

Yale Linguistics Colloquia Series, Fall 2005

Speaker: Stephen R. Anderson, Yale University
Title: Verb-second in Surmiran (Rumantsch)

Date: Monday, September 12, 2005
Time: 4:00pm

Abstract:

The Rumantsch languages of Switzerland provide the best examples of verb-second structure within the Romance family. Surmiran is one member of this group, and in this language the verb appears quite generally in second position in declaratives, in both matrix and embedded clauses.

Inversion of the verb with the subject, when required for purposes of verb-second, is also associated with an interesting set of clitic elements which can "double" the subject phrase or sanction its omission.

This system seems relatively straightforward until we consider an impersonal subject element, 'in', similar in interpretation to French 'on' or German 'man'. The detailed grammar of this element leads to a re-evaluation of the nature of verb-second in Surmiran.