

Motives for Intercultural Friendships in Higher Education: A Case Study of First-year ESL Students and Native Speakers of English

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ABSTRACT This paper investigated the formation of intercultural friendship between native speakers of English and first-year ESL students at a large urban university in the Free State Province. Qualitative approach was used with open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews to collect data to understand factors that lead to the formation of intercultural friendship. The research population of this study included fifty first-year students (twenty-five females and twenty-five males). The study found that personal liking, similar values and beliefs facilitated social contact among students from different cultures. The results suggest that intercultural friendship provides students with the opportunity to learn each other's cultural beliefs, values and languages which underpin the Interdependence Theory. This study recommends that higher education institutions should encourage academics to infuse intercultural friendship as an adjustment and teaching and learning tool to celebrate multiculturalism within and outside the classroom.