

Cultural conflict occurs all the time. For example, people categorize other groups by creating stereotypes. Stereotypes help us order a complex world, but they usually involve overgeneralizations or categorizations based on false information or simple hatred. You must avoid them and, instead, educate yourself about different cultures and cultural values.

Debaters should be aware of some areas where cultures tend to differ so that they can then focus on understanding them. To do so, you must consider many factors, including a culture's history, social and political institutions, intentions of the people communicating, and context. Here are some areas where cultural distinctions exist:

- Individual versus group or community
- Oral tradition versus written tradition
- Private versus public activism or citizenship
- Verbal communication versus nonverbal communication
- Political emphasis on national government versus local action
- Tradition versus innovation/progress
- Direct versus indirect communication styles
- Elaborate versus succinct communication styles
- Personal versus contextual thinking
- Linear thinking versus holistic thinking
- Confrontational versus empathic beliefs

Once debaters know the possible areas of cultural tension, they can improve their cultural competence. The key is to be tolerant, respectful, and appreciative of difference.

When we encounter persons from another culture, our uncertainty about how to act increases and we feel awkward. Reducing such anxiety, then, can be a key component in an intercultural communication. You can decrease stress by focusing on similarities between cultures rather than differences. If you can locate areas you have in common with people who may appear to be different, then you have a good chance of communicating effectively.

PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES OF INTERNATIONAL DEBATING

International debating involves negotiating many cultural differences. Two of the main are language and etiquette and customs.

DEBATING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The fact that Karl Popper debates are in English, a language foreign to some debaters, creates a major challenge. The debate requires not only that participants translate, write, and speak a different language, but also that they think, process, and persuade others in a foreign tongue. This may be extremely difficult,