Formulation and justification of the relevance of the problem. Languages are regarded as attractive according to the economic power or cultural values and prestige attributed to them by the mainstream of a society, which tends to privilege national or international languages. Language education reflects unstated government policies and minority group aspirations as well. Education in only one language is not taken for granted in most regions of the world. In Europe bilingualism or multilingualism is more common, resulting in different types of bilingual education. For Ukrainian
system of education it is important to study bilingual education typical of European countries, such as the Slovak Republic, being close to Ukraine geographically and mentally, to clarify what patterns of languages used in education are more successful. Besides, in Slovakia bilingual education became an extraordinarily popular instrument for the fulfillment of the general European policy of developing language diversity and promoting «European plurilingualism and multilingualism». That is an up-to-date issue for Ukrainian educational policy as well.

Analysis of recent researches and publications. Steve McCarty, professor from Osaka Jogakuin University claims bilingualism to be the study of languages in context, typically in situations where people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds share the same space. He analyzes bilingualism into four levels: individual, family, societal, and school levels [8]. Bilingual education is bilingualism at the school level. It is not to be confused with bilingual child-raising [7], such as speaking two languages to an infant systematically at home, which is bilingualism at the family level. Bilingual education should involve teaching in two or more languages in a school, that is, more than one language as the medium of instruction for students to learn regular school subjects.

Significant empirical research reflecting bilingual education in the Slovak Republic is nearly non-existent. One of the reasons is that the number of bilingual schools (56 in total) does not enable Slovak researchers to create a relevant sample as well as required conditions for pedagogical experiments. Nevertheless the research has been conducted by K. Horváthová, S. Pokrivcaková and others in the field of comparison of both bilingual and non-bilingual schools. M. Gondova, B. Menzlova and others have succeeded in the sphere of CLIL method as a constituent part of bilingual education. Despite of different complications, three experimental research projects on bilingual form of teaching foreign languages have been currently conducted or still are being conducted by the State Institute of Education.

The purpose of the article: Thus, this paper aims to find out what is bilingual education in Slovakia today and what purposes it serves.

The main material of the study. The Slovak legislation also provides for education in several foreign languages (only six languages may be taught as foreign languages in Slovakia: English, German, Russian, French, Spanish, and Italian). It means that the model L1 + FL is the only type of bilingual education that is terminologically recognized as (truly) bilingual by the Slovak school legislation [14]. L1 + FL means that instruction is given in both L1 and FL (a language that is neither a learner's mother language nor an official language used in the country). Here we should mention other existing combinations such as: L1 + L2 – instruction that combines L1 (a mother language; the first language, a native language) with L2 (a second language; the language of instruction that is not a learner’s mother language but is used as an official, state language in the country); L2 + FL – instruction provided in L2 and FL; FL1 + FL2 – instruction given in two different foreign languages that are neither a learner’s mother language nor an official language used in the country.

In official documents of Slovak Ministry of Education bilingual education is seen generally as one of the means of protecting European linguistic diversity and European multilingualism, which is a required ability of all Europeans to communicate in at least 3 languages, as stated in various European documents [2, 3, 4].

Some school systems claim to practice bilingual education because their cultural minority students know another language aside from the one used in schools, but such programs with a monolingual medium of formal instruction do not actually represent a type of bilingual education at all. With such diverse aims and resulting educational systems existing in the world, a taxonomy can only classify common patterns, but based on worldwide research sources, C. Baker has formulated ten types of bilingual education spanning four editions of his Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism.

The classification we consider is important to understand how bilingual education works in the Slovak Republic. So, there are the following types of programs: submersion (structured immersion); submersion with withdrawal classes / sheltered English; segregationist; transitional; mainstream with foreign language teaching and separatist which are weak forms. Then come strong forms of bilingual education with the following types of program: immersion; maintenance / heritage language; two-way / dual language and mainstream bilingual.

As we have mentioned, C. Baker by the typical language outcomes among students distinguishes weak and strong forms of bilingual education basically whether or not children become or remain bilingual. In some cases the weak forms of bilingual education may actually be monolingual forms of education. In strong forms of bilingual education, reading and writing are conducted in both languages, resulting in biliteracy [1].

While analyzing ways of providing bilingual education in the Slovak Republic we should dwell on different types of programs they use. At the beginning of the 21st century this education started its development so actively that some parents worried a lot that it could tend to result in the cognitive damage of losing their children’s native language proficiency. Then Ministry of Education went beyond explanations to persuade families about the importance of attending bilingual schools.
Originally, bilingual schools could be established only on the basis of international agreements between the Slovak Republic and the countries in which a foreign language (a working language in classes) is used as an official state language. These days, any school may provide a bilingual study program if at least three of its compulsory subjects are taught in a foreign language [14]. The maximum number of subjects taught in a foreign language is not limited. In both types of bilingual schools (established by an international agreement or by a school curriculum), the state language (Slovak) is taught as a compulsory subject. Bilingual schools established under international agreements do not need to follow the Slovak national curriculum. They follow an international study program accredited by the Ministry of Education of both countries involved. Bilingual schools of the second type need to follow the Slovak national curriculum and the related articles of the Conception of Teaching Foreign Languages at Primary and Secondary Schools [6].

In the Slovak Republic as in other countries where one language is dominant they have the same predicament with English and other various foreign languages taught. Mainstream with Foreign Language Teaching is the usual pattern where the mainstream language majority students study a foreign language several hours a week, which does not provide enough exposure and interaction in the second foreign language for students to become bilingual. Far removed from environments where it would be necessary and rewarding to use the foreign language, it is too little and started too late. Therefore Slovak teachers consider this model to be ineffective.

A very successful model for majority language students is immersion, usually in another language of high status, cultural prestige, and economic value. The majority children or at least their parents choose an immersion bilingual education program for the utmost academic advancement.

Immersion originated in Canada that has developed a national policy of bilingualism and multiculturalism, with English and French as official languages. In the Slovak Republic immersion bilingual education has been implemented widely for many years and adopted by Canadian Language School in Nitra, QSI International School of Bratislava and other schools.

Maintenance or Heritage Language programs serve the purpose of preserving the ethnic identity, culture and language of minority group members. Immigrant communities in particular have a need to maintain communication channels with first generation immigrants and people in their country of origin. Through bilingual education their children can cope with the majority society without losing their roots.

The Slovak Republic is inhabited mostly by ethnic Slovaks (approximately 85% of population). Consequently, the mainstream instructional language at schools in Slovakia is a state language. According to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, members of ethnic minorities have the right to be educated in their own mother language. To fulfill this right, an amount of primary and secondary schools (at least 12% of all primary and secondary schools in Slovakia) where minority languages are used as either first or second languages of instruction in majority of subjects has been created.

Although these schools are in fact bilingual in their nature, this form of education is not recognized as bilingual by Slovak legislation. That is why these schools are not included into Slovak scientists’ research. Nevertheless, Slovak-Hungarian schools’ experience illustrates how bilingual language education can be successful in promoting a minority home language and culture in a majority language environment.

Two-Way or Dual Language bilingual education is similar to immersion, but schools try to gather about the same number of minority and majority language students in each class in the program, and usually team teach about half of the curriculum in the native language of the minority and half in the native language of the majority language students. This shows that both languages are equally valued, and students can learn from each other.

It is also important to decide when to teach through each language – the most frequent preferences are to use the two languages on alternate days or to use different languages in different lessons with regular alternations to ensure both languages are used in the curriculum. Although language boundaries are established so that different parts of the curriculum are taught in different languages, a dangerous situation may occur when the majority language becomes associated with more prestigious and «modern» subjects while the minority language is used to teach less prestigious subjects.

The last strong form among the ten types of bilingual education is called Mainstream Bilingual. It includes international schools and the European Schools Movement in which the Slovak Republic takes an active part. It serves children like majority students or temporary residents whose native language is an international language such as English. Thus, C. Baker’s most recent edition also calls it Bilingual Education in Majority Languages. «Such schools are in societies where much of the population is already bilingual or multilingual (e.g. Singapore, Luxembourg) or where there are significant numbers of natives or expatriates wanting to become bilingual (e.g. learning through English and Japanese in Japan)» [1, p. 250, 227]. «Bilingual education in majority languages means that some curriculum content is learnt through a student’s
second language. In Europe, this is often called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) [1, p. 251].

The CLIL method has been applied in Slovak primary schools for nearly 10 years. Not surprisingly, the initiative to use CLIL has been mostly coming from primary schools. On the one hand, their managements and teachers seem to be very well aware of educational benefits and attractiveness of bilingual education (mostly to parents). On the other hand, the occasional attempts to incorporate it were usually very short-lived, most often due to a lack of experience and examples of good practice, a lack of qualified bilingual primary teachers and an absence of suitable teaching materials adapted to the requirements of Slovak national curriculum.

Thus CLIL, with its half-to-half or even less ratio of using a foreign language along with a mother language, comes as more acceptable for these schools. Here are the main reasons:

a) the approach is less demanding for learners (also for failing learners, learners with lower communicative skills and learners with special educational needs) and for school managements;

b) the combination of two languages gives the opportunity to see the subject through two media, thus, develops higher cognitive functions of learners;

c) CLIL does not «endanger» the dominant position of a mother language and one of the main objectives in Slovak national curriculum, i.e. it develops literacy in both a mother tongue and the foreign language;

d) CLIL appropriately prepares learners for secondary education both in a mother and foreign language since learners do not lack specialized terminology and academic-discourse expressions in any of them [10, p. 242].

One of the important problems teachers have to deal with while using CLIL is significant differences between learners in the acquisition of a new language occurring in the initial phase of studying within a group.

More often teachers try to individualize learning process, giving instructions as well, because even two learners from the same culture might show different patterns in learning English as a second language based on factors such as experience, personality and his temperament. Being a persistent combination of personality’s individual qualities temperament characterizes dynamics of a person, but it doesn’t determine his possibilities.

For many learners another language acquisition can be a challenge. The time it takes to learn English, for instance, may vary from person to person depending on the age, motivation, personality, type of temperament, knowledge of mother tongue, and exposure to English. However, the developmental period for bilinguals is fairly consistent across young learners. This developmental period includes four stages: the continued use of the home language; the silent or nonverbal period; sound experimentation and use of telegraphic speech (e.g. the use of a few content words as an entire utterance) in English; productive use of the foreign language.

Conclusions and prospects for further researches of direction. This paper shows the basic types of bilingual education that are recognized according to worldwide research. Bilingual education typical of the Slovak Republic system of education is briefly introduced as well as the different purposes behind using different languages as the medium of instructions in schools. Research on bilingualism suggests that some purposes for choosing languages used in education may be better than the other ones in terms of ethics as well as pedagogy. Analyzing the diverse purposes for the choice of the program for bilingual education that appear in schools can improve the understanding of bilingual educational system, and possibly suggest improvements in terms of bilingual educational process in Ukraine.

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