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Abstract

In recent years, over half a million Chinese students travelled abroad to study, making China the largest source of international students in the global higher education market. A large Chinese population on campus does not, however, generate prolific interactions between them and local students. Language barriers and cultural distance are frequently cited in the literature as factors that hinder communication, yet it is not clear how they actually affect the communication process. To address this gap, we utilise quantitative and qualitative data collected at one Australian university through an online survey (n=?124) and focus groups (N=?16) to investigate how Chinese international students and local students understand and experience intercultural communication. We find that both student groups are quite positive about language and cultural differences but struggle with comprehension problems and low-quality interactions. Intercultural communication requires

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interlocutors to establish common grounds between language and cultural variations via meaning negotiation. However, being restricted by intracultural practices and norms, students are not able to fully utilise communication techniques to fulfil this need. This, in return, affects their motivations to have further intercultural interactions. The paper concludes by discussing the implications for universities and suggestions for further research. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)