

Gerhard Neweklowsky

The Gailtal Slovene Dialect in Austria

Gailtal Slovene dialect material has been discussed since the first half of the 19th century, first by Urban Jarnik in his letters to Janez Primic, the first holder of the Slovenian chair at the University of Graz, then by the Russian Ismail Ivanovich Sreznevskij, who visited the Gailtal, and wrote the first survey of Slovenian dialects in 1841. The dialect, which can be split up into a number of sub-dialects has been described in a number of books and papers. The dialect is situated at the North-Western periphery of the Slovene language, it is archaic and shows a number of specific features. The speakers can make themselves hardly understood with other Slovene dialect speakers of Carinthia. The number of speakers has fallen dramatically during the last decades. It is estimated that there are about 500 native speakers today. In the paper the position of the dialect within the Slovene Carinthian dialects and within the Slovene dialect continuum will be discussed. The sociolinguistic situation is characterized by bilingualism, the Slovene standard language is used in church. There is some mother-tongue instruction in school, in which Standard Slovene is taught. It is likely that the dialect disappears during the next few decades.

gerhard.neweklowsky@aau.at