

D35 Mark / Germany / Economics

Interaction partner(s): Chinese student
Moment of enquiry: WS 08/09
Experience of difference: Topics of conversation and taboos

Mark, an economics student, shares an apartment with other students in the dorm. The group of roommates consists of two German students, a Russian student and a fourth one, a Chinese named Xun. When Xun moves in, Mark shows him the apartment and explains the house rules. After that, they talk about their studies, the university location and life at university. Suddenly, Xun starts asking Mark about personal matters: Where he is from, where his family lives, whether he has siblings and, finally, how much money he has available each month and whether his family is rich. While Mark is happy to talk about his family, he finds the question about money shocking, and evasively responds that the money is enough to get by on. This question goes way too far for him! Therefore Mark ends the conversation with an excuse and quickly goes to his room. The Chinese student stays where he is, puzzled.

1. Why does Mark respond evasively to the Chinese student's last questions?
2. What conversational conventions determine the Chinese student's behaviour?