

A sociolinguistic perspective on the subdialect spoken in the Upper Valley of the Mureş

Violeta Ioana RUS¹

The present research is falling within the domain of variational linguistics, it is focused on the study of the variability of the language used by the inhabitants from the Upper Valley of the Mureş and is a sociolinguistic approach from a synchronic and diachronic perspective. In a previous linguistic study (Rus 2012, 219) it has been noted that within the subdialect spoken in the Upper Valley of the Mureş, the influences of the Moldavian subdialect, as well as those of Hungarian can be traced. However, the influence of the standard language among young people, but also among the people who have a higher social status, is obvious. In the determination of the physiognomy of the dialect one must take into account not only its formation mechanisms but also the transformations occurring as a result of the influence of the standard language or the contact with other languages. Therefore, I will consider the degree in which the dynamics of the subdialect is influenced by the standard language or by neologisms, but also the determination of the dialectal linguistic competence and performance according to sociolinguistic criteria (gender, age and social status). In the Upper Valley of the Mureş, there are common and distinctive features of the use of language between members with different ages, statuses, and genders. However, older people tend to use more frequently the specific particularities of the subdialect, whereas the younger ones or those who have a higher social status use constantly literary language or even neologism, even though they know the subdialect.

Keywords: subdialect, sociolinguistics, the influence of the standard language, dialectal particularities

1. General considerations

1.1. Geographic coordinates

The Upper Valley of the Mureş represents the first part of the Gorge of the river Mureş between the villages Izvoru Mureşului and Deda. The Mureş is the second longest river in Romania, compared to the Danube, it springs from the Mountains Hăşmaşu Mare, runs throughout Romania, then passes in Hungary where it flows into the river Tisa.

¹ Transilvania University of Braşov, Romania, rusioanavioleta@yahoo.ro

The Upper Valley of the Mureş is situated in the Central-Eastern part of Romania between the Ciucului Hollow in the South, Giurgeului Mountains in the East and Gurghiului Mountains in the West, on the Izvoru Mureşului-Topliţa section, while the Topliţa-Deda section, is bounded by the Călimani mountain chain in the North, Gurghiului Mountains in the South and the Transylvanian Plains in the West.

From the spring until the exit from the Topliţa-Deda Gorge, the Mureş crosses the Giurgeului Hollow, the Topliţa Hollow, as well as the impressive Topliţa-Deda Defile, crossing the following villages: Izvorul Mureşului, Voşlobeni, Senetea, Suseni, Ciumani, Joseni, Borzont, Remetea Subcetate, Hodoşa, Sărmaş, Runc, Platoneşti, Gălăuţaş, Nuţeni, Moglăneşti, Topliţa, Călimănel, Vâgani, Ciobotani, Stânceni, Meştera, Neagra, Lunca Bradului, Sălard, Andreneasa, Răstoliţa, Iod, Borzia, Gălăoia, Bistra Mureşului and Deda.

1.2. Historical considerations

In a monographic paper of a village on the Upper Valley of the River Mureş (Dobreanu D., Dobreanu V. 1999, 9), Topliţa and Deda are referred to as the oldest settlements in the Upper Valley of the Mureş; dating been from the time of the Dacians, as it has been presumed following the discovery of some antiquities on this territory.

In a Hungarian chronicle of Simon de Keza (Dobreanu D., Dobreanu V., 1999, 9) it is attested that, in the 13th century, when the Székely emigrated from the Pannonian Plains to the Subcarpathians in the East of Transylvania, in the Upper Fild of the Mureş, they found Romanian population. In the 14th and 15th centuries, there are a series of localities on the Upper Valley of the Mureş that belong to the Székely family from Gheorgheni. Not only from a territorial point of view, but also from a linguistic point of view, the influence of the Hungarians lasted over time, therefore all the villages gathered around the city Gheorgheni (Senetea, Suseni, Ciumani, Joseni, Borzont, Remetea), and they are populated to a rate of over 95% by Hungarians, while in other parts of the Hungarian population is under 50%, therefore the influence of the Hungarian language is obvious, especially at the lexical level of the dialect.

Another historical phenomenon that had an impact on the linguistic level, especially at the level of the phonetic level, is that of the transhumance. It seems that at the end of the 17th century “oricine era liber a merge în Moldova de aici sau a veni

de acolo și a se așeza aici, că nu era necesar ca cei care veneau a se așeza aici sau cei ce plecau să ceară îngăduința cuiva (...)”² (Dobreanu D., Dobreanu V. 1999, 9).

1.3. Linguistic considerations

In a previous study (Rus 2012:296) it has been found that the most “affected” level of the language spoken in the Upper Valley of the Mureș is the phonetic one, since phonetic particularities specific to the Moldavian subdialect as well as those specific to the Transylvanian one are reflected. The morphological and syntactic level also present aspects that can be found in the two subdialects, while the lexical one has a Transylvanian layer with evident influences from Hungarian.

One of the particularities specific to the studied dialect is the transformation of [ĉ] into [ŝ] and of [ĝ] into [ž], an issue that characterizes the Moldavian subdialect. According to Iordan (Iorgu apud Todoran, 1998, 78) „rostirea ŝ și ž în locul semioclusivelor ĉ și ĝ ar fi ultima particularitate pe care și-ar pierde-o un moldovean atunci când suferă un puternic proces de „muntenizare” a graiului său [...]”.³

Another phonetic particularity specific to the Moldavian subdialects is the transformation of [e] into [i], mentioning that this takes place only inside the word and not at the end of it, with the exception of the prepositions [di, pi] and their compounds, forms which are met in the Transylvanian subdialects as well.

A phonetic particularity specific to the subdialects from Transylvania (Rusu 1983, 105) is represented by the palatal consonants developed from a yod preceded by the labials [p, b], as in the examples: *pĉeĉle* (skin), *pĉor* (foot), *obĝeĉle* (socks), *bĝir* (tribute) etc. It seems that these phonetic phenomena are specific to the Transylvanian subdialects, because they originate in the form [pt’], respectively [bd’].

However, in the subdialect spoken on the Upper Valley of the Mureș, there are phonetic particularities specific to the areas from Transylvania such as the presence of [ń] after the labial [m], which has been a yod at its origins and subsequently transformed into [ń].

Singular nouns that end in the labial [p] or [b] oppose in the plural the consonant groups [pĉ] and [bĝ]), and the verbs in the first person singular, that have as final phoneme the same consonants *sap* (dig), *întreb* (ask) will have the second person plural the forms *sapĉ*, *întrebĝ*. These characteristics are considered by Rusu (1983, 42) as belonging exclusively to the subdialect from Transylvania.

² Anyone was free to go from here to Moldavia or come from there and settle here, because it was not necessary for those who came to settle here or for those who left to ask for someone’s permission (...).

³ uttering ŝ and ž instead of the semioclusive ĉ and ĝ is the last particularity that a Moldavian would lose when he undergoes a powerful process of being influenced by the dialect spoken in Muntenia [...].

The phenomenon of palatalization of the dentals [t] and [d], as it is found in the investigated subdialect, more exactly by means of the presence of the sound [ʃ] in the background, is due to the Hungarian influence which is more apparent in this area.

The presence of the phoneme [ó], when it is the result of a monophthongation of the diphthong [öa], is considered by researchers the mark of a phenomenon that is characteristic to Transylvania, while the situation in which the vowel [e̯], appears as a result of the substitution of the vowel [e] and it is a phenomenon specific to the Moldavian subdialect.

As far as the morphological level of the investigated subdialect is concerned, it seems that there are blended particularities „borrowed” both from the Moldavian subdialect as well as from the Transylvanian one. The genitival article has the invariant form «a», the common nouns ended in [r], which lose their final vowel in the plural, situation in which the vibrant becomes a soft [r']: *învățător'* (primary school teacher), *pădurar'* (forester) etc. are influenced by a phenomenon specific to the Transylvanian subdialect. The phenomenon of softening the nasal [n], specific to the areas in Transylvania, can sometimes create confusions related to the number, for example in the case of the words: *bătrân-bătrâni* (oldman-oldmen), *motan- motań* (tomcat-tomcats) etc. (Rusu 1983, 77)

As far as the influence of the Hungarian language is concerned, one can notice that it operates at the morphological level through the existence of some specific interjections (*ca-ńe*⁴ *heidă-ńe*⁵, *fórtó-ńe*⁶), but especially at the lexical level: *fuioc* (sertar) (drawer), *fiteu* (sobă) (stove), *imaş* (pășune) (pasture), *majă* (o sută de kg) (o hundred kg), *raşpă* (fierăstrău) (saw) etc.

Relating to the lexical compartment, it seems that the highest number of the words used are characteristic to the dialects from Transylvania: *brâncă* (*mână*) [hand], *şont* (*os*) [bone], *şogor* (*cumnat*) [brother-in-law], *nări* (*nas*) [nose], *brâncă* (*mână*) [hand], *barşon* (*catifea*) [velvet], *lipid'u* (*cearceaf*) [bed linen], *cheşe* (*perie*) [brush], *copârşău* (*sicriu*) [coffin], *fid'eu* (*capac*) [lid], *ocoş* (*isteţ*) [smart], *tolşer* (*pâlnie*) [funnel].

2. Methodological aspects

The sociolinguistic study of a dialect imposes the use of some research and analysis methods common to both domains: sociolinguistics and dialectology. According to

⁴ This interjection is used when someone commands to the horse to start going.

⁵ This interjection is used when someone commands to a cow to start going.

⁶ This interjection is used when someone commands to a cow to move to the left or to the right.

the scientific literature „metoda principală de culegere a materialului în sociolingvistică este aceeași ca în dialectologie: ancheta”.⁷

If in the previous research (Rus 2016, 297) I have focused on the determination of the „local invariants” of the language, the present paper considers the establishment of the „social invariants”, but also of the „linguistic invariants”, offering in this way a mosaic-like type of picture of the subdialect spoken in the Upper Valley of the Mureș. For that matter, the intention of my study is to establish the linguistic and dialectal point of convergence in the language used by the dialect speakers from the researched area.

The gathering and the interpretation of the data is carried out by means of the following: the *inductive-deductive method* based on the analysis and synthesis of the scientific information, the descriptive method; the comparative method, the linguistic analysis method and the questionnaire method. The inductive-deductive method offers the possibility to study the sociolinguistic phenomenon from two perspectives which lead to an overview of the linguistic phenomenon specific to the researched area. Therefore, in the first stage I start from the scientific foundation, and I offer prominent examples that can be found in the selected corpus, then, I follow a reverse direction, I start from particular examples in order to draw conclusions in accordance with the scientific literature. The descriptive method aims to describe the corpus, the subjects as well as the registered chunks of languages, while the comparative method highlights the dynamics and evolution of the dialect spoken in the Upper Valley of the Mureș depending on certain criteria such as: age, gender, profession and social status. The *linguistic analysis method* involves a study of a synchronic type which highlights the chunks of language specific to the investigated area, starting with the phonetic ones and ending with the morphological and lexical ones.

Finally, *the questionnaire* represents one of the most efficient instrument for gathering a big quantity of information in a very short time. In the first stage of the research, the questionnaire had a number of 65 questions, but, following its piloting process, 30 questions relevant for the present study were extracted, questions which are spelled out prevalingly in an indirect manner combined with ostensive means. They are divided in three categories: questions that aim the phonetic, the morphologic and the lexical particularities of the studied area.

The addressed methodology requires an indirect investigation, which involves integral recording (audio-video) and the subsequent transcription of the results. The investigation involved different generations of informers, the subjects

⁷ the main method for gathering the material in sociolinguistics is the same as in dialectology: the survey.

being aged between 17 and 75 of both genders and with different professions and social statuses (students, pensioners, nurses, entrepreneurs, teachers, local folk music interpreters, priests).

The answers to each question are written in a chart from which one can observe the frequency of some terms, as well as the different versions of a word performed in accordance with the stated sociolinguistic criteria: age, gender, social status. (See Appendix)

3. The importance of studying a subdialect from a sociolinguistic point of view

Starting from the idea that every speaker is, at the same time, part of a dialectal linguistic community, as well as of a social group, we agree with Cortelazzo that sociolinguistics is “social dialectology” (Cortelazzo apud Ruxăndoiu, Chițoran 1975, 11). Therefore, we should add that a sociolinguistic approach of a corpus of dialect entails the assignment of two types of structure: the linguistic structure (the distinctive features of dialect specific to the subdialect which is being studied) and the social structure (“social invariants” according to age, gender and social status), in view of determining their relationship.

Thus, understanding the dynamics of a subdialect requires an approach from different viewpoints. In order to ascertain the features of a subdialect, the first phase is a dialectal study which identifies the phonetic, morphosyntactic and lexical particularities, and subsequently it is essential to take into account the fact that any studied area does not comprise only model speakers, prototypes of the area, but it is necessary to refer to several categories of speakers. Therefore, it is required to identify the dialectal linguistic competence and performance from one generation to another or from one social status to another.

On these lines, in addition to the unity conferred by dialectal particularities, a subdialect is also characterized by diversity, determined by the different categories of speakers who belong to the studied community. In linguistic terms, diversity is in fact the “free variation” which is induced by various factors which are socially defined.

The linguistic results obtained from questionnaires drawn up beforehand are interpreted according to several criteria. Age is a very important factor in relation to establishing the diversity of a subdialect. Specialists in the field (Stockwell 2002, 3) believe that older subjects use the particular features of a subdialect to a greater degree than the young, as long as the former do not hold a higher social status in their community, a fact which could influence their language. Middle-aged speakers usually combine the particularities of a subdialect with the standard language, while the young population in a certain area use the standard language

prevailingly, borrowing words from other languages as well as using dialectal particularities, especially of phonetic nature.

Regarding the criterion of gender (Hudson 2005, 193), I notice that it has been widely discussed by specialists. Concerning style, the linguistic variation according to the criterion of sex is universal: thus, specialists agree that women tend to speak in a more elevated manner than men, showing preference for “prestigious” norms, while men use mainly the subdialect, a more relaxed language, closer to the everyday speech (Ruxăndoiu, Chițoran 1975, 38). For example, according to Spolski (1998, 38), women are more sensitive than men when it comes to language norms, as long as they were given equal education.

Another aspect discussed by specialists (Lackoff 1975, 23) is that women use exaggerated intonation contours as compared to men or they have a discursive structure marked by hesitations, rewordings, rectifications, as well as fluctuating pitch.

Therefore, in order to interpret the results obtained from my research the two criteria mentioned above should be taken into account, in order to establish the reason why there are differences of language between the speakers of the same area, but also of another criterion provided by the social status of the speaker. If there may be differences between the speakers of the same social category, there will be more differences between speakers of different social statuses. It is obvious that a person working in the urban area will use mainly standard language and will have the tendency to use terms which are specific to his/her field of interest. The phenomenon is called by specialists “social network” and it “deals with the dimension of solidarity at the level of the individual and his or her everyday contacts” (Coulmas 1998, 43).

To conclude, the fundamental problem signalled by sociolinguistics is the necessity of understanding why somebody says something. As such, when analysing the data gathered, social factors, the context as well as extralinguistic factors will be taken into account.

3.2. Sociolinguistic aspects

3.2.1. The criterion of age

The dynamics of the subdialect from the Upper Valley of the Mureș is heavily influenced by the sociolinguistic parameter age and, to a significant degree, by social status and gender.

The questions were classified according to the expected results: with the purpose of a) emphasizing several phonetic, morphologic and lexical particularities or b) emphasizing the influence on the standard language of the Hungarian.

For the category of questions which concern phonetic accidents, I received similar answers for the question: “Cum îi mai spuneți obiectului cu care mânăți animalele?” [What other name do you have for the object with which you herd animals?] All the informants, no matter the age, mention the word *zbiș* (whip), in addition to synonyms which are specific to the area (*zbici* [whip], *botă* [cudgel], *șomag* [cudgel], *japă* [rod], *jord'e* [rod]). In this case there is a pre-stressed [z] added to *bici* [whip] and the transformation of [č] into [š]. Epenthesis is another phonetic accident which occurs in the language of speakers aged between 30 and 75 years: e.g., *hrean* > *hirean* (horseradish); this is signaled by the occurrence of epenthetic [i] within the word.

One word used by all the subjects of all age groups is the verb *a îmbumba* (from the noun “bumb” meaning “nasture” [button]), when they fill in the following phrase: “Când vă încheiați nasturii înseamnă că vă” [When you fasten your buttons, it means that you] For the age group 50- 75 years there is also the form *bumbaț*; in this case, I notice the presence of another phonetic accident, the aphaeresis of the prefix “îm”. There are also answers which are not specific to the studied area: *te-nčótór'* or *că mă cheotor*, an answer obtained from an informant who lived in the studied area as well as in Oltenia.

Labials [p, b, m] have a special status. Since they are followed by the vowel [i] they present several transformations which individualize them as compared with other consonants. Rusu (1983, 105) notices that when the *iota* is preceded by the labials, a series of affricates, palatals or nasals interpose between them, as follows: [p] is followed by [t', č, k'], after [b] appear [d', ĝ, g'], and [m] precedes [ń]. In the subdialect from the Upper Valley of the Mureș, I notice the phenomenon [p] followed by [č] (*copčil* [child], *pčişleac* [curds], *pčele* [skin]), [b] by [ĝ] (*îmbumbĝ* [button up]), [m] preceding the nasal [ń] (*mńel* [lamb], *mńinune*, *mńere* [honey]), in the language of all subjects, irrespective of age. There are also instances, mentioned by the subjects aged between 30 and 75, when [p] is followed by the diphthong [ie] or [ia], there occurs the phenomenon of eliminating the labial (cf. *pieptene* > *čept'ene*, *piaptănul* > *čaptănu* [a comb]). Other phonetic particularities which are rare among speakers under 30 are: the change of the vocalic accent from the first to the second syllable (cf. *zahár* vs. *záhár* [sugar]) or the replacement of [n] and [e] respectively with linguistic variants [ń] and [ę] (cf. *Nemțeșt'e* [German language]).

In the subdialect under study there is a series of nouns which have a different form in the plural as compared to the standard language. Thus, the word “palmă” [palm] will have the plural form “pălmi”, a form used by the speakers of all age groups, especially those aged between 50 and 75. Another very interesting aspects is that nouns ending in the singular in the vibrant [r] or the nasal [n] are

particularized by their softening in the plural, (*feșior'* [youngmen], *fișior'* [youngmen], *bătrîn* [oldmen]), often creating number confusion.

There is a series of nouns with a theme ending both in the singular and in the plural with the consonant [ș]: *caș* [cheese], *cocoș* [rooster], *uncêș* [uncle].

A rather interesting case, occurring especially in the language of people aged over 30, is of changing gender. Thus, when asked to identify several images, the subjects mention: *o litră* [one litre], instead of *un litru*, *o kilă* [one kilo] instead of *un kilogram*, *o cartofă* [a potatoe] instead of *un cartof* or *un gogoș* [a donut] instead of *o gogoasă*. Moreover, in the case of all speakers, one notices the replacement of the unit of measure specific to liquids with the one specific to weight, that is for the identification of a bottle of oil one of the answers was *un kilogram de ulei* [one kilogram of oil], instead of *un litru de ulei* [one litre of oil].

In the subjunctive some verbs of the first conjugation take the diphthong [ie], thus: *a bea* [to drink] > *să beie*, *a da* [to give] > *să deie/ să deie/ dăie*, *a vrea* [to want] > *să vrie/ să vrăie* etc. At the same time, for the question: "Ce trebuie să faci un om căruia i-ai dat bani cu împrumut?" [What should do a person to whom you have lent money?] the subjects aged between 17 and 30 answered with the neologism *a returna* [to give back].

Regarding synonyms for the adverb *niciodată* [never], the adjective *fericit* [happy] or the noun *magazin* [shop] we notice a major difference depending on the age group. In order to substitute the term *niciodată* [never] subjects aged between 17 and 30 used the English expression *never ever* or the Spanish term *nunca*, while those aged over 30 used the Hungarian phrase *suhan vila*. A similarly interesting case appears concerning the incomplete sentence: "Când un om îi fericit, ziceți că-i..." [When a person is happy, you say that s/he is...], the subjects aged between 50-75 used a term specific to the area, *lotru*, while two of the subjects aged between 17-30 said *happy* or *no stress* (an English phrase frequently used by the young) (Stoichițoiu 2001, 85). The same situation occurs in the case of the noun *magazine* [shop], for which informants younger than 30 used the English phrase *market*, those between 30 and 50, used the dialectal form *magazîn*, while those over 50 used the dialectal term *boltă*.

Since the area is heavily populated by the Hungarian ethnics, the influence of the Hungarian language is usually felt in the speech of subjects over 50: *d'ufe>gyufa* [matches] or *fuioc/ fioc/fioc > fiok* [drawer].

For the question which contained a false friend: "Când ziceți *spurcău*, vă referiți la ceva care spurcă?" [When you say *spurcău*, do you mean something that besmirches?] I received three similar answers from three subjects aged over 50: "Nu, d'obișei la noi să foloșă înaint'e... ibricu d'e șert cafê îi zîșe, *spurcău*" (63 years); [No, it has been used in the past... the kettle in which we make coffee it is called

spurcău]; “Ăăăă, *spurcău* îi... ăăă mai d’emult i să spunea la ibric, ăă nu-mi mai amint’esc”; [Aăăă, *spurcău* is... uh in the past we said *spurcău* instead of kettle, uh I can’t remember] (56 years); “Nu, nu....*spurcău* îi ibricu’ în care șebği cafe” [No, no... *spurcău* is the kettle in which one makes coffee] (75 years). The informants of the other two age groups are influenced by the form of the word which seems to come from the verb “a spurca” [to besmirch] and answer that it is related to “ceva ce spurcă” [something that besmirches], others say that they have never heard the word. Nonetheless, one of the subjects who did not know the meaning of the term answered with a creation specific to the area: “Nu, la căcă. O—s că *Vai d’e miře am dat pe limbă îi iute/ Am dat la nas put’e,/ Am dat pe limbă-i iut’e,/ Vai de miře-i c...t/ Un pic d’e nu m-am spurcat, asta-i spurcău*” [No, is shit. Someone said: Oh my God, I tasted it and is hot/ I smelled it, it stinks,/ I tasted it is hot/ Oh my God is shit/ A little bit and I would have defused myself.]

According to the criterion of age, I say that there are linguistic dialectal varieties known and used by all the speakers of the area, and social variants used only by the old or by the young, respectively. The first category, as mentioned above, comprises those words or dialectal forms known and used by all the speakers, no matter the age, for example: *zbiș* [whip], *jordie* [rod], *japă* [rod], *pčișleac* [curds], *lapt’e acru* [sour milk], *blîndă* [rash], *magazîn* [shop], *copçil* [child], *șiled* [brat], *a îmbumba* [to bottom up], *bat’e* (for “*latră*”) [barks], *çept’en* [comb], *unsóre* [lard] etc.

My analysis shows so far that older people have the tendency to use the particularities of the subdialect, showing a kind of pride in the perpetuation of the language of the old. Middle-aged persons combine in the same phrase elements which are specific to the subdialect with the standard language, while the young use more and more standard language, although many of them know the subdialect (as shown by the questionnaire). What is more, they have the tendency to use neologisms borrowed from English or Spanish.

3.2.2. The criterion of social status

Social status is the “social position that society assigns to its members or the differences between social groups, in terms of prestige associated with them by other.” (Van Herk 2012, 48). Social status is a decisive factor in the study of dialectal variants of the subdialect on the Upper Valley of the Mureș. In order to determine the influence of the environment of activity on the language, the selection of the subjects was made according to their belonging to different occupational fields.

Analyzing the recorded data, I notice that there is a difference in the language used by two students of the same age who go to highschool in the

countryside (Subcetate Mureș), and in the city (Toplița) respectively. The student from the rural high school did not have much contact with other social media outside her family or her school, because of the geographic isolation of the area in which she lives, a fact which is reflected in the language she uses. On the other hand, the language of the student in the urban area contains various neologisms and the influence of the literary language is widely felt.

Thus, the former subject uses the phonetic particularities specific to the subdialect: e> ę (*miere*) [*honey*], ȕ>ș (*zbiș*) [*whip*], d>d' (*d'eal*) [*hill*]; morphological particularities: *palme* [*palms*] > *pălmi*, *o gogoășă* [*donut*] > *un gogoș*; lexical particularities or the use of several terms specific to the area: *o piciocă* [*a potato*], *pâșleac* [*curds*], *bate* [*barks*]. The language of the latter subject is heavily influenced by the Romanian standard language, and it is characterized by the use of borrowings or calques from English or Spanish: *never*, *happy*, *nunca* etc.

In the sociolinguistic analysis of the subdialect from the viewpoint of social status, it has been underlined the importance of the "social network" (Coulmas 1998, 48) in relation to people's "life-modes" and their impact on the individual. Therefore, we conclude that "[...] different kinds of social network structure do not occur accidentally, but «fall out» naturally from different life-modes, such as those of the self-employed, of wage-earners [...], and of professionals" (Coulmas 1998, 48).

Thus, I notice that according to their profession, people have the tendency to use words and expressions which are specific to their field of activity. For example, one of the informants, who is a registered nurse, uses words from the lexical field specific to medicine: *iritație* [*irritation*], *regiune dureroasă* [*painful zone*], *unguent* [*unguent*], *alifie* [*ointment*], *anorexic* [*anorexic*], *subnutrit* [*undernourished*]. Another informant, who is a shop assistant in a food store, is the only one who answered *chefir* [*kefir*] at the question: "În ce se transformă laptele lăsat la fermentat?" [What does milk left to ferment turn into?], although this is a neologism which is not yet used by the speakers of the subdialect under study.

Another interesting subject is a former teacher who, although having a good command of the subdialect and being an active speaker, during the interview uses mainly the standard language, as well as neologisms such as *ironic* [*ironical*], *satiric* [*satirical*] etc. The use of the standard language to the detriment of the subdialect used in everyday life is motivated by the prestige s/he has in society and the desire, probably unconscious, to preserve the image of an educated person with a high social status.

Moreover, two of the informants, of different age groups, who work as vocal and instrumental soloists, stand out due to their knowledge and use of particularities specific to the subdialect. One of the attributions characteristics to their field of work is to play and sings songs which are specific to the area, thus

they are accustomed to use the subdialect all the time, in their everyday life as well as in their field of activity.

Lastly, “the link between status, language and education have long been of interest to sociolinguistics.” (Van Herk, 2012: 55). For that matter, irrespective of age, subjects with a higher social status tend to use standard language, although they know the subdialect specific to the area. On the other hand, the general tendency of informants with middle to low social status, no matter the age, is to preserve the particularities of the subdialect, especially if their field of activity is or was in the rural area.

3.2.3. *The criterion of gender*

The dialectal linguistic variation according to the criterion of gender is universal. Thus, if men use a more relaxed language, employing mainly the local subdialect, women have the tendency to use mainly standard language, preferring “prestigious” norms. Studies in the field (Spolski 1998, 38) highlight linguistic differences between women and men, thus, as long as they were given equal education women tend to be more “sensitive” regarding the use of language norms.

When comparing the manner of performance of the female subjects with the one of the male informants, I notice that standard language has a significant influence on the language of the former. Nonetheless, female informants aged over 50 alternate the dialectal language specific to the area with standard language. Men from the same category of age (over 50) and with a similar education are not concerned with the orderly aspect of the spoken language, while women are more interested in this aspect. For example, for question 15 which deals with the identification of images, male subjects answer: *o litră de ulei [one litre of oil]/ un kil de ulei [one kilo of oil], o piciocă [a potatoe]*, and women: *un litru [one litre]/ un kilogram de ulei [one kilogram of oil], o cartofă [a potatoe]*. In the first case, I notice the inadequate gender use in the case of the word which designates the unit of measure for liquids (*o litră [one litre]*), the abbreviation of the unit of measure for weight and the use of the word in an inadequate context (*un kil [one kilo]*) or the use of the dialectal variant for the word potato (*o piciocă*). On the other hand, in the second case, I notice the correct use of the masculine gender for the word *litru [litre]*, the use of the literary form of the word *kilogram [kilogram]*, but in an inadequate context, as well as the phenomenon of lexical hypercorrection, the use of the feminine gender for the word potato, in order to avoid the dialectal form *piciocă* (noun, feminine gender).

Another interesting aspect is recorded in the case of the questions “Cum spuneți când chemați/alungați: câinele, pisica, oaia, porcul sau găina?” [What do you say when you call/chase: the dog, the cat, the sheep, the pig, or the hen?],

because they were identical for all age groups, irrespective of social status: *Cuțu-cus-cs-cs!* *Pițu-pis-pis-pis!* *Țocă-be!* *Cică-cică!* *Pi-pi-pi!*, respectively *Cuștri!* *Chet-chi!* *Țocă-brrr!* *Heță-ne!* *Hșșș!* Nonetheless, it seems that male subjects are more familiar with these interjections, while some of the female subjects, aged less than 50, answered: “Nu știi, nu am crescut niciodată un porc” [I don’t know, I have never raised a pig], “Știi că spunea cumva buna când chema oile, dar nu-mi aduc aminte.” [I know that grandma said something when she called the sheep, but I don’t remember what] or “Am avut animale când eram mica, dar nu prea mergeam eu la grajd.” [I used to have animals when I was little, but I seldom went to the stable.]

Specialized works in the field (Lakoff 1975, 23) mention the fact that women use exaggerated intonation contours as compared to men, who use a more direct style. On the other hand, women have the tendency to adopt a communication style which is cooperative and detailed. One of the female informants (50 years) stands out for using a redundant discursive structure marked by hesitations (note the presence of the pause of thought marked by “ăăă” at the beginning and inside every answer) rewordings, rectifications, as well as a fluctuating height of tone:

“Da, caier ăăă caieru proviñe ăăă de egzemplu póte fi caier d’e línă, sau caier d’e câinepă, ăăă...șîi..d’in ăăă...câinepă, cum să raželă cu răă...cu ražela iješă bușiu, buși care-i un ăăă, îi ceva mai iiii...ăă..ma din câinepă iješă fuioru, o torși, iješă fuioru, șî d’in buși o torși mai gros, șî d’-acolo mai d’emult ăăă mama mea șî bunica mea făce preșuri, o torce grósă așa ca lîna d’in bușiu..ăă caieru d’e buși torșe așa ca...ca d’ eģetu d’e gros, îl vopsea șî făce preșuri, care le puñe pe pod”.

[Yes, wisp uh the wisp comes uh for example it can be wisp of wool or wisp of hemp, uh... and of... uh... hemp, how one can scrape it with leash appears the chaff which is uh, it is something is... uh... from the hemp it appears the flax, you spin it, appears the flax and from the chaff you spin it more thick, and of that in the past uh my mother and my grandmother were making mats, they spin it like the wool of chaff... uh the wisp of chaff was spinning as... thick as a finger, they painted it and made mats which were put on the floor.]

In my research I have also selected two subjects of Hungarian ethnicity (who have lived their entire life in the area under study) in order to determine the degree to which they have adjusted to the subdialect of the Upper Valley of the Mureș. The analysis of the provided answers proves that the male subjects use mainly phonetic and morphological particularities specific to the subdialect (sometimes the influence of the Hungarian language is felt, cf. *tormo*, instead of *hrean* [horseradish]), while the female informant uses mainly the standard language.

In the discourse of women there are frequent questions, and the phrasing of the answer may be in the form of a question, as compared to male subjects, who provide a direct answer. One can notice that the manner in which two subjects of

different gender answer distinctly to the same question: “La ce îi spuneți dumneavoastră *bórfă*?” [What do you call *bórfă*?]: “La ce îi mai spun *bórfă*? La o haină veche?” [What do I call *bórfă*? To an old coat] (female informant) vs. “*Bórfă*, la haine sau la o femeie ușoară.” [*Bórfă*, to clothes or to a loose woman] (male informant).

The differences in the style of communication stem from the fact that women usually take account of the prestige they assert in society, while men resort to direct formulations, preferring to maintain their social distance.

4. Final considerations

The present paper represents an attempt to re-establish the connection, started once, between sociolinguistics and dialectology, emphasizing the idea that the dialectal language still represents a strong interest, due to the transformations that occur from one generation to the other, from people with a certain social status to the others.

Following the analysis of the gathered data, I have found that there are dialectal terms unanimously known by all the generations of speakers, there are words that are used and known only by the elderly, and notions which are not part of the use of the language spoken by the speakers from the Upper Valley of the Mureș, but also neologism and phrases borrowed from English and Spanish.

One of the main methods used to interpret the results was the comparative method. A first form of studying the answers used the criterion *age*. From the analysis of the gathered data, it results that the elderly could be considered “keepers of the dialect”, because in their vocabulary the phonetic, morphological and syntactic particularities of the language spoken in the studied area can be found. In the vocabulary of the young people, we find both dialectal words or words pronounced in accordance with the dialectal phonetic particularities as well as terms which belong to the standard language, or which are borrowed from other languages. Therefore, the survey confirms the fact that the young people have a specific linguistic register in which, sometimes, English phrases have functional and stylistic roles, receiving a specific signification depending on the communicational and situational context.

At the same time, an interesting aspect is that the majority of the subjects, who – during the survey – have chosen to predominantly use standard language, are active speakers of the studied dialect; as a result, it can be noticed from the given answers that they know the dialect, thing which is also obvious from the permanent shift from the standard language to the dialectal language and the other way round.

From the analysis based on the criterion age, I could notice the tendency of the subjects aged over 50 to offer as many explanations of a phenomenon as possible, but also the tendency of the young people to give evasive, lacunary or even monosyllabic answers.

In what concerns the analysis of the dialect starting from the gender criterion, I note that the language of the women is different from that of the man, especially by the fact that women have the tendency to speak much more accurately than men, as long as we speak about the same level of education. Therefore, women prefer to use a number of "prestigious" forms, while men have a more "relaxed" language. In the case of our informers, we notice that within the category of those aged over 50, women have the tendency to combine the dialectal language with the standardized one, the balance leaning towards the first type. In the case of women under 50, it has been found that they preponderantly use the standard language. Another feature specific to the female subjects is the use of some redundant structures marked by hesitations, rephrasing, as well as a fluctuating variation of the pitch.

The interpretation of the data from the social status perspective was based on the same process, that of the comparative analysis. Therefore, the analysis followed a three-stage approach. The first stage focused on the degree in which the subjects use terms specific to the field of their work. A second stage involved a comparison in what concerns the answers of the subjects who have the same social status, and a third stage took into account the comparative analysis of the subjects with different social status. In the first case, we have noticed that there are terms specific to the field of interest that appear in spontaneous speech, therefore, the hypothesis of the sociolinguists according to which there is a dimension of the solidarity of the individual with what s/he gets into contact with every day is supported. As to the second stage, I have noted that between the subjects who have the same social status or the same occupational domain there could be resemblances and differences as well, and that these are due to the environment in which they live or activate (urban vs. rural). The last stage of the analysis focused on the identification of the common and distinctive features of the use of language between members with different status, and the results showed that there are many differences, especially when we talk about subjects of different ages.

In conclusion, the alternative use of the dialectal language and of the standard language is one of the essential features of the inhabitants from the Upper Valley of the Mureş. However, elderly people have the tendency to use particularities specific to the dialect, so they represent the category of traditionalist speakers.

Therefore, the interpretation from a sociolinguistic point of view comes to fill in the mosaic-like image of the dialect spoken in the Upper Valley of the Mureș, which underlines the fact that I speak about a certain naturalness and pride when people speak their own dialect.

References

- Coulmas, Florian (coord.). 1998. *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics*. London: Blackwell.
- Dobreanu, Doina and Vasile Dobreanu. 1999. *Subcetate Mureș - File de monografie*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Motiv.
- Dumistrăcel, Stelian. 1978. *Influența limbii literare asupra graiurilor dacoromâne. Fonetica neologismului*. București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică.
- Hudson, Richard. 1996. *Sociolinguistics*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, Liliana and Dumitru Chițoran. 1975. *Sociolingvistică*. București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.
- Lakoff, Robin Tolmach. 1975. *Language and Women's Place*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Romulus, Todoran. 1998. *Contribuții la studiul limbii române*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Clusium.
- Rus, Violeta. 2013. "Graiul de pe Valea Superioară a Mureșului". *Limba română: Variație sincronică, variație diacronică. Actele celui de al 12-lea colocviu internațional al Departamentului de lingvistică*, 291-298. București: Editura Universității din București.
- Rus, Violeta. 2016. "Particularitățile fonetice ale graiului din zona geografică a Topliței." *Sangidava* 4 (X): 294-301.
- Rusu, Grigore. 1983. *Structura fonologică a graiurilor dacoromâne*. București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică.
- Spolski, Bernard. 1998. *Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stockwell, Peter. 2002. *Sociolinguistics: A resource book for students*. London: Routledge.
- Stoichițoiu-Ichim, Adriana. 2001. *Vocabularul limbii române actuale: dinamică, influență, creativitate*. București: Editura ALL.

Appendix

No.	QUESTION	THE CRITERION OF THE AGE, SOCIAL STATUS AND GENDER		
		1. No. of subjects: 6 2. Age: 17- 30 years old 3. Social status: pupil, student, teacher, unemployed. 4. Gender: feminine/masculine	1. No. of subjects: 7 2. Age: 30-50 years old 3. Social status: pensioner, nurse, entrepreneur, priest, shop manager, economist. 4. Gender: feminine/masculine	1. No. of subjects: 7 2. Age: 50-75 years old 3. Social status: teacher, pensioner, priest, local folk music amateur interpreter, housewife 4. Gender: feminine/masculine
Questions that focus on the phonetic particularities specific to the studied area				
1.	How else do you call the object that you use to drive the cows?	jord'ie (rod), bici (whip), zbici (whip), zbiș (whip)	zbiș (whip), botă (cudgel), jord'e (rod), bici (whip), zbici (whip), bîță (club), japă (rod), boată (cudgel)	zbiș (whip), botă (cudgel), șomag (cudgel), jord'e (rod),
2.	Do you call the <i>hrean</i> (<i>horse raddish</i>) in a different way?	Hrean (<i>horse raddish</i>)	hrean, hirean (<i>horse raddish</i>)	hrean, hirean, tormo (<i>horse raddish</i>)
3.	How else do you call a very thin man?	schelet (skeleton), amărât (this word is used to describe someone poor or miserable, but someone very thin as well), uscat (flessless, dry), foarte slab (very thin).	slăbănog (meagre), rahitic (rachitic), anorexic (anorexic), jîngărit (weedy), subnutrit (underfed)	pțețe și os (skin and bone), jîngărit (weedy), pricăjît (gaunt), slăbănog (lean), sclępc (skeleton)

4.	What do you call <i>bórfă</i> (<i>togs/tart</i>)?	haină (a piece of clothing), femeie ușoară (a loose woman).	femeie ușoară (a loose woman), o ușuratică (a frivolous woman), o haină (a piece of clothing), femeie d'epărată (a depraved woman), femeie bugeardă	umblă d'e-a sulii și d'e-a folomoștongu (wasting time trying to have sex with men); femeie care să plimbă pre mult (ușuratică)/woman that walks too much to sleep with men), (femeie) calcă strîmb (woman that cheats), o haină (a piece of clothing).
5.	What do you kill for Easter?	miel (lamb)	mielul (the lamb), mînel (lamb)	mînei (lamb)
6.	What can you see in this picture? (They are shown a photo with a child).	copil (child), copîil (child)	șiled (brat), purdel (child), mîinuîe (a wonder), copîil (child)	băieț (a boy), șiled (brat), copîil (child)
7.	What do you sweeten your tea with?	zahăr (sugar), miere (honey), miere (honey)	zahăr (sugar), zahăr (sugar), zaharină (saccharin)	zăhăr (sugar), zahăr (sugar), zahăr (sugar), mîere (honey)
8.	What do you use to comb your hair?	piaptănul (the comb), peria (the brush)	čaptănu' (the comb), čept'en' (the comb), pieptenele (the comb),	čept'enu' (the comb),, piaptăn (the comb),
9.	When you button up it means that you ...	încheiaț (fasten), îmbumbat (button up)	îl îmbumbă (button up), a te cheotora (button up), mănchei la bumbă (button up)	bumbaț (button up), înčotor (button up), îmbumb (button up)
10.	What language do you think that a man from Germany speaks?	germana (German), nemțește (German), nemțește (German)	germană (German), nîmțeșt'e (German),	nîmțășt'e (German),

Questions that focus on the morphological particularities specific to the studied area				
11.	What are these? (The interviewer shows the subjects the palms)	palme (palms), pălmi (palms)	pălmi (palms), palme (palms)	pălmi (palms)
12.	The unmarried girls danced at the ball with	băieți (boys)	fecior' (boy/son), flăcăi (lads)	feșior' (boy/son), fișior'(boy/son),
13.	People aged over the 70 are already.... people	în vârstă (elderly), bătrâni (old)	înaintaț în vârstă (growing older), bătrâni (oldmen), bătrân (oldmen)	bătrîn (oldmen)
14.	Let`s suppose that your mother has 2 brothers, both these two men are for you	unchi (uncle), unçeș (uncle/old man), unçeș (uncle/old man)	unçeș (uncle/old man), unçeș (uncle)	unçeș (uncle/old man), unçeș (uncle)
15.	A picture is shown: 1 litre of oil, a weight of 1 kilogram, a potato and a donut. Please tell me what you can see in the picture!	un litru de ulei (1 litre of oil – masculine structure)/ un kg de ulei (1kg of oil) o greutate de 1 kilogram (a weight of 1 kilogram) / 1 kil (1 kilogram) un cartof (a potato-masculine noun), o piciocă (a potato-feminine noun), o gogoșă (a donut – feminine noun), un gogoș (a donut – masculine noun)	o litră de ulei (1 litre of oil – feminine structure)/ un litru de ulei (1 litre of oil – masculine structure)/ un kil de ulei (1kg of oil) un kilogram (1 kilogram) / un kil (1 kilogram) o piciocă (a potato-feminine noun)/ o cartofă (a potato-feminine noun)/ un cartof (a potato-masculine noun) gogoș (a donut – masculine noun)	o litră de ulei (1 litre of oil – feminine structure)/ un litru de ulei (1 litre of oil – masculine structure)/ un kil de ulei (1kg of oil) un kilogram (1 kilogram) / un kil (1 kilogram) o piciocă (a potato-feminine noun)/ o cartofă (a potato-feminine noun)/ un cartof (a potato-masculine noun) gogoș (a donut – masculine noun)

16.	After you put the potatoes in the ground and the leaves start growing, what do I have to do with them before taking them out of the ground in autumn?	să-l prășui (to hoe it), să scoți buruienile (to take out the weeds)	să-l prășui (to hoe it)	să-l prășui de două ori (to hoe it twice)
17.	What does a man to whom you have lent some money at a certain point have to do?	să ți deie-napoi (to give it back to you), să ți returneze (to return it to you), să ți dea înapoi (to give it back to you)	să ți deie-napoi (to give it back to you), să ți d'ê înapoi (to give it back to you), să mi returneze (to return it to me)	să mîni dăie înapoi (to give it back to me), să mi deie-napoi (to give it back to me)
18.	What do you say when you want to highlight that a certain thing will <i>niciodată</i> (<i>never</i>) happen again?	never ever (word borrowed from English), <i>nunca</i> (Spanish word for <i>never</i>), <i>niciodată</i> (<i>never</i>)	<i>niciodată</i> (<i>never</i>), <i>suhan vila</i> (Hungarian expression for <i>never</i>)	<i>suhan vila, niciodată</i> (<i>never</i>)
19.	What do you say when you call the: dog, cat, sheep, pig or hen?	cuțu- cus-cs-cs!, pițu-pis-pis-pis!Țócă- be!cică-cică!Pi-pi-pi! (Romanian equivalents for the interjections `Come on! `doggie, doggy, kitty-kitty, chuck! chuck!etc.)	cuțu- cus-cs-cs!, pițu-pis-pis-pis!țócă- be! țócă-me! cică-cică! Pi-pi-pi! tugu-tugu! (Romanian equivalents for interjections `Come on! `doggie, doggy, kitty-kitty, chuck! chuck!etc.)	cuțu- cus-cs-cs! pițu-pis-pis-pis!țócă- be! țócă-me! cică-cică! pi-pi-pi! tugu-tugu! (Romanian equivalents for the interjections `Come on! `doggie, doggy, kitty-kitty, chuck! chuck!etc.)

20.	What do you say when you chase the: dog, cat, sheep, pig or hen?	cuștri! cheț-chi! țócă-brrr! heță-neț! hșșș! (Romanian interjections used to chase the: dog, cat, sheep, pig or hen)	cuștri! cheț-chi! țócă-brrr! heță-neț! hșșș! (Romanian interjections used to chase the: dog, cat, sheep, pig or hen)	cuștri! cheț-chi! țócă-brrr! heță-neț! hșșș! (Romanian interjections used to chase the: dog, cat, sheep, pig or hen)
Questions that focus on the lexical particularities specific to the studied area				
21.	What does milk left to ferment turn into?	lapte acru (sour milk), sana (a type of yoghurt), pçișleac (yoghurt/curds), chefir (kefir).	pçișleac (yoghurt/curds), lact'e acru (sour milk), sana (a type of yoghurt), chefir (kefir).	lapt'e acru (sour milk), lapt'e covășit (curdled milk), pçișleac (yoghurt/curds)
22.	How do you call the place where you go to buy food?	magazin (shop), market (word borrowed from English, it is an equivalent for shop, it's short form of supermarket), alimentară (food store).	magazin (shop), chioșc (kiosk), coperativă (cooperative shop).	magazîn (shop), cumpărativă, coperativă (cooperative shop), boltă (vault/shop).
23.	What is this (a drawer is shown)?	seltar (drawer), sertar (drawer)	saltar, fuioc, săltar, fioc (regional equivalents for drawer)	săltar, saltar, fuioc, fioc (regional equivalents for drawer)
24.	When a man is <i>happy</i> , you say that s/he is....	happy (word borrowed from English), bucuros (joyful), no stress (word borrowed from English)	în al nouălea cer (in the seventh heaven), bucuros (joyful), vșel (cheerful)	Vșăl (cheerful), satisfăcut (satisfied), lotru (agile), bucuros (joyful), n-are bai (has no problems), buiac (playful)
25.	How do you say <i>spurcău</i> , you talk about something that soils?	ceva ce spurcă (something that soils)	ceva ce spurcă (something that soils)	ceva ce spurcă (something that soils) ibric (kettle)

26.	When an insect bites you, what appears in that place?	o bubă (a bump), o pată roșie (a red spot), o blîndă (rash).	o bubă (a bump), o blîndă (rash), o iritație (an irritation).	o blîndă (rash), o bubă (a bump).
27.	If the cat meows, the dog....	latră (barks), bate (regional equivalent for <i>barks</i>).	latră(barks), bat'e (regional equivalent for <i>barks</i>).	Latră (barks), bat'e (regional equivalent for <i>barks</i>).
28.	What do you use to light the fire?	chibrite (matches), chibrituri (matches), bricheta (lighter).	chibrit'e/ chibrituri (matches), bricheta (lighter).	d'ufe, cribite (matches), chibrite (matches), chibrituri (matches).
29.	Wat does <i>buhai</i> mean?	instrument muzical (musical instrument), taur (ox).	taur (ox), instrument muzical (musical instrument), om cu o voce groasă și mare (man with a deep voice).	instrument muzical (musical instrument), taur (ox), om care arată ca un taur (a man that looks like an ox).
30.	What do you refer to when you say <i>unsóre</i> ?	Untură (grease)	unsoare de porc (untură) (lard), unsoare pentru a te freca într-o anumită regiune dureroasă alifie, (grease used to rub a certain painful area ointment)	Unsóre de porc (untură)/ lard (grease), unsóre de găină/hen grease, unsóre care mă ung pe ósă (alifie)/ grease that I use to smear my bones (ointment), unsóre d"e tufă (fecale), unsóre d"e screm) / - phrase used to describe the excrements (calque translation „bush grease”) , unsóre d"e logăr