

## **Doesn't everyone know how to say please? On communicating across cultures without static interference.**

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To fully understand what another person really means can sometimes seem an insurmountable task even within very close relationships. Understanding what someone from a different language and a different cultural background is talking about is harder still, and to our great frustration, the answer is not always to be found in a dictionary. The old Italian proverb seems to put it very well when it says "Traduttore – traditore" or "Translator – traitor", because haven't we all been betrayed by words, tones of voice, facial expressions and gestures we thought we knew so well what they meant?

The T/I professional is well aware of the fact that there is more to translating and interpreting than acting as a living dictionary. Our role is far more complex than transferring one language into another, it also includes a constant crossing and re-crossing of cultural divides, where we act as ambassadors for the cultures in question to make sure both sides come to a mutual understanding. This is perhaps more immediately obvious in interpreting than in translating, but I would argue that the cross-cultural aspects have as much validity in translating as in interpreting.

The aim of this paper is to consider the importance of cross-cultural awareness for the T/I professional and what we can do to achieve excellence in this area. It is divided into three parts, starting with a brief introduction to what "culture" is and an attempt to define the word. Secondly, the need for "translation of culture" will be discussed, and finally we will take a look at if and how we could achieve "fluency" in more than one culture.

This presentation will be interactive and the audience will be expected to participate in short exercises as we progress.



**Anna HERBST** is Swedish but has lived in Australia for 24 years. She originally came here to take up a position as Swedish Tutor at the University of Melbourne and stayed there until the funding ran out in the early 1990s. Since then she has lectured in English Language, Literature and Study Skills around Melbourne and spent a year lecturing in English, Western Culture and Media Studies at the Communications University of China in Beijing, where she also worked as English News Editor at China Central Television. In the late 80s and early 90s she was a constant contributor to SBS Radio's Swedish program in Melbourne.

Anna has been translating to and from Swedish parallel to her other work since her arrival in Melbourne, and she authored the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> editions of the Lonely Planet's Scandinavian Phrasebook. In the early 80s she published a short story in translation from Greek to Swedish in Sweden.

She lives with her cat in the Dandenong Ranges just east of Melbourne.