THE NATURE AND DIMENSIONS OF PLURILINGUALISM
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Abstract: *this article deals with the role of multilingualism in today᾽s world and its role in our social life. It is also believed that multilingualism is a major contributor to the modern world.*
Keywords: *multilingualism, bilingualism, plurilingualism, mother/native language, culture, first language, second language.*

Multilingualism is undoubtedly the most prominent feature of the modern world and affects people's social environment, career development and cultural life. Language and culture are of paramount importance in our lives and affect both our personal lives and the business environment. In intercultural communication, representatives of different cultures engage in exchanges of information regarding their daily routines. The language we communicate in defines our identity to a large extent. People engage in language-based communication to interact with other people and institutions, to identify themselves as community members and to share spiritual values. Article 22 "Cultural, religious and linguistic diversity" of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union [1] states that "the Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity." With respect to languages, the EU has put an emphasis on the concept for development of plurilingualism in order to avoid the dominance of a single language in business and administration. According to Eurobarometer [2], the most popular languages among EUcitizens are English, French and German.

For many decades, linguists used the term "mother tongue" - the language used for communication. It was used synonymously to the term "native language" - the language we grew up with and in which we were taught at school. The two terms are applicable to communities where most people speak the same language (i.e. are monolingual.) Logically, the mother/native language was opposed to the term "foreign language" – a language we did not learn as part of our environment. Today, due to the process of globalization, the boundaries between communities are blurring and there is a growing number of multilingual families and professional communities of people who speak different languages. In such cases, we cannot distinguish a universal native/mother language and therefore the terms "first language" (L1), "second language" (L2), etc., are more relevant. Plurilingualism exists both in Europe and worldwide [3] There are numerous examples of people speaking different languages in their daily communic'ation the language spoken by their parents, the people they live, work or study with, etc. Receptive and productive foreign language skills are the core of communication. In the process of foreign language acquisition, these are developed by means of various teaching methods: concepts, topics, roles and places of communication, verbal and non-verbal aids. Some of them are universal while others are language-specific. The European languages are very similar in terms of their underlying material cultures, which means that their denotations and connotations are very similar as well. However, in other fields related to verbal etiquette and rules of social conduct (e.g. the ways to express courtesy, to establish contacts, to avoid uncertainty, etc.) they are quite different. For example, the conditional mood in German is used to express politeness or caution, while in Bulgarian it expresses uncertainty. In order to communicate effectively in the foreign language we have to "switch" to the register of the foreign language and ignore the specifics of our native/first language.

For the purposes of this study, we have to distinguish between the terms "multilingualism","bilingualism" and "plurilingualism". Every person is potentially plurilingual due to the existing languages. Multilingualism (*German* Vielsprachigkeit) refers to the situation in a given country, region, community or school. Plurilingualism (*German* Mehrsprachigkeit) refers to the language situation of an individual [4]. Statistics show that the majority of the world's population is bilingual or plurilingual and lives in a multilingual environment.[5] This is due to the fact that people from different ethnic and linguistic communities can nowadays easily migrate and live in other countries around the world, where they actively communicate with the indigenous residents. There are many definitions of plurilingualism: Kierepka and Krüger believe that it refers to the usage of at least two other languages in addition to the mother tongue6 while Christ [7] relates plurilingualism to the mastery of several languages from different language families.

Thus the question the arises is at what level a person must use the foreign language to be considered plurilingual, i.e. whether learners should achieve a relatively high level (fluent use of language) or acquire only the knowledge and skills that would be sufficient for certain linguistic situations. The predominant opinion is that, to be considered plurilingual, one must have certain knowledge of at least two other languages in the same or in different areas ofь communication [8]. Thus, plurilingualism complies with the language policy of the European Union and refers to people with sufficient working knowledge in different languages that enables them to engage in professional and personal communication without being equal to the level of their native language.

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