



### Contact Email for March 2018

The vocabulary of most people is relatively small and sometimes confusing with the use of regional dialect words or jargon words which are used in some English speaking communities but not understood in most others. For instance, did you know that when you use the noun 'skype' you are actually using a Scottish word meaning 'a worthless, lean person of disagreeable manner and temper?' Well, I know that since Microsoft took over Skype, it has become a disagreeable program that frequently infuriates me. Of course 'Skype' the program, is the name given to software that derived its name from "Sky peer-to-peer", which was then abbreviated to "Skyper". However, some of the domain names associated with "Skyper" were already taken so the final "r" was dropped leaving the current title "Skype". One word, arrived at from two entirely different circumstances, and giving entirely different meanings.

The problem with dialect and jargon words is that they are not universally known or are known by a few. Thus, if you are trying to get a message across, and you use jargon, for example, you may find that many people don't understand what you are saying or writing and give up on your message.

When I got notice of the theme of this year's conference I found it emblazoned as "Precarity, Rights and Resistance". Rights, I understood, Resistance I understood, but could not see the connections, but Precarity I had never seen or heard.

Many years ago I ran a conference at Melbourne University on presenting research to the community. I asked Graham Perkins, the then Editor of the 'Melbourne Age', to come and listen to the presentations then take the last session to talk about their impact and what he would publish. Papers were presented by Chemists, Physicists, Historians and Social Scientists. At the final session, I introduced him and then asked him what he would publish out of all the publications. He said "Nothing". I said "Nothing at all?" He said "No" so I said, "Can you tell us why?" He went on to say, "*If you want me to publish what you do, you have got to put it in my language and the people my paper is written for. Much of what was said today I did not understand. If you want people to go along with what you say, you have got to do it in their language, not in the jargon or invented words your group uses*".

With Sally's assistance I discovered what the word 'Precarity' meant. "**Precarity** (also precariousness) is a precarious existence, lacking in predictability, job security, material or psychological welfare. The social class defined by this condition has been termed the precariat." I had looked in my dictionaries but none of them mentioned the word, but having been directed to on line dictionaries I found the definition, but my built in computer dictionary still does not mention it.

This morning's ABC Breakfast Show had someone talking about the popularity and adulation of sports people by the Australian community. The compare said sport provides heroes that draw crowds to games. It answers a psychological need that people have. You never see the same response to scientists. If we want people to understand what we are doing, we must provide it in their language. Academics usually write for other academics. The applied Sociologist writes for many people who have no academic background, or no understanding of the jargons used in sociology. To be understood outside of your cohort you must use language others will understand.

*Alan Scott*, Continuing Education Officer