15h 15h45 Ricardo Etxepare (IKER CNRS)
Paleolithic hand stencils as sign language formatives

Hand stencils with so-called « attenuated » or « mutilated » fingers can be observed in Europe in the archeological sites of Gargas (Leroi-Gourhan, 1967), Cosquer (Clottes et al., 2005a,b), Tibiran (Barrière, 1977), and Fuente del Trucho (Muñoz and Ripoll, 2001), among other places. First datation attempts situate those hand stencils in the gravettien period (circa 29.000-22.000 BP), but they could be older (the Aurignacian period, about 34.000-29.000 year BP, see Pettitt, 2015). It has been claimed that attenuated hand stencils represent either ritual mutilations or the effects of frostbite or other physical conditions in the relevant populations (Bahn and Vertut, 1997 ; Jeandeaux, 1997 ; McCawley, Maxwell and Collard, 2018). We specifically explore the hypothesis that attenuated hands represent the type of hand configuration that one ordinarily finds in the phonology of natural sign languages : in other words, that the handshapes are sign language formatives. We interpret the results within the context of the bimodal bilingualism that seems to be a frequent feature of many hunter-gatherer societies : bimodal bilingualism seems to thrive in cultural contexts that provide a priviledged locus for silent communication (hunting, taboo or ritual silence periods), and doesn't seem to be related to the presence of a deaf population. Sign languages in those contexts (called *alternate sign languages*) seem to possess a relatively impoverished lexicon, but observe grammatical properties shared with primary sign languages (Green, 2014 ; Green and Wilkins, 2014). An illustrative case is provided by the Queensland aboriginal people, who are bimodal bilinguals speaking, say, Pitta-Pitta or Warlpiri, and a regional sign language, a combination typical of the aboriginal tribes in Australia (Kendon, 1988). The correspondence of similar hand stencils found in cave art in the Queensland belt with linguistic signs is well established in that area (Walsh, 1974).

15h45 16h30 Georg A. Kaiser (Universität Konstanz)
Syntactic variation in wh-interrogatives in (Old and Modern) Romance languages

One crucial observation concerning the syntactic development in Romance is that wh-interrogative clauses are characterized by a general wh-phrase-verb(-subject) (whV(S)) order, which is supposed to result from the fronting of the wh-phrase to the left periphery and the placing of the finite verb directly after it. Given the general characterization of Old Romance as having a verb-second (V2) grammar, whV(S) order is thought to be linked to a general rule of placing the finite verb into a left-peripheral position. As for Modern Romance, where the general V2 grammar has been lost by the end of the Medieval period (except in some Raeto-Romance varieties), whV(S) order is claimed to represent a 'residual verb-second' effect. In the generative framework, this is typically captured by the assumption that wh-phrase and finite verb obligatorily move to the left periphery. As a consequence, the finite verb should be adjacent to the wh-phrase and the subject, if phonologically expressed and if it does not represent the wh-phrase, should appear in postverbal position. However, while this seems to be empirically confirmed for Old Romance, this is not true for Modern Romance languages which show a number of deviations from whV(S) order in many varieties. In this talk, I will discuss (some of) these deviations on the basis of data from an extensive corpus with parallel texts from different periods of time and initiate a discussion about the question of whether and how it is possible to retrace this diachronic change and this synchronic variation on the basis of such a corpus of parallel texts.

16h45 17h30 Eric Haeberli (University of Geneva)
Evaluating alleged effects of inflectional morphology on syntax: The development of V-movement in the history of English
(joint work with Tabea Ihsane)

The occurrence of V-movement to the inflectional domain has often been related to the richness of inflectional morphology in the literature. In particular, verbal agreement morphology has long been argued to play a crucial role in this area of the grammar (the Rich Agreement Hypothesis (RAH); cf. e.g. Bobaljik and Thrainsson 1998, Koeneman and Zeijlstra 2014, Rohrbacher 1999, Vikner 1995 among many others). More recently, Biberauer and Roberts (2010)

propose an alternative correlation, according to which richness of tense morphology determines the occurrence of V-movement (where 'tense' is a cover term for tense, mood and aspect). In this paper, we will evaluate these proposals on the basis of a close examination of the loss of V-movement in the history of English. It will be shown that the two main diagnostics of V-movement (adverb placement, placement of negation) suggest that the loss of V-movement in English is not a single event. Instead, V-movement seems to be lost sequentially, with movement past adverbs being lost first and movement past negation declining later. Our findings are problematic for morphology-based accounts as they generally treat V-movement as an all-or-nothing phenomenon - either a language has it or a language does not have it. Furthermore, the timing of the changes turns out to be incompatible with proposals linking V-movement to richness of agreement morphology. In this respect, Biberauer and Roberts' (2010) proposal is more promising as the first step in the decline of V-movement can be related chronologically to the loss of subjunctive morphology. However, no such morphological connection can be found for the second step in this change. We therefore propose an account of the developments in English in which morphological factors only play a weak role with respect to the status of V-movement. Instead, the decline of V-movement is argued to be the result of a combination of factors: independent syntactic changes (loss of head-final structure, decline of subject-verb inversion), changes in the verbal morphosyntax (loss of subjunctive, rise of periphrastic forms), an acquisitional bias towards simpler structures, and, possibly, effects of dialect contact. We will also show how the continued occurrence of movement with 'have' and 'be' (another potential problem for morphology-based accounts) can be integrated into our framework.