

Like a chicken talking to a duck

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Raymond Chen

Many years ago, I called the home of my Chinese-speaking nieces. This was before they started learning English and before I started learning their dialect of Chinese. After the call was over, the eldest niece asked, “Who was that on the phone?” “That was Uncle Raymond.” “Oh, I want to talk to Uncle Raymond!” Her mother replied, “That’d be like a chicken talking to a duck.” A chicken talking to a duck is a Chinese idiom referring to two people who cannot communicate due to a language barrier.

It seems that ducks are somehow central to the concept of language unintelligibility. Is there a duck-related language idiom in your language?

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