



Communication Challenges and Adaptation Strategies Among Non-Thai Muslim Students at Rangsit University

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Abstract

This study examines the communication experiences of non-Thai Muslim students at Rangsit University within Thailand's multicultural higher education context. The objectives are: 1) to identify the communication challenges faced by non-Thai Muslim students at Rangsit University in their daily interactions; and 2) to understand the strategies they use to adapt to communication challenges. Grounded in Communication Accommodation Theory and Intergroup Contact Theory, the research explores how linguistic, cultural, and religious factors intersect in shaping students' academic and social communication. A mixed-methods design was employed. The quantitative phase surveyed 50 non-Thai Muslim students using a structured questionnaire with established content and face validity. Reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha values of 0.82 and 0.79. The qualitative phase involved semi-structured interviews with 30 participants, which were analyzed using thematic analysis. Trustworthiness was ensured through a standardized interview protocol, verbatim transcription, and an inter-coder agreement rate of 85%. Findings indicate that communication challenges were experienced at moderate to high levels, particularly in Thai language proficiency, English accent comprehension, halal food accessibility, religious environmental differences, and limited institutional communication about Muslim facilities. Nevertheless, adaptation strategies were reported at high to very high levels, reflecting strong resilience. Students actively learned Thai, developed intercultural friendships, engaged with Muslim community networks, utilized digital platforms, and negotiated religious obligations with lecturers. The study underscores both the structural areas requiring institutional improvement and the adaptive capacity of non-Thai Muslim students in navigating intercultural academic environments.

Keywords: *Non-Thai Muslim Students, Communication Challenges, Adaptation Strategies, Rangsit University, Thailand*

1. Introduction

The globalization of higher education has transformed universities into multicultural spaces characterized by increasing cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. In Southeast Asia, Thailand has emerged as a regional education hub within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Rujiprak, 2016). At the same time, the global Muslim population—projected to grow by 35% between 2010 and 2030—has contributed significantly to international student mobility (Hackett & Lipka, 2018). As a predominantly Buddhist country, Thailand hosts a growing number of students from Muslim-majority nations, creating dynamic intercultural interactions within its universities. This diversification enriches campus environments but also introduces communication complexities shaped by differences in language, culture, and religion.

International student mobility continues to expand, with over 5.6 million students enrolled in tertiary education abroad in 2018 (UNESCO, 2020). Asian destinations such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore have gained prominence due to affordability and regional integration (Henderson, 2015). Thailand's policy initiatives—including educational reform and internationalization strategies—support its ambition to become a regional education leader (Ministry of Education, Thailand, 2017). Institutions such as Rangsit University have actively promoted English-language programs and multicultural engagement (Rangsit University, 2020). However, integration within a predominantly Buddhist sociocultural context presents distinct challenges, particularly for Muslim students whose daily practices, dietary requirements, and religious observances may differ from local norms (Pimpa, 2011; Chen et al., 2019).

Intercultural communication theory provides a framework for understanding these dynamics. Gallois (2005) defines intercultural communication as interaction between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, requiring the management of anxiety and uncertainty. International students frequently encounter linguistic barriers, differing

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communication styles, and unfamiliar social norms (Andrade, 2006). Thai cultural patterns, emphasizing indirect communication and respect for hierarchy (Hofstede, 2001), may contrast with more direct communication styles found in some Muslim-majority societies. Such differences can contribute to misunderstandings, social isolation, and academic difficulty (Bester & Budhal, 2001). Additionally, logistical concerns—such as access to halal food or prayer spaces—may influence students' sense of belonging (Brown & Holloway, 2008).

Despite these developments, a clear problem remains. While Thailand continues to position itself as an international education hub, there is limited understanding of how non-Thai Muslim students experience intercultural communication within Thai universities. Existing studies often generalize international student experiences without adequately addressing the intersection of religion, culture, and communication. This lack of focused research creates a gap in understanding the specific challenges and adaptation processes of non-Thai Muslim students in a predominantly Buddhist context.

To interpret adaptation processes, this study draws on Kim's (2001) cross-cultural adaptation theory, which conceptualizes adaptation as a stress–adaptation–growth dynamic. Students develop communication competence through active engagement with the host environment. Gudykunst's (2003) Anxiety/Uncertainty Management theory further explains how effective communication depends on reducing intercultural anxiety and uncertainty. For non-Thai Muslim students, strategies such as language learning, seeking co-cultural support, and proactive engagement may facilitate the adaptation process.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the communication challenges and adaptation strategies of non-Thai Muslim students at Rangsit University. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it extends intercultural communication scholarship by incorporating religious and cultural dimensions within the Southeast Asian context. Practically, the findings provide insights for universities and policymakers to develop more inclusive support systems, enhance intercultural competence, and improve the overall experiences of international students. Ultimately, this research supports Thailand's vision of becoming a culturally responsive and inclusive education hub within ASEAN.

2. Objectives

- 1) To identify the communication challenges faced by non-Thai Muslim students at Rangsit University in their daily interactions.
- 2) To understand the strategies employed by non-Thai Muslim students at Rangsit University to adapt to communication challenges.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to investigate the communication challenges and adaptation strategies of non-Thai Muslim students at Rangsit University. The integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches enabled a comprehensive exploration of both measurable trends and in-depth lived experiences. The quantitative component identified descriptive patterns in the prevalence and intensity of communication challenges and adaptation strategies, while the qualitative component provided contextualized narratives explaining how and why these challenges occurred.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the research framework focuses specifically on non-Thai Muslim students within a single institutional setting. This approach allows for an in-depth examination of intercultural communication dynamics within a predominantly Buddhist academic environment. By combining survey data with semi-structured interviews, the study ensures methodological triangulation, thereby enhancing the credibility and robustness of the findings. The design aligns directly with the two research objectives: identifying communication challenges and understanding adaptation strategies.

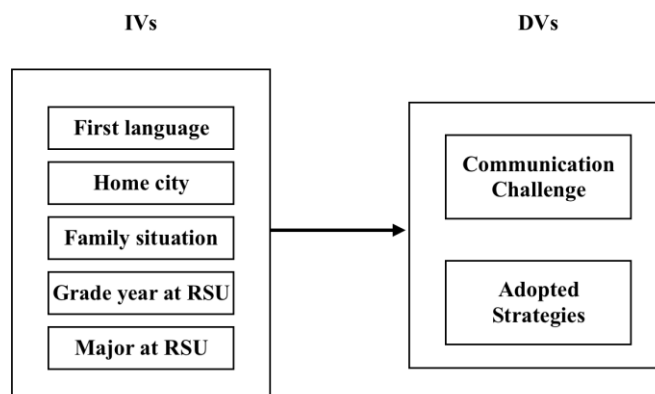


Figure 1 Framework of the Research

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population consisted of non-Thai Muslim students enrolled at Rangsit University between 2020 and 2024. To estimate the population size, a preliminary consultation was conducted with the current leader of the RSU Muslim Club (hereafter referred to as Mr. A to preserve anonymity). According to this communication, the approximate number of non-Thai Muslim students was around 50 individuals. Given the Muslim Club's active engagement with both Thai and international Muslim students, this estimate was considered reliable. Therefore, the accessible population for this study was approximately 50 non-Thai Muslim students (RSU Muslim Club, personal communication, 2025).

For the quantitative component, **the entire accessible population (N = 50) was included in the survey**, representing a census approach rather than a sampling method. This approach eliminates sampling error and provides a complete representation of the target population.

For the qualitative component, 30 participants from this population were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews. This number was considered sufficient to achieve thematic saturation, as recurring patterns and themes emerged with minimal introduction of new categories.

3.3 Sampling

Purposive sampling was employed **exclusively for the qualitative phase** to select participants for the semi-structured interviews. Participants were selected based on specific inclusion criteria aligned with the research objectives: (1) non-Thai nationality; (2) Muslim identity; and (3) full-time enrollment at Rangsit University between 2020 and 2024.

Purposive sampling was appropriate for identifying information-rich participants capable of providing in-depth insights into intercultural communication challenges and adaptation processes. Participant recruitment was facilitated through collaboration with the RSU Muslim Club. Invitations were disseminated via the club's communication channels, including group messaging platforms and social media networks. This approach enhanced accessibility while fostering trust and encouraging voluntary participation.

3.4 Research Instrument

Two primary research instruments were utilized: a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide.

Questionnaire

The survey instrument was structured into three sections to align with the research objectives: **1) Demographic and Background Information** - This section collected contextual data, including country of origin, academic program, year of study, and duration of residence in Thailand. These variables provided baseline information for examining potential influences on communication experiences; **2) Communication Challenges** - This section measured the



frequency and intensity of challenges encountered in daily academic and social interactions. Items were presented using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), alongside multiple-choice questions. The items assessed language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, religious-related challenges, and social integration difficulties; **3) Adaptation Strategies** - This section examined coping mechanisms and adaptive behaviors. Participants rated the frequency and effectiveness of strategies such as language learning, peer support, engagement with the Muslim Club, use of translation tools, and communicative adjustments. The questionnaire was distributed electronically via Google Forms to ensure accessibility and efficient data management. Content validity was established through review by two intercultural communication specialists and one faculty member with expertise in international student experiences. Face validity was confirmed through pilot testing with five students. Reliability testing yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.82 and 0.79, indicating strong internal consistency.

Interview Guide

The semi-structured interview guide was organized into three sections: **1) Background and Context (3–4 questions)**: This section explored participants' cultural backgrounds, motivations for studying at Rangsit University, and familiarity with Thai culture; **2) Communication Challenges (5–6 questions)**: Participants were asked to describe specific experiences related to language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and religious-related differences in academic and social settings; **3) Adaptation Strategies (5–6 questions)**: This section focused on coping mechanisms, social support systems, and communication adjustments employed to navigate intercultural interactions. Interviews were conducted in English, lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, and were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent. The interview guide ensured consistency across interviews while allowing flexibility for in-depth elaboration.

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted over a four-week period. All 50 participants completed the online questionnaire within a one-week timeframe. Simultaneously, 30 participants took part in semi-structured interviews scheduled at mutually convenient times. Interviews were conducted either in person or online, depending on participant availability. Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the data collection process. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, confidentiality procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time. Anonymity was maintained through the use of pseudonyms and secure data storage.

Data Analysis

A mixed-methods analytical approach was employed: **1) Qualitative Analysis** - Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The researcher conducted repeated readings of transcripts to achieve data familiarization, followed by initial coding of meaningful units related to communication challenges and adaptation strategies. The codes were subsequently organized into broader themes corresponding to the research objectives. Themes related to communication challenges included language barriers, religious practices and environmental differences, limited awareness of Muslim facilities, halal food accessibility, and decision-making contexts. Themes related to adaptation strategies included language learning and peer exchange, religious community support, personal growth and long-term adjustment, academic negotiation, and institutional recommendations. Inter-coder agreement reached 85%, thereby strengthening the reliability of the analysis; **2) Quantitative Analysis** - Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics using SPSS and Microsoft Excel. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated to assess the prevalence and intensity of reported communication challenges and adaptation strategies. The results were presented in tables to illustrate distribution patterns across the sample. The integration of qualitative thematic findings and quantitative descriptive results enabled methodological triangulation. While descriptive statistics revealed the overall levels of communication challenges (moderate to high) and adaptation strategies (high to very high), thematic analysis provided contextual explanations for these patterns. This complementary analysis enhanced interpretative depth and strengthened the validity of the study's conclusions.

3.6 Ethical Considerations



This study adhered to established ethical research standards for research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and the voluntary nature of their involvement. **Informed consent was obtained from all participants** prior to their participation in both the survey and interviews. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and no personally identifiable information was disclosed in the study.

In addition, the study complied with institutional ethical guidelines. Where applicable, **ethical approval was obtained from the RSU Ethics Review Board (RSU-ERB)** prior to data collection. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

This section presents the integrated quantitative and qualitative findings in relation to the two research objectives: (1) identifying communication challenges and (2) understanding adaptation strategies. The discussion synthesizes statistical patterns with thematic insights to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the students' lived experiences. Quantitative results are presented descriptively using Percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation as the primary indicators; for qualitative data, all participant names used in this section are pseudonyms to protect privacy and confidentiality.

Objective 1: To identify the communication challenges faced by non-Thai Muslim students at Rangsit University in their daily interactions.

Quantitative: The population (N = 50) consisted predominantly of male students (62%) and undergraduate students (88%). The majority of participants were aged between 18–23 years (76%), with most in their third year of study or above (76%). Over half of the respondents (52%) had resided in Thailand for more than three years. In terms of nationality, students from Myanmar constituted the largest group (58%). This demographic profile suggests that respondents generally had substantial exposure to the university environment, enabling informed and reflective insights into their communication experiences.

Category	Item	Mean (M)	S.D.	Level
Structural Challenge	Halal food accessibility	3.8	0.88	High
Language	Thai fluency difficulty	3.56	0.95	High
Academic Communication	Classroom participation	3.48	0.98	High
Cultural Adaptation	Adapting to Thai culture	3.28	0.93	Moderate
Religious Practice	Maintaining religious practices	3.2	0.9	Moderate
Social Interaction	Building relationships with Thai peers	3.1	0.94	Moderate
Institutional Adjustment	University traditions	3.26	0.91	Moderate
Diversity Interaction	Gender interaction	2.72	0.96	Low
Overall Mean		3.58	1	High

Table 1 Communication Challenges (Objective 1)

As illustrated in Table 1, communication challenges were generally reported at a high level (M = 3.58, S.D. \approx 1.00). Among the ten measured items, halal food accessibility emerged as the most significant challenge (M = 3.80, S.D. = 0.88), with 68% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that accessing halal food on or near campus is difficult. This finding highlights the importance of institutional and structural factors in shaping students' daily experiences. Language-related difficulties were also reported at a high level. Lack of fluency in Thai (M = 3.56, S.D. = 0.95) and

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challenges in participating in classroom discussions or group projects ($M = 3.48$, $S.D. = 0.98$) both reached high levels of agreement. These findings suggest that linguistic competence plays a critical role in shaping academic engagement and interaction with lecturers, peers, and staff. Communication barriers therefore extend beyond social contexts and directly affect academic participation and performance. Moderate levels of challenge were reported in adapting to Thai cultural norms ($M = 3.28$), maintaining religious practices ($M = 3.20$), building meaningful relationships with Thai peers ($M = 3.10$), and adjusting to university traditions ($M = 3.26$). The lowest mean score was observed in interactions with individuals of diverse gender identities ($M = 2.72$), indicating relatively lower perceived difficulty among these individuals. The influence of students' original socio-cultural background was moderate overall ($M = 3.37$, $S.D. = 0.92$). Thai language proficiency ($M = 3.60$) and family religious background ($M = 3.62$) emerged as the most influential background factors. Coming from a Muslim-majority society ($M = 3.55$) and food culture background ($M = 3.50$) also showed relatively high influence, suggesting that prior cultural and religious experiences shape students' perceptions of communication barriers. However, not all background variables were equally significant; for example, having one parent who converted to Islam showed a lower mean score ($M = 2.95$). In contrast, present environmental factors demonstrated a high overall influence ($M = 3.90$, $S.D. = 0.77$). Sense of belonging ($M = 4.05$), exposure to cultural diversity ($M = 4.02$), and interactive academic engagement ($M = 3.95$) were particularly strong influencing factors. These findings indicate that the university environment plays a substantial role in shaping students' communication development and comfort levels. Although students encounter moderate to high communication challenges, the institutional context also provides meaningful opportunities for growth and integration.

Qualitative: The findings reveal that communication challenges are multidimensional, extending beyond language barriers to include religious practice, institutional communication, and halal food accessibility. **1) Language Barriers:** Language differences emerged as the most frequently reported communication challenge. Participants described structural differences between their mother tongue and Thai as a primary difficulty. As Mr. AA explained, *"My tongue is very different from Thai language, so it was a bit hard for me to learn Thai language."* Students highlighted tonal pronunciation, unfamiliar sentence structures, and limited vocabulary as persistent obstacles. Communication in English also presented additional and unexpected barriers. Mr. AE noted, *"The English here in Thailand was a little bit hard for me to understand because people are speaking it with a certain accent, but Thai people are very friendly."* Although students acknowledged the friendliness of Thai peers, localized accents contributed to comprehension difficulties. These findings indicate that communication challenges were not limited to Thai language acquisition but also required flexibility in navigating multiple linguistic systems. Language barriers also affected classroom participation, students' confidence, and the ability to form deeper social relationships. **2) Religious Practice and Environmental Adjustment:** Religious adjustment emerged as another significant theme. Participants described the transition from Muslim-majority environments to a predominantly Buddhist context as both emotional and communicatively challenging. Miss AH reflected, *"Growing up as a Muslim child in my home country, I can hear the call of prayer every day, but ever since I moved to Thailand, I barely hear the call of prayers."* The absence of collective religious reminders required students to rely more heavily on personal discipline and digital platforms. This shift illustrates how communication challenges intersect with religious identity, whereby practices that were previously socially reinforced became increasingly individualized. The shift from a collective to a more private religious environment required both psychological adjustment and ongoing communicative negotiations in daily life. **3) Limited Awareness of Muslim Facilities:** Institutional communication gaps were also evident in relation to Muslim facilities on campus. Although Muslim facilities and student clubs exist on campus, several participants reported delayed awareness of their availability. Mr. AK stated, *"At first, I didn't know there's a Muslim club at RSU, it took me 2 semesters to know there's a prayer room at building nine."* Similarly, Miss AL described difficulty locating facilities despite finding them on a university map. These accounts suggest that communication challenges are partly institutional rather than purely individual in nature. Insufficient information dissemination during orientation appears to have increased first-year stress and delayed social and academic integration. Improved institutional communication channels could therefore reduce early adjustment difficulties and facilitate smoother integration. **4) Halal Food Accessibility:** Halal food availability was strongly emphasized as a daily communicative burden. Mr. AP explained, *"It's very difficult for me to find Halal food because there's literally no Halal restaurant on campus."* Beyond availability, cultural misunderstanding further compounded the issue. Mr. AR shared, *"Some Thai people don't understand why I must eat Halal food only... They invited me to eat non-pork restaurants, I couldn't go and eat."* Halal food therefore represents more than a dietary preference; it involves



repeated explanations of religious obligations. Students were often required to justify their choices, thereby turning everyday dining into a negotiation of religious identity. This finding highlights how communication challenges are embedded within routine campus experiences. Despite these challenges students intentionally chose to pursue their studies in Thailand. As Miss AS stated, “*Before I decide to study here... I thought about Malaysia because of the Muslim quantity there... But eventually I chose Thailand.*” This demonstrates student agency and suggests that these challenges are contextualized within broader academic and personal motivations.

Objective 2: To understand the strategies used by non-Thai Muslim students at Rangsit University to adapt to communication challenges.

Category	Strategy	Mean (M)	S.D.	Level
Community Support	Muslim student community participation	4.3	0.6	Very High
Language Adaptation	Learning Thai	4.25	0.65	Very High
Social Integration	Building Thai friendships	4.22	0.63	Very High
Internal Resources	Religious background	4.22	0.68	High
Internal Resources	Upbringing	4.12	0.7	High
Technology Use	Translation tools	3.85	0.75	High
Overall Mean		4.11	0.69	High

Table 2 Adaptation Strategies (Objective 2)

Quantitative: As shown in Table 2, despite the presence of communication challenges, adaptation strategies were adopted at a **high to very high level** ($M = 4.11$, $S.D. \approx 0.69$), representing the strongest dimension of the study. The most prominent strategy was participation in Muslim student communities ($M = 4.30$, $S.D. = 0.60$), with 86% of respondents expressing agreement. This finding suggests that religious networks function as key support systems, facilitating both emotional reassurance and practical guidance. Cultural maintenance through community involvement appears central to students’ adaptation processes. Language-related adaptation strategies were also strongly endorsed. Learning basic Thai phrases ($M = 4.25$, $S.D. = 0.65$) was rated at a very high level, reflecting proactive efforts to improve communication competence. Building relationships with Thai students ($M = 4.22$, $S.D. = 0.63$) similarly scored at a very high level, indicating that students actively pursue intercultural friendships as a means of integration. Other strategies, including drawing confidence from family religious background ($M = 4.22$) and relying on upbringing to navigate cultural diversity ($M = 4.12$), also demonstrated high levels of agreement. These findings suggest that adaptation involves both internal resources (e.g., identity confidence, upbringing) and external engagement (e.g., peer interaction, community participation). Although digital translation tools were utilized ($M = 3.85$), they were less emphasized compared to relational and community-based strategies. This implies that interpersonal interaction and social networks play a more central role in adaptation than technological assistance.

Qualitative: In response to these challenges, participants demonstrated proactive and diverse adaptation strategies, reflecting resilience and agency. **1) Language Learning and Peer Exchange:** Students actively engaged in self-directed language learning through digital media and peer interaction. As Mr. AV explained, “*I have been trying to learn Thai language by watching YouTube videos and making Thai friends.*” Similarly, Miss AW described reciprocal exchange: “*Thai friends here are very friendly... it would become language partners.*” Such peer-based learning not only improved language competence but also strengthened social integration. However, adaptation goals varied among participants. For example, Mr. AY stated, “*I don't think speaking Thai is necessary for me at all, because after graduate I will go back to my home country.*” This reflects a form of pragmatic adaptation, where some students prioritize short-term academic functionality over long-term cultural assimilation. **2) Religious Community Support:** The Muslim student community played a central role in facilitating adaptation. Miss AZ noted that once she connected to the Muslim club’s online platforms, she no longer missed activities. Similarly, Mr. BA stated, “*The Muslim club Facebook page is*



now posting the bilingual post... This is very convenient for me.” Digital platforms enhanced inclusivity and reduced language barriers. The Muslim club functioned as both a religious and communicative support hub, fostering a sense of belonging and emotional security. **3) Personal Growth and Academic Negotiation:** Length of stay contributed to increased confidence among participants. Mr. BD reflected, *“After three years living here... things have become easier.”* Prior multilingual experience also facilitated adjustment, as Miss BE explained that previous experience in learning Arabic made Thai less intimidating. Proactive communication with lecturers further reduced tensions between academic and religious obligations. Mr. BF admitted, *“At first, I was very afraid to miss class for Friday Prayers... But after I spoke with the lecturer, they understood.”* This indicates that perceived barriers were often mitigated through open communication and dialogue.

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this study align with broader trends in the globalization of higher education, where increasing cultural and religious diversity creates both opportunities and communication complexities (Rujiprak, 2016; UNESCO, 2020).

Regarding Objective 1, which aimed to identify the communication challenges faced by non-Thai Muslim students, the results confirm that participants experienced significant linguistic barriers, accent differences, and uncertainty in daily interactions. These findings are consistent with intercultural communication theory, particularly the notion that individuals must manage anxiety and uncertainty in cross-cultural contexts (Gallois, 2005; Andrade, 2006). Difficulties related to Thai indirect communication styles and hierarchical norms further support Hofstede’s (2001) cultural framework, suggesting that differences in communication patterns contribute to misunderstanding and hesitation, particularly in academic settings. In addition, challenges related to religious adjustment and halal food accessibility reinforce prior research indicating that logistical and religious factors play a critical role in shaping international students’ sense of belonging (Brown & Holloway, 2008; Pimpa, 2011). The limited availability of Muslim-friendly facilities and the absence of visible religious practices, such as the calls to prayer, further illustrate how a predominantly Buddhist environment influences the lived experiences of Muslim students (Chen et al., 2019).

Regarding Objective 2, which focused on understanding the adaptation strategies employed by these students, the findings reveal that participants actively adopted multiple strategies to navigate communication challenges. Their engagement in proactive language learning, participation in Muslim student networks, and efforts to communicate with lecturers reflect Kim’s (2001) stress–adaptation–growth dynamic, in which individuals gradually develop communication competence through continuous interaction with the host environment. Furthermore, by relying on peer support and maintaining open communication, students were able to reduce uncertainty and effectively manage intercultural anxiety, consistent with Gudykunst’s (2003) Anxiety/Uncertainty Management theory.

Overall, these findings highlight both the structural challenges that require institutional attention and the active role of non-Thai Muslim students in adapting to intercultural environments. This dual perspective emphasizes the importance of not only improving institutional support systems but also recognizing students’ agency in facilitating their own intercultural adjustment.

5. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive understanding of the communication experiences of non-Thai Muslim students at Rangsit University by integrating both quantitative and qualitative findings. The results demonstrate that communication challenges are present at a moderate to high level and are multidimensional in nature. Language barriers—particularly limited Thai proficiency and difficulty in understanding Thai-accented English—remain the most consistent obstacles affecting academic participation, classroom confidence, and daily social interaction. However, these challenges extend beyond language to include cultural differences, religious environmental adjustment, institutional communication gaps, and halal food accessibility. Notably, halal-related concerns represent both a structural limitation and a communicative burden, as students frequently need to explain and negotiate their dietary requirements in everyday contexts. Despite these challenges, the findings highlight strong resilience and proactive adaptation among students. Adaptation strategies were practiced at high to very high level, particularly in language improvement and social support. Many students engaged in self-directed learning, informal language exchange, and peer interaction to enhance their communication competence. Muslim student networks and digital platforms also played a crucial role in fostering a sense



of belonging, reducing uncertainty, and facilitating access to information. Additionally, direct dialogue with lecturers and peers proved effective in resolving misunderstandings related to religious obligations. Overall, the study reveals a dynamic relationship between structural challenges and individual agency. While institutional improvements—such as clearer information dissemination and improved halal accessibility—are necessary to enhance inclusivity, non-Thai Muslim students demonstrate significant intercultural competence and adaptability. Their experiences underscore the importance of supportive campus environments in fostering successful integration within Thailand's increasingly internationalized higher education context.

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