



# NEWSLETTER

Dear SIETAR Members and Supporters,

The intercultural field, being so multidisciplinary by origin, attracts people from various professions: human resources, organizational development, education, language teaching, management, leadership and communication studies etc. These diverse backgrounds only enrich our field and it is always fascinating to hear stories of the different journeys we took to this point where we all converge and exchange, be it at our learning events or our conferences. Keeping the spirit of exchanging alive, here is a story of how intertwined the fields of language and culture are. We look forward to hearing from you as to how you got involved with intercultural work and what your journey has been like.

*Learning a foreign language is perhaps one of the most powerful ways of understanding a different world view. When I signed up for a foreign language class, little did I suspect that it would change my life and my world view forever. I was in love with the idea of speaking French but I did not expect to step into wonderland and view the world from another angle. Let me give you a little example. I was learning vocabulary related to weather and the task was to associate the sentence- "It is good weather" with one of two images. One with the sun shining bright and another had clouds and rain. Most of my Indian class mates and I associated that phrase with clouds and rain and when we were told we were wrong, and that good weather for the French meant the sun. We found it ridiculous! Of course the reason was that we lived in a city (Chennai) which had the sun shining 365 days in a year with a perennial summer and so when we saw clouds and rain, it meant some respite from the heat and loads of fun.*

*Businesses can hardly afford to overlook these differing perceptions. The skin product that is most sold in India is skin lightening cream and not sun tan lotion. Exotic locales for shooting multimillion dollar Bollywood films are more often than not snow-capped peaks rather than sunny beaches! Countries like Switzerland have understood the lure of their cool climates for Indians and have welcomed the Indian film industry with wide open arms.*

*As I continued to learn the French language, little windows into a different world view kept opening up and I became aware of how different cultures instilled different values helping me understand my own cultural values at a deeper level and appreciate different world views.*

*But I also became very aware of how cultures and languages could become a barrier and divisive forces if people came up very sharply against differences without adequate preparation. It was this insight that led me into intercultural work and everyday brings its lessons. For example, while preparing an Indian team to work virtually with the French, my participants and I gained an insight when one of the Indian participants confided her hurt at her French counterpart, because he had sent her an email in English saying that "It was a shame" she couldn't send the document earlier. She had burst into tears thinking that her French counterpart was chiding her for shameful conduct when in fact he was expressing mild regret at the most. This misunderstanding can be explained as being due to a poor grasp of the English language. But then there is a cultural angle as well. In a collective culture like India, where "what the other will think is" is still very important, the word "shame" evokes a strong reaction. - Sunita Nichani*

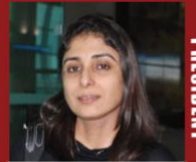
## UPDATE

The Indo French Chamber of Commerce is organizing two intercultural workshops and have accepted to extend the registration rate to all Sietar India members. The details are as below

**19th JUNE:** Impact of cultural values on Business Negotiation between Indian and French people- Facilitated by **Guillaume Gevrey**, C2C Consulting, at Fortune J.P Celestial, Bangalore.

**4th JULY:** Making sense of differences: the role of intercultural competence- Focus on France and India Facilitated by **Sunita Nichani** at the Alliance Francaise of Madras, at 40 College Road, Nungambakkam, Chennai.

For attending any of these events, please contact Ms Sarah Goldfark, [contactchennai@iffci.org.in](mailto:contactchennai@iffci.org.in). to enroll.



Sunita Nichani

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