, both approaches are important and complement each other in constructing a holistic concept of the environmental approach in education.

### **Theoretical foundations of the environmental approach in teaching and education**

The environmental approach is a pedagogical and language method that considers the environment as a key factor in learning and development. Instead of focusing solely on direct teaching, this approach emphasizes that the environment can be a powerful tool that shapes knowledge, skills and behavior. An analysis of the theoretical foundations of the environmental approach allows us to define it as a system of views on education and training through the purposeful creation and management of the environment. Unlike traditional methods, where the main focus is on direct influence on the student, the environmental approach considers the environment as a third, equal participant in the educational process. The goal of the teacher or parent is not simply to impart knowledge, but to organize an environment that will stimulate the child's independent development and self-learning.

In pedagogy, the environmental approach means creating an educational environment that stimulates active learning and self-development. This is achieved through:

Creating a rich environment. This involves creating conditions where the child is constantly surrounded by the language (or languages) they need to learn. This can be either a natural environment (communication with native speakers) or an artificial one (specially selected books, games, media resources, bilingual or multilingual books, etc.).

Active interaction. Learning takes place not through passive perception, but through active participation. The child must be able to use the language in real-life situations, which makes its acquisition natural and meaningful.

Self-learning and self-development. The environmental approach stimulates the child's internal motivation, encouraging their curiosity and desire for independent learning.

Complexity and integrity. The environment is viewed not as a set of separate elements, but as a single, interconnected complex that includes material, social, and cultural components.

In linguistics, the environmental approach is particularly important for language acquisition. It assumes that language is best learned in a natural environment where it is used for real communication purposes:

The most effective way to apply this approach is through complete immersion in an environment where the language is the primary means of communication.

Creating an artificial environment. In situations where immersion is not possible, special conditions are created: watching films and reading books in the language being studied; communicating with native speakers, including online; using the language in everyday situations, such as cooking a recipe in a foreign language.

### **Description of the specifics of language situations in heteroethnic families in Russia and the Arabian Gulf countries based on a study of the potential of the environmental approach in education and upbringing**

In the context of heteroethnic families, the environmental approach is particularly important, as it is the family that is the main environment for the formation of language identity. Parents, as speakers of different languages, play a key role in creating conditions for bilingualism. Their task is not only to speak their own languages, but also to create situations in which both languages are in demand and valued. This can be done by using the "one parent, one language" method, holding family celebrations with elements of both cultures, reading books and watching films in different languages. In this way, the family becomes a kind of "laboratory" where the child gains unique experience of intercultural and language interaction.

Language policy and the situation in Russia and the Arabian Gulf countries differ significantly, which has an impact on the lives of heteroethnic families. In Russia, language policy is aimed at preserving and developing language diversity, with Russian having the status of the state language and serving as the main means of interethnic communication.

Russian is the dominant language in public, political and educational spheres. Alongside it, the languages of indigenous peoples are recognized and supported in

the national republics and districts. Russian-national bilingualism is widespread in Russia, where Russian is used as a lingua franca. However, Anglo-Russian bilingualism is on the rise in cities and large metropolitan areas.

The language situation in the Arabian Gulf countries (such as the UAE, Qatar, Jordan, and Bahrain) is characterized by the dominance of Arabic as the official language, but English plays a key role in intercultural communication, business, and education. Official language policy supports Arabic, but language practice effectively creates a two-tier system. Arabic is used in government institutions, on television and in the daily life of the indigenous population. However, English is the working language in most international companies and higher education institutions. Due to the large number of foreign workers and expatriates, numerous migrant languages (e.g. Hindi, Urdu) are spoken in the Gulf countries. Comparative analysis of the language policies in the studied regions is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of language policies and their impact on family language practices

<b>Region</b>	<b>Dominant language</b>	<b>Status of minority languages</b>	<b>Key risks for children</b>	<b>Role of the educational environment</b>
<b>Russian Federation</b>	Russian (state language)	Protected at the level of federal subjects (republics). Possesses institutional support.	Risk of heritage language attrition due to the dominance of Russian in digital and urban spaces.	Schools serve as a primary tool for preserving bilingualism through native language programs.
<b>Arabian Gulf Countries (UAE, Qatar, etc.)</b>	Arabic (official); English (de facto lingua franca)	English dominates in business and private education. Expatriate languages are	Loss of Arabic or heritage languages due to the globalization of communication. Linguistic	Private international schools often ignore heritage languages, creating an “artificial”

		often socially isolated.	fragmentation of identity.	monolingual environment.
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As shown in the table, the main difference lies in the nature of language dominance: in Russia, it is the state language that prevails, whereas in the Gulf countries, the global lingua franca (English) poses a greater challenge to both the official language and heritage languages.

Applying Yu.S. Manuilov's environmental approach allows for a novel interpretation of the linguistic differences between the Russian Federation and the Arabian Gulf.

Niches: in Russia, the family "niche" is supported by the state educational environment (native language programs in schools), creating conditions for stable bilingualism. In the Gulf countries, the family niche is often isolated because the educational niche (private international schools) is entirely dominated by English.

Elements: the primary "element" in the Gulf is globalization and the "Anglicization" of communication, which creates a "bifurcation point" in a child's development. In Russia, the dominant element is the state language (Russian) in digital and urban spaces, requiring different family strategies to protect heritage languages.

Mediators: our analysis demonstrates that successful heritage language maintenance in both regions depends on parents' conscious roles as primary "mediators." While mediation in Russia is shared between the family and the school, in the Gulf, the responsibility rests almost entirely on parents, who must deliberately organize the environment to support the heritage language (using OPOL or MLH models).

In heteroethnic families in the Gulf countries, where one parent is Arab and the other is foreign, English is often used as the common language of communication. This can lead to children not fully mastering Arabic or another language of one of their parents, or using a hybrid form of communication.

The specifics of language practices in heteroethnic families depend on a variety of factors, including state language policy, cultural attitudes, parents' personal preferences, and their language competence. These practices form unique patterns that influence children's language development.



The review of the formation and evolution of the concepts of "environment" and "environmental approach" can help in analyzing the specifics of language situations in heteroethnic families in Russia and the Arabian Gulf countries, paying particular attention to how the environment shapes and develops personality and language.

Within the environmental approach, language is not just a means of communication, but an integral part of the environment that actively shapes personality. According to Heidegger, language is "the home of our being" that shapes the human psyche. This means that language is not just a tool we use, but the very environment in which we think and exist. In a heteroethnic family, at least two such "environments" coexist.

The language environment can be analyzed using a "molecular" model (Glazytchev, Barker), which allows us to consider the "places" (family, school, neighborhood) and "opportunities" (communication with native speakers, watching films, reading books) provided by each language. Using a "factorial" model, it is possible to study specific factors that influence language: the level of education of parents, their attitude to their native and second languages, economic conditions, etc.

In a heteroethnic family, the language environment has a dual role in formation and development. Formation is expressed in the language of the dominant society or the most active parent, who will shape the child's social type necessary for successful adaptation. This can lead to the language of the less influential parent being learned to a lesser extent. However, if the family creates conditions for "free choice," that is, if both languages are actively used, the child has "freedom of choice" and their language individuality develops. The wider the "range of opportunities" (e.g., communicating with both parents, participating in joint leisure activities with other members of heteroethnic families, travelling to each of their homelands), the richer their language development will be.

There are "bifurcation points" in a child's language development when their language environment becomes particularly susceptible to change.

In heteroethnic families in Russia, where the Russian-speaking environment dominates, a crisis may arise when the child starts kindergarten or school, and their bilingualism may weaken. In heteroethnic families in the Arabian Gulf countries, where one parent is foreign and the other is local, Arabic will dominate in public spaces. "Bifurcation points" may arise when the child enters an international school

where instruction is in English, or when the child begins to actively communicate with peers in Arabic, and their second language may take a back seat.

As our theoretical analysis has shown, the environment can be not only a condition but also a means of education. Parents and teachers can purposefully organize the language environment to achieve a specific result. For example, they can create "places of behavior" (Barker) where one language will dominate and another will dominate in other places.

For example, in a heteroethnic family in Russia, where one of the parents is, say, Arabic-speaking, a rule can be established that at home with mum, only Arabic is spoken, and outside and with dad, Russian is spoken, which will serve as an "educational tool" for maintaining bilingualism. Or in the Arabian Gulf countries, where Arabic dominates, "family places" can be organised with visits to cultural events or communication with relatives in the language of the second parent in order to maintain it.

Conclusion. Analyzing language situations in heteroethnic families in Russia and the Arabian Gulf countries using an environmental approach allows us to go beyond simple explanations and understand how a complex, multi-level environment affects a child's language and development.

### **Recommendations for specific steps for parents and educational institutions**

Based on the environmental approach, recommendations for parents and educational institutions in Russia and the Arabian Gulf countries are determined by how they organize the child's language environment. Key models of language practices, such as 'one parent – one language' (OPOL), 'minority language at home' (MLH) and 'common family language' (CFL), should be viewed not simply as techniques, but as the conscious formation or development of a language environment.

The "one parent, one language" (OPOL) method is one of the most popular and effective strategies, as it aims to create a clear connection between language and interlocutor in the child's mind, thereby promoting bilingualism. However, in conditions where the language of society dominates, such as Russian in Russia or English/Arabic in the Arabian Gulf countries, the language of one of the parents may be displaced if its use is not reinforced by the external environment.

The "Minority Language at Home" (MLH) method is implemented when parents agree to use a language that is not dominant in society exclusively at home,

essentially creating a special "niche" for it that allows the minority language to be preserved. However, this can lead to a limited vocabulary in the child, as they may lack practice in the language outside the home.

The "common family language" (CFL) method involves choosing one language, most often the dominant one in society, for communication within the family, which simplifies communication and socialization for the child. However, in this case, there is a risk that the parents' languages other than the chosen one may be lost. This is an example of how the environment shapes a child, guiding their development along the most obvious path, but limiting their individual language palette.

Particular attention should be paid to bifurcation points – critical moments of transition in the educational environment (such as entering kindergarten or school) when a child's linguistic balance is most vulnerable. During these periods, the parent's role as a "mediator" becomes decisive. Upon entering a foreign-language school (e.g., an English-medium school in the Gulf), the parent must compensate for the pressure of external social "elements" by strengthening the domestic "niche" of the heritage language. Instead of passive observation, parents must act as active regulators (conscious mediation), organizing "places of behavior" where the use of the heritage language is mandatory and valued. At moments of identity crisis, parents need to artificially create a positive "valence" for the native culture through media resources and shared activities, preventing the heritage language from being displaced by the dominant environment.

### **Revised limitations and Conclusion**

Notwithstanding the depth of the conceptual synthesis presented, this investigation is bound by certain structural limitations. Primarily, the study remains rooted in the theoretical and methodological domain. Our focus was intentionally directed toward reconciling divergent pedagogical paradigms and dissecting the architecture of regional policies, rather than the acquisition of primary empirical data. As a result, the proposed models for bilingual upbringing function as robust theoretical constructs that still require rigorous validation through field-based methodologies – namely, longitudinal ethnographic observations or structured interviewing within heteroethnic households.

Furthermore, the geographical breadth of this comparison – spanning both the Russian Federation and the Arabian Gulf – necessarily overlooks the internal micro-heterogeneity of these regions. Socio-cultural and linguistic currents are far from

monolithic; for instance, the dynamics in Russia's autonomous republics or the specific legislative nuances between Gulf states may produce divergent outcomes in the application of the milieu approach. Recognizing these localized "blind spots" is essential for future researchers who seek to transition this environmental framework from high-level conceptualization to site-specific practice.

After analyzing the language situations in heteroethnic families in Russia and the Arabian Gulf countries, we concluded that the environmental approach is the most effective and promising tool, as it ensures the harmonious language and cultural development of children. The study found that although Russia's language policy, which is oriented towards the coexistence of multiple languages with Russian as the dominant language, creates different challenges and opportunities than the language policy of the Gulf countries, where Arabic and English coexist, in both environments the effectiveness of such models of language behavior as "one parent – one language" or "common family language" directly depends on the awareness and consistency of parents. The key role of the environment lies precisely in the fact that an environmental approach helps to overcome the challenges associated with language inequality.

Moreover, we have confirmed that the key to successful language development is not just knowledge of the language, but also its active use in a rich and supportive environment. The potential of the environmental approach, which lies in its flexibility and adaptability to the specific conditions of each family, makes it an indispensable tool for the formation of a bilingual personality.

Considering the unique sociocultural landscape of the Arabian Gulf countries, where Russian functions solely as a heritage language in the face of fierce competition with the dominant English as a lingua franca and official Arabic, we emphasize the fundamental difference between this environment and traditional migration contexts. This difference, conditioned by the temporary, expatriate status of most heteroethnic families, requires the researcher not to analyze individual speech errors, but to develop a methodological framework for an environmental approach aimed at compensating for the lack of institutional support for minority languages in the region's educational systems.

Based on the analysis, key areas for further research were identified that require more in- depth study. In particular, long-term studies are needed to track how language practices change over time and to assess the long-term effects of various strategies, such as the "one parent, one language" method. In addition, further study

of the impact of bilingual schools and kindergartens on the language development of children in heteroethnic families is needed, as it is important to analyze which programs and methodologies are most effective and how they can be adapted to different sociocultural contexts.

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## المنهج البيئي للمواقف اللغوية والتطور ثنائي اللغة للأطفال في الأسر متعددة الأعراق: دراسة مقارنة بين روسيا ودول الخليج العربي

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### المستخلص

إن ازدياد حراك السكان يجعل دراسة الأوضاع اللغوية في الأسر متعددة الأعراق مهمة بالغة الأهمية لعلم التربية الحديثة، وعلم اللغة الاجتماعي. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد خصوصيات الأوضاع اللغوية في الأسر متعددة الأعراق في روسيا ومنطقة الخليج العربي، وتقييم إمكانات المنهج البيئي في تنشئة الأطفال، وتنمية ثنائية اللغة لديهم. وتكمن حداثة الدراسة في تكييف "المنهج البيئي" المانويلوف مع الديناميكيات الاجتماعية، والثقافية الخاصة للأسر متعددة الأعراق في منطقة الخليج العربي، وهو سياق لم يتم استكشافه سابقاً

ضمن هذا الإطار النظر. وتستعمل الدراسة منهجاً نظرياً ووصفياً، يشمل تحليلاً مقارنة للنماذج اللغوية الاجتماعية ومراجعة للنظريات التربوية المتعلقة بدور البيئة في تكوين الشخصية. ونحدد الدراسة وتصنف نماذج الممارسات اللغوية الرئيسة "أب واحد، لغة واحدة"، و"لغة الأقلية في المنزل"، و"لغة الأسرة المشتركة" في سياق السياسات اللغوية الإقليمية. وتسلب الضوء على كيفية خلق البيئات السائدة "نقاط تحول" قد تضعف فيها ثنائية اللغة دون دعم فعال. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن المنهج البيئي يوفر إطاراً مرناً لتنمية شخصية ثنائية اللغة من خلال تحويل البيئة الأسرية إلى أداة لاكتساب اللغة. وتركز التوصيات على التنظيم الواعي لـ "مواقع السلوك" لتحسين النمو اللغوي للأطفال.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الأسرة متعددة الأعراق، الموقف اللغوي، ثنائية اللغة، المنهج البيئي، اللغة الروسية كلغة تراثية