ISGS Hong Kong online seminar series

**Wednesday 3rd February 5-6pm HK time**

*From Language to Languaging: Bringing chant and gesture into the picture*

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**Abstract**

The term “language” is used to motivate inquiry into two very different and important questions. The first is the inquiry into coded message exchange. This underlies almost all of the work within traditional linguistics. The second is to inquire into a profound change that occurred in pre-history, birthing modern humans and their activities. I will argue that the conventional understanding of “language” cannot address this second question and I will introduce the term “languaging” instead, to highlight a range (scope unknown) of coordinative and affiliative activities that produced the change we recognise in retrospect. Working from the empirical observation of chanting (joint speech) and its role in embodied ritual and performative practices, I will illustrate one form of languaging that has hitherto been neglected. This novel focus yokes gesture, speech, and many other aspects of collective embodied activity together and adds to the increasingly motivated drive to develop profoundly embodied theories of our being that avoid the shortcomings of accounts based in the computational metaphor and a reductive neurocentrism.

**Bio**

Fred Cummins is a cognitive scientist and linguist (PhD Indiana U., 1997) with longstanding interest in developing accounts of human cognition and being that are rooted in the body, rather than just the brain. His work on joint speech (chant) over the last 20 years has generated a novel field of relevance to disciplines from neuroscience to religious studies. His work combines ethnological observation with philosophically motivated use of concepts from the theory of enaction and the formal tools of dynamical systems theory. Further information

at <http://fredcummins.net>.