

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an introduction to the present study, which investigates the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students living in Thailand and studying in English as a medium of education (EME) curriculums. It begins by providing background information on the study. Chapter one starts with the background of the study, followed by the statement of the problem and the significance of the study. Definitions of key terms is then presented at the end of the chapter. The chapter concludes with an outline of the entire thesis.

1.1 Background of the Study

In recent times, there has been a significant surge in the internationalization of higher education, as an ever-growing number of students are now exploring educational prospects beyond their own nations. This phenomenon has coincided with the widespread use of English as the primary language of instruction in many countries. Consequently, it has become appealing for students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to pursue tertiary education in foreign countries (Altbach & Knight, 2016). This trend has led to a growing number of curriculums designed by higher education institutions that utilize English as a medium of education.

Due to such curriculums, the landscape of higher education has shifted to prioritize student mobility, foster international collaborations and networks for research and educational programs, and strive for improved rankings on a global scale (Baker & Fang, 2021). This shift demonstrates the significant role that English now plays in higher education institutions worldwide, as highlighted by Dafouz and Smit (2020). As a result, the English language has become more prominent and serves as the primary means for communication among individuals whose first language is not English.

In a recent study conducted by Baker and Fang (2021), it was stated that English as a medium of education serves not only as a linguistic phenomenon but also an approach to support students in cultivating intercultural citizenship driven by the intercultural dimension of internationalization of higher education. This implies that when students enter an educational setting in another country, consisting of individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, they not only enhance their English

skills through communication but also develop a sense of intercultural citizenship (Baker & Fang, 2021; Boonsuk & Fang, 2021).

Contributors to the study of intercultural citizenship among study-abroad students have identified several key advantages of internationalizing higher education institutions. These advantages include attracting and accommodating international as well as local students, promoting intercultural interaction, awareness, and understanding, and fostering global perspectives among students in higher education settings (Baker et al., 2022; Baker & Fang, 2021; Fang & Liu, 2020; Fang, 2019; Ota, 2018).

Regarding the context of this study, it is important to note that English is used not only within the classroom but also in various higher education settings where students from different countries interact. English as a medium of education (EME) was selected for the purpose of the study rather than English as a medium of instruction (EMI) due to the distinction of it being more comprehensive, encompassing both “instruction” and “learning,” rather than prioritizing one over the other (Dafouz & Smit, 2016). In this environment, students will inevitably experience intercultural contact and interactions that extend beyond the classroom. These interactions will become increasingly common and dynamic, especially through extracurricular activities. Such activities will enhance students’ awareness and enable them to engage with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds from various countries (Fantini, 2018).

Given the significant role of English in fostering these intercultural interactions, it is essential to understand the broader implications for students’ educational choices and experiences, as well as the influence of those experiences on their intercultural citizenship.

Studying in another country is a valuable educational opportunity for Cambodian students (Ngel, 2022). Cambodian students may prefer to study outside of Cambodia, either in Anglophone countries or non-Anglophone countries such as Malaysia and Thailand (Chao Jr, 2023; Sassoon, 2016). This preference is mainly due to the higher quality of the host country’s higher education system, as well as factors such as tourism, cultural closeness, geographic proximity, costs, and the availability of scholarships (Chao Jr, 2023; Jampaklay et al., 2022; Pongsin et al., 2023; Snodin, 2019).

Regardless of their preferences regarding which countries to study in, students can expect to face distinctive opportunities and challenges. Upon arrival in a foreign country and being immersed in an environment with people from various countries and different cultural and linguistic communities, students are bound to encounter challenges, particularly in non-Anglophone countries. Language barriers can hinder international students’ adaptation to their study environment (de Wit et al., 2022; Fit

& Haj, 2022), and cultural adjustment, such as adapting to a new cultural environment, different teaching styles, and societal norms can also be challenging (Killick & Foster, 2021; Minaeva & Prostakov, 2022; Tsuneyoshi, 2005). The decision to pursue studies in another country exposes them to diverse cultural and linguistic communities, shaping their intercultural interactions, academic pursuits, and future careers (de Wit et al., 2022).

As EME programs become more common in Thailand, part of the country's plan to become a Southeast Asian education hub (Snodin, 2019), Cambodian students are increasingly taking advantage of the opportunity to pursue their educational there. Therefore, it is important to explore the intercultural experiences of Cambodian university students in Thailand, considering the deep historical, cultural and geopolitical ties between the two countries. While Cambodia and Thailand have a long history of cultural exchange and migration, the current trends of student mobility and internationalized higher education provide new insights into this relationship (Jampaklay et al., 2022).

Within the realm of English as a Medium of Education (EME) programs in Thailand, Cambodian students face a distinctive educational landscape in comparison to English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) programs in English-speaking contexts. Unlike in English-speaking countries, where English is the primary mode of communication, Thailand presents a multilingual setting where English is secondary. Consequently, this poses additional linguistic obstacles for students, as they must navigate academic content and day-to-day interactions in a language that is not widely utilized beyond the classroom (Jenkins, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 2010). Additionally, the process of cultural adaptation in Thailand involves comprehending and integrating into a society with unique cultural norms and educational practices, which diverge significantly from those found in English-speaking countries (Hofstede, 2011; Phan, 2016). Together, these factors contribute to the intercultural experiences of Cambodian students in EME programs, emphasizing the need for an in-depth examination of how these experiences influence their academic and social integration.

The setting of this study adds to its uniqueness as it takes place at a university in the northeastern region of Thailand. This university offers programs to students not only from Thailand and Cambodia, but also from many other countries. These students study a variety of fields and degrees, creating opportunities to learn about each other both inside and outside of class. They can engage in extracurricular activities or participate in university-organized events, interacting not only with fellow students from the host country but also with students from other countries (de Wit et al., 2022).

Considering these points, this section provides an overview of the research topic, situating it within the broader context of international education and emphasizing the importance of exploring the intercultural experiences of Cambodian university students living in Thailand and studying in EME curriculums. The subsequent sections will delve into the statement of the problem.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Research on Cambodian students enrolled in English as a Medium of Education (EME) programs in Thailand is limited, despite the growing importance of intercultural education and citizenship among international students (Baker et al., 2022; Wagner & Byram, 2017). These programs, which utilize English for instruction and facilitate learning both inside and outside the classroom, attract diverse student body, thereby fostering multicultural environments.

Intercultural citizenship entails active engagement with local and international communities, the cultivation of intercultural understanding, and the ability to navigate diverse cultural contexts while preserving one's cultural identity (Jurgilė, 2019; Wagner & Byram, 2017; Williams, 2005). Prior studies have shown that studying abroad can enhance intercultural awareness and competence (Kinging, 2009; Wu et al., 2015; Zapata-Barrero, 2020). It requires a combination of skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for social action, alongside an awareness of different cultural perspectives (Wagner & Byram, 2017). Additionally, engagement with individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds is crucial for the establishment intercultural citizenship (Baker & Fang, 2021).

Existing research has predominantly focused on graduate and post-graduate students in Anglophone countries (Baker et al., 2022; Baker & Fang, 2021; Boonsuk & Fang, 2021), often neglecting undergraduate students who are non-native English speakers studying in non-Anglophone countries. Moreover, while numerous Thai universities offer EME programs to international students, there is a scarcity of research regarding the intercultural citizenship of these students, particularly Cambodian students who constitute a significant proportion of the international body in Thailand. Consequently, there exists a notable gap in understanding how Cambodian undergraduate students in Thailand navigate their intercultural experiences and how these experiences shape their development of intercultural citizenship.

In contrast to prior studies that have concentrated on graduate students in Anglophone countries, this study focuses on undergraduate students in a non-Anglophone country, offering a fresh perspective on the intercultural experiences of a

less-explored group. By directing attention towards Cambodian students enrolled in Thailand's EME programs, this research addresses a significant void in the existing literature by investigating how these students engage with and adapt to a multicultural academic environment outside the conventional Anglophone context.

This study makes a significant contribution to the existing knowledge on intercultural citizenship. It focuses on the experiences of Cambodian students in a non-Anglophone EME environment, offering a detailed examination of the specific challenges they face, such as psychological discomfort, language barriers, and understanding different accents (Jurgilė, 2019). By shedding light on the nuanced experiences, the study deepens our understanding of how intercultural citizenship is developed and enacted. Importantly, this research provides a fresh perspective by specifically looking at undergraduate students in a Non-Anglophone context, complementing previous studies that have primarily focused students in Anglophone settings.

Additionally, this study enhances our understanding of how prior experiences influence students' ability to adapt and engage with diverse communities. By exploring how Cambodian students navigate intercultural encounters, valuable insights are gained into the factors that either facilitate or hinder the development of intercultural citizenship. The practical implications of these findings are significant for educational institutions in non-Anglophone countries like Thailand, offering guidance on how to better support international students in EME programs.

Hence, despite the emphasis on intercultural education in Thai higher education institutions (Arphattananon, 2018; Snodin, 2016), there is still a lack of understanding regarding the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students in Thailand's EME curriculums. By addressing this gap, this study aims to contribute to discussions on the intercultural citizenship of international students, as well as the broader topics such as intercultural communication and the internationalization of higher education.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

Kramsch (1998) emphasized the importance of adapting to multiple discourse communities in foreign educational settings. This suggests that navigating diverse academic and local environments is vital for cultural survival. To understand the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students in English as a Medium of Education (EME) programs in Thailand, it is necessary to thoroughly explore their daily experiences (Aba, 2016; Lehto et al., 2014; Tran & Vu, 2017).

Thailand, being a multilingual country with diverse languages and cultures, presents both challenges and opportunities for international students. Aside from Thai language, English is widely used in academic settings, particularly in EME programs, making it an ideal environment for studying intercultural adaptation. Baker (2011) examines the role of English as a lingua franca in Thailand, highlighting its function in enabling communication in academic and professional contexts. However, this also means that students must navigate a complex multilingual environment. Foley (2005) underscores the importance of English in Thai education, which allows international students to communicate effectively but requires them to adapt to a multilingual setting.

By exploring the experiences of Cambodian students, we can gain various insights into their interactions with academic and local communities, as well as their ability to adapt to a diverse, multicultural, and multilingual environment (Jurgilė, 2019). This knowledge is crucial for developing effective strategies to foster intercultural competence and promote citizenship among Cambodian university students studying in a non-Anglophone country (Ji, 2020). In the context of internationalization, Deardorff (2006) places significant importance on recognizing and assessing intercultural competence as a central objective, especially for students involved in EME programs. To uncover the nuances of their intercultural citizenship, it is essential to examine their viewpoints on navigating diverse discourse communities and the challenges they face (Wu et al., 2015). Gu et al. (2010) explore the influence of intercultural experiences on the academic and personal growth of international students. The authors underscore the significance of comprehending these experiences within a foreign context to fully grasp their meaning. Delving into their lives reveals the complexities they face when engaging with diverse communities in their educational environment (Sunendar et al., 2021). An in-depth exploration of the students' perspectives will offer valuable insights into their strategies for adapting to a multicultural and multilingual environment, shedding light on the interplay between academic, local, and personal spheres of influence (Jurgilė, 2019).

By examining the daily experiences of Cambodian university students residing in Thailand, this research article aims to provide valuable insights into the broader concept of intercultural citizenship within an English as a Medium of Education (EME) context. Researchers such as Coleman (2006) and Macaro et al. (2018) have emphasized the importance of EME in fostering cross-cultural understanding and academic success. They acknowledge that while EME programs present challenges, they also offer significant advantages for students from diverse backgrounds. Therefore,

this study seeks to investigate the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students who are studying in English as a Medium of Education (EME) curriculums in Thailand. In doing so, it aims to gain a deeper understanding of how these students navigate and adapt to a multilingual and multicultural academic and social environment.

1.4 Research Objectives and Research Questions

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To identify Cambodian university students' prior knowledge of "others" and intercultural experiences before coming to Thailand.
2. To investigate the intercultural challenges experienced by Cambodian university students in EME curriculums and how they dealt with them.
3. To explore the factors that impact the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students.

The purpose of this research is to address the aforementioned objectives by answering the following questions:

1. What knowledge of "others" and intercultural experiences did Cambodian university students have before coming to Thailand?
2. What intercultural challenges did Cambodian university students in EME curriculums encounter, and how did they deal with them?
3. What are the factors that influence the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research study focuses on the intercultural citizenship of undergraduate and graduate students in Thailand who are studying English as a Medium of Education (EME) curriculums. While previous studies have examined graduate and post-graduate students in English-speaking countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, this research investigates the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students studying EME curriculums in Thailand.

By conducting an in-depth investigation into the intercultural interactions and experiences of Cambodian university students, this study aims to provide valuable insights into their ability to effectively engage with both local and international peers. It examines various factors that influence their intercultural citizenship, such as language proficiency, age, gender, and field of study, in order to identify students who may face challenges in this area.

The findings of this study have practical implications for EME curriculums not only in Thailand but also in other countries. They can inform the development of targeted interventions, such as consultations or extracurricular activities, that aim to facilitate students' interactions with diverse cultural groups. These interventions can enhance students' language proficiency, provide cultural orientation, and create opportunities for intercultural dialogue and collaboration.

The insights gained from this research can also be valuable for university administrators and policymakers, as they can help in evaluating and refining EME curriculums to better foster intercultural competence and promote diversity on campus. This may involve incorporating more intercultural communication training, adapting curriculum content to be more inclusive, and implementing support systems for students who face intercultural challenges.

Lecturers and support staff can benefit from understanding the specific needs and experiences of Cambodian students, enabling them to provide more personalized and effective support. This may involve offering tailored academic advising, mentorship programs, and adopting culturally sensitive teaching practices that recognize and address the diverse backgrounds of students.

Students themselves can benefit from a more inclusive and supportive learning environment that acknowledges and values their intercultural experiences. Enhanced support and targeted interventions can lead to improved academic outcomes, increased satisfaction, and a stronger sense of belonging within the university community.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the broader body of knowledge on EME curriculums by highlighting the outcomes and benefits of these curriculums for international students. It provides valuable guidance for higher education institutions globally that are implementing or planning to implement EME curriculums, offering insights into best practices for fostering intercultural competence and ensuring the successful integration of international students.

Overall, this study significantly adds to the understanding of intercultural citizenship within internationalized higher education institutions that offer EME programs. It reveals the outcomes and benefits of these curriculums for university students and provides valuable guidance for effectively supporting the academic and social integration of international students. The insights gained from this research can inform policies and practices that enhance the quality and inclusivity of EME curriculums in Thailand and other non-English-speaking countries.

1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

The following are the key terms and definitions used in the current study:

"Cambodian University Students" refers to students who are in the international program, and are living and studying at the undergraduate and graduate level in different fields in Thailand.

"Intercultural Citizenship" refers to the possession of skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to effectively collaborate with individuals from diverse cultures. This involves understanding and respecting their beliefs and behaviors, and being able to communicate proficiently with them (Wagner & Byram, 2017). This study sought to measure intercultural citizenship by utilizing various methods including written autobiographies, shadow observations, and in-depth interviews with Cambodian university students. The purpose of these methods was to evaluate the students' competence, understanding, and attitudes towards engaging with diverse communities, as well as their capacity to appreciate and respect cultural differences.

"English-Medium Education" (EME) refers to programs in which English is the language used for teaching and learning but also for international communication in a multilingual university setting (Dafouz & Smit, 2016). This research focuses on EME programs at a university in Northeastern Thailand, specifically targeting Cambodian students. The study includes various disciplines and degree levels (undergraduate and graduate) such as Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Innovative Agripreneur, and Food Technology, all using English as the primary language for instruction and communication.

"Non-Anglophone Countries" refers to countries that are Non-Native English-speaking countries, i.e., Cambodia and Thailand.

"Others" refer to foreign students or individuals from different cultural backgrounds who are not part of the Cambodian culture, i.e., the locals and university students who are Thai, and other university students from other different countries.

1.7 Summary

This research aims to investigate the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students living in Thailand and studying in EME programs. To contribute to the current trend in intercultural citizenship research and EME programs and provide insights on the intercultural citizenship of non-native English speakers studying in EME programs in a non-native English-speaking country. These considerations inspired the objectives and questions of this study. The results of this study are expected to be applicable to the study of intercultural citizenship and provide information on whether or not students develop intercultural citizenship as they live and study in EME programs in another country.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

As the world moves towards a globalized era, each country tries to make progress in all areas of development to fit in with the time, whether it be the economy, society, business, or education. In that situation, this study begins by addressing the impact of globalization on higher education and the efforts of many countries to transform their higher education systems into ones that are more international.

2.1 Globalization

Levitt (1983) coined the term "globalization" to describe the economic forces that are shaping the world. Nevertheless, globalization goes beyond mere economics; it encompasses the growing interconnectedness and interdependence of people worldwide, fostering economic, social, cultural, and political liberties (Mitchell & Nielsen, 2012). Throughout the history, globalization has been instrumental in shaping various aspects of society, such as the economy, trade, politics, culture, and ideas, continuously evolving alongside advancements in technology and communication (Reagan & Osborn, 2019).

Globalization facilitates economic expansion by enabling market access and stimulating trade. Additionally, it fosters social exchange, promoting the sharing of ideas and improving cross-cultural comprehension among nations. In terms of culture, globalization encourages the integration and appreciation of diverse customs and rituals. Politically, it has the potential to promote democratic principles and advance the dissemination of fundamental human rights (Mitchell & Nielsen, 2012). The advent of social media is a notable example, as it has connected individuals worldwide, enabling immediate cultural interactions and cooperative endeavors in tackling global challenges such as climate change.

Education, especially at the tertiary level, plays a vital role in comprehending and adjusting to world socioeconomic developments. According to Nayyar (2008), education is essentially an economic investment. The advent of globalization has prompted universities and colleges worldwide to actively pursue internationalization. Knight (2008) characterizes globalization as a catalyst and internationalization as a reactor, underscoring their interdependent role in reshaping higher education. This shift

is evident in the increasing number of international collaborations, exchange initiatives, and curriculums with a global focus.

Internationalization efforts in higher education have the primary goal of making education more accessible to individuals worldwide. By conforming to international education standards, institutions can provide programs, courses, and degrees to both domestic and international students, thereby expanding global educational opportunities (Aktas et al., 2017; Mitchell & Nielsen, 2012). Furthermore, these institutions aim to produce graduates who possess the necessary skills and knowledge to function effectively and contribute in both local and global settings. In doing so, they foster a workforce that is capable of addressing challenges on an international scale (Fang & Baker, 2021; Thanosawan & Laws, 2013). To exemplify, universities in Asia and Europe have formed numerous collaborative initiatives, such as joint degree programs and research partnerships, to enhance the quality of education and promote global engagement.

2.1.1 Global Citizenship

The influence of globalization reaches far beyond local and national boundaries, impacting regions and the global arena. This interconnectedness emphasizes the concept of global citizenship, which highlights the interdependence of diverse groups beyond geographical limits (Thanosawan & Laws, 2013). Global citizenship, as defined by Baker and Fang (2021), encompasses multiple layers of citizenships, including local, national, and global dimensions. Boulding (1990) and Schattle (2008) argue that it entails an awareness of issues that go beyond local and national borders, a comprehension of rights and responsibilities in regional and global contexts, and an acknowledgement of the mutual dependence of communities, thereby requiring cooperating at various levels in today's interconnected world.

Recognizing the importance of preparing students to actively engage with global issues, educational institutions are increasingly incorporating the concept of global citizenship into their academic programs. Researchers such as Hammond and Keating (2018), Janmaimool and Khajohnmanee (2020), Smith et al. (2017), and Xu and Knijnik (2024) have emphasized this growing trend, highlighting the significance of equipping students with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the complexities of the modern world. For instance, universities now offer courses on subjects such as global ethics, international relations, and sustainable development, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the interconnectedness of our global society.

In response to this changing landscape, traditional universities are transforming into institutions with a global perspective. They strive to create environments that cater to both local and international students, promoting an appreciation for and understanding of cross-cultural differences. According to Thanosawan and Laws (2013), these institutions prioritize practical skills and knowledge over theoretical concepts, with the aim of preparing graduates to compete on a global scale. They achieve this by placing a strong emphasis on global perspectives and intercultural competence among their students.

This research article specifically focuses on intercultural citizenship within an educational setting. While the concept of global citizenship highlights individuals' global connectivity and responsibilities to communities worldwide (Fang & Baker, 2021), intercultural citizenship aims to foster intercultural interactions and understanding across different contexts (Wagner & Byram, 2017). In this particular context, intercultural citizenship refers to groups of university students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds who come together in one educational environment. This educational setting not only promotes academic learning but also facilitates the development of intercultural communication skills, empathy, and mutual respect, all of which are crucial for thriving in a globally interconnected world.

2.1.2 Internationalization of Higher Education

2.1.2.1 The Aims of Internationalization of Higher Education

In response to the globalizing world, institutions around the globe are striving to embrace internationalization. This multidimensional phenomenon greatly influences various aspects of education and has significant consequences on higher education systems (Knight, 2003). The trend towards internationalization is continuing to grow, with no sign of reversing in the foreseeable future. Knight (2003) defines internationalization as an ongoing and continuous effort to integrate an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of postsecondary education.

Qiang (2003) highlights two key objectives of internationalizing higher education institutions. Firstly, the goal is to prepare graduates for global careers. This entails providing students with the necessary academic and professional abilities to meet the requirements of globalized societies, economies, and labor markets. Graduates should acquire multilingual capabilities and demonstrate social and intercultural skills and attitudes in order to thrive in international settings. Secondly, institutions strive to attract international students. They achieve this by providing programs that meet international standards and are frequently delivered in English.

Previous studies have emphasized the substantial endeavors made by universities to globalize their higher education systems in light of the phenomenon of globalization. These endeavors encompass the creation of English-language curriculums and the provision of programs taught in English, catering to both local and international students (Brown, 2014; Hou et al., 2013; Huang, 2006; Im & Kim, 2015; Jampaklay et al., 2022; McNeill, 2008). For example, universities have successfully established collaborative degree programs, exchange initiatives, and global research partnerships in order to enhance their international allure.

Tsou and Kao (2017) have noted that many countries, especially those that were once under British rule, have embraced globalization by internationalizing their educational systems. In contrast, countries not influenced by the British have often adopted educational models from the United States. These trends highlight the proactive measures taken by governments to participate in the global knowledge economy. To achieve this, language policies and English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) programs play a crucial role. The goal is to enhance the language skills of local students and attract international students by offering courses, programs, and degrees taught in English globalization and determination to participate in the current knowledge economy (Hou et al., 2013; Tsou & Kao, 2017).

The internationalization of higher education goes beyond simply improving academic and professional abilities. It also aims to cultivate a workforce that is globally conscious and capable. In this pursuit, institutions are not only enriching their educational offerings, but also actively contributing to wider social and economic objectives by fostering a more interconnected and culturally competent global community.

2.1.2.2 Internationalization of Higher Education and EME

Dearden (2014) highlights that the use of English as a medium of education (EME) and English as a medium of instruction (EMI) programs has undergone significant and complex changes. These changes have had a profound impact on the global knowledge economy, the reputation and rankings of educational institutions, and the increasing mobility of students. The internationalization of higher education has brought about a more multilingual and culturally diverse classroom environment. Additionally, it has shaped the skills that graduates need to succeed in the global job market (Kramsch, 2019). English plays a crucial role in the internationalization of higher education, with many institutions adopting EME programs to expand their global reach (Baker et al., 2022).

"English-Medium Education in Multilingual University Settings (EMEMUS)", also known as EME, focuses on the significance of English in university settings where multiple languages are spoken. This encompasses both the process of learning and teaching (Dafouz & Smit, 2020). English as a Medium of Education (EME) curriculums have become increasingly appealing to students from both English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries (Huang, 2006). By accepting international students, universities establish diverse academic environments that promote multilingualism and multiculturalism, thereby strengthening the concept of EME.

English-speaking countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia are highly sought after by international students who desire to study in an English-speaking environment. These countries not only offer excellent academic and professional opportunities but also provide language proficiency (Collins et al., 2017). Additionally, non-English-speaking countries in Asia and Europe are actively working to establish international programs that can rival those offered in English-speaking nations, in order to enhance their competitiveness on a global scale (Deem et al., 2008).

European countries such as Germany, France, and Spain have made noteworthy progress in the internationalization of their higher education institutions. There has been a significant increase in the availability of programs taught in English at universities in these countries (Blattès, 2018; Dafouz et al., 2020; Gürtler & Kronewald, 2015; Mikuláš & Jitka, 2019; Robson & Wihlborg, 2019; Sánchez-García, 2020).

East and Southeast Asian countries have put in significant efforts to globalize higher education, with has yielded remarkable outcomes. Universities in China, Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong are continuously expanding their graduate and postgraduate programs taught in English to cater to both local and international students (Brown, 2014; Huang, 2006; Macaro et al., 2018; Mok & Yu, 2013; Ota, 2018). Likewise, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Thailand are undergoing substantial transformations in their higher education systems (Ali, 2013; Armstrong & Laksana, 2016; Bolton & Botha, 2017; Duong & Chua, 2016; Jampaklay et al., 2022; Lavankura, 2013; Sangpikul, 2009; Tran & Nguyen, 2018).

Internationalization plays a crucial part of Thailand's strategy to establish herself as an educational hub for Southeast Asia (Snodin, 2019). However, it is important to note that internationalization efforts in Thailand often adopt a Westernized perspective and prioritize the use of English language (De Wit, 2020). While a few leading Thai universities spearhead these initiatives by seeking guidance from experts in the United States and the European Union, decisions made in this manner

are expected to be followed by other Thai higher education institutions (Snodin, 2019). This approach has faced criticism due to the imposition of policies on stakeholders without adequate consideration of the local context, leading to mixed outcomes. To attract more students, Thai universities continue to offer English-language programs, while also ensuring that these programs meet international standards and respect the local culture (Jampaklay et al., 2022).

The globalization of higher education and the rise of EME curriculums have led to a shift in the educational landscape. As a result, international students are no longer limited to pursuing their degrees exclusively in English-speaking countries. This emerging trend has contributed significantly to the growing number of students seeking education abroad, with universities in non-English-speaking countries gaining increasing appeal and recognition.

2.2 Student Mobility

Student mobility is an essential aspect of the internationalization of higher education. It involves the transfer of knowledge across borders, fostering international cooperation and communication, promoting international education and research, and contributing to global similarity and reputation. Among dimensions, mobility holds the highest priority (Snodin, 2019). The exchange of ideas, cultures, and knowledge facilitated by mobility enriches the educational experience for students and promotes a global perspective. Altbach and Knight (2007) emphasize the significance of international student mobility in cultivating global competence and establishing international partnerships.

According to Baker et al. (2022), the topic of student mobility encompasses various concerns pertaining to internationalization and intercultural citizenship. These issues arise not only during students' pre-departure preparations, but also during their time spent in the host country. The act of studying abroad offers a multitude of advantages, such as exposure to different cultures, enhancement of language proficiency, and the cultivation of a global perspective. These benefits are deemed crucial in the present interconnectedness global landscape (Knight, 2003; Montgomery, 2010)

Asia has emerged as a leading choice for students seeking education abroad, a trend that has continued for more than ten years, signifying the region's growing significance in global learning (Jampaklay et al., 2022). Notably, countries like China, Japan, South Korea, and Malaysia have witnessed notable upswings in the enrollment of international students, indicating their increasing influence in the realm of higher education, as reported by Education (2004). A prime example of this

internationalization and the promotion of educational mobility can be seen in Thailand. Between 2008 and 2011, the number of international students studying in Thai universities rose from 16,000 to 20,000. Furthermore, from 2011 to 2019, this number experienced a further increase from 10,000 to 25,000, underscoring Thailand's dedicated efforts to establish itself as a prominent educational hub in Southeast Asia (Jampaklay et al., 2022).

In order to keep up with the increasing demand and maintain a competitive advantage in the international student market, it is imperative for higher education institutions in Thailand to consistently evolve and adjust. It is crucial for Thailand to comprehend the factors that draw international students and guarantee the excellence of their educational experiences, as this is essential for accomplishing their aspiration of becoming a prominent educational hub in the region (Snodin, 2019). Undertaking various initiatives such as enhancing infrastructure, offering a wide range of high-quality programs, and providing comprehensive support services for international students are fundamental measures toward achieving this objective (De Wit et al., 2015).

While there have been encouraging developments, there are still obstacles to overcome. The presence of language barriers, cultural disparities, and varying educational criteria can all affect the experiences of students from abroad (Andrade, 2006; Carroll & Ryan, 2007). It is crucial to tackle these challenges by implementing all-compassing support systems and customized initiatives in order to maintain and enhance student mobility. One effective strategy is to offer pre-departure orientation, on-site assistance, and post-arrival integration programs, which have been shown to greatly improve the overall experience of international students (Glass et al., 2015).

Therefore, the movement of students across borders is crucial for the process of internationalizing higher education, as it brings about substantial advantages for both students and educational institutions. The advancements made by Thailand in this sphere indicate its capacity to emerge as a prominent hub for education in Asia, on the condition that it persists in fostering innovation and catering to the requirements of its varied student body.

2.2.1 Definitions of Student Mobility

Student mobility accounts for the majority of cross-border education (Kington, 2009), which is technically divided into three categories: (1) studying abroad for a foreign degree or qualification; (2) studying as part of an academic partnership within a home degree or a joint degree including domestic and foreign institutions; and (3) exchange programs.

(1) Studying abroad for a foreign degree or qualification, this entails students venturing to a different nation to undertake an entire academic program. To illustrate, a student hailing from Thailand may embark on a journey to the United States with the aim of acquiring a bachelor's degree. This form of mobility grants students the opportunity to completely immerse themselves in the educational and cultural milieu of the host country, thereby facilitating a holistic international experience (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

(2) When students participate in an academic partnership, either within their home institution or as part of a joint degree program involving both domestic and foreign universities, they have the opportunity to study abroad during their degree program. This involves spending a portion of their program in a foreign institution that has a partnership with their home university. For instance, a student might study for two years in their home country and then spend their final year abroad, resulting in a joint degree from both institutions. This type of mobility allows students to gain valuable experiences from different educational systems while still maintaining a strong connection with their home university (Knight, 2004).

(3) Exchange programs offer students the chance to engage in a temporary period of study abroad, typically spanning one semester or one academic year, while maintaining their enrollment at their home institution. Prominent examples of such programs include Erasmus+ in Europe. By participating in exchange programs, students can acquire valuable international exposure without the need to commit to a complete degree program in a foreign country (Teichler, 2004).

In this study, the term "student mobility" will be used to describe a specific group of students. These students are international students who choose to pursue an international program in a foreign country, with the intention of obtaining a degree or certification from that country. This type of mobility is important to examine because it entails a substantial commitment and involves the students fully immersing themselves in the educational and cultural environment of the host country. As a result, it has the potential to greatly influence the personal and professional growth of these students (OECD, 2021).

Pursuing an overseas education presents multiple advantages, including exposure to diverse instructional techniques, cultivation of intercultural competencies, and improved career prospects in a globalized labor market (Deardorff, 2006; Montgomery, 2010). Nevertheless, it also presents obstacles such as adapting to a new culture, overcoming language barriers, and managing financial expenses (Andrade, 2006).

Comprehending these dynamics holds great significance for higher education institutions that aim to attract and support international students effectively. Consequently, it is crucial to not only examine the reasons behind student mobility but also the institutional strategies that can foster a positive experience for international students (Glass et al., 2015).

2.2.2 The Purposes of Student Mobility

Global policymakers have prioritized student mobility as a means of fostering international understanding, cooperation, and competitiveness (Kinging, 2009). Generally, a full degree is the main purpose for students from the Asia-Pacific area, such as Cambodian students, to pursue cross-border education. These students often spend several years in a foreign country earning degrees that are recognized and valued by their host countries. For example, a bachelor's degree typically takes four years, a master's degree two years, and a PhD three years. These degrees can be taken back to their home countries to help build capacity or qualify the student to work in the host country, contributing to both personal and national development (Kinging, 2009).

The motivations behind student mobility are multifaceted. According to Baker et al. (2022), much of the preparation for student mobility is based on the idea that there is a link between the language of instruction in an institution, the culture and language of the host community, and the culture and language of the country. In other words, prior to studying in a foreign country, students are expected to be prepared not only in the language but also in the culture, environment, and local customs. According to Baker et al. (2022), adequate preparation is crucial for students to successfully adapt and assimilate within the unfamiliar academic and social setting.

Despite the setting of this study being in a non-Anglophone country, the students who will be coming to study will be enrolled in international programs. This means that even though English is not the first language of their respective host countries, it will continue to be the language of learning, teaching, and communication. Indeed, as higher education becomes more internationalized, such connections cannot be assumed as various student and faculty bodies transform higher education institutions into highly multilingual and multicultural environments in both Anglophone and non-Anglophone settings (Baker, 2016; Jenkins & Mauranen, 2019).

The intricacy of student mobility is emphasized by this occurrence, underscoring the importance of linguistic and cultural readiness. It is crucial for students to be equipped to actively engage and partake in diverse multilingual and multicultural communities, both within and beyond the academic realm. As noted by

Knight (2004), the internationalization of higher education goes beyond the mere transportation of students; it involves a comprehensive approach to learning that encompasses curriculum enhancement, research cooperation, and institutional alliances, all of which enrich and diversify the educational journey.

Furthermore, student mobility brings forth a range of advantages that go beyond mere academic accomplishments. It nurtures personal development, fosters intercultural skills, and promotes a sense of global citizenship, equipping students with the essential abilities to succeed in a world that is becoming more interconnected (Deardorff, 2006; Montgomery, 2010). Therefore, it is crucial for higher education institutions not only to offer academic assistance but also to actively promote the social and cultural integration of international students, guaranteeing a favorable and rewarding experience.

2.2.3 The Impact of Student Mobility on Intercultural Citizenship

Researchers have investigated the impact of student mobility on the intercultural citizenship of university students studying in another country. One of the purported benefits of internationalization in higher education and student mobility is the development of students' intercultural awareness and sense of intercultural citizenship (Baker, 2016; Beaven & Borghetti, 2015; Kinginger, 2013). Intercultural citizenship encompasses the ability comprehend and actively participate in various cultural identities, while nurturing a profound connection and accountability to the wider global community (Byram, 2008). However, there is no conclusive evidence to back up this claim, and there is disagreement about how much internationalization and student mobility help develop international students into intercultural citizens (Baker & Fang, 2021; Byram et al., 2016; Kinginger, 2013).

Snodin (2019) found that "connection" is one of the major themes in the experiences that international students shared about their time in Thailand, where they made strong bonds with the local people. This study, however, was conducted outside of the capital city. This contrasts with previous research in which international students experienced isolation and a lack of integration with local people, particularly Thai classmates, resulting in a failure to incorporate international and intercultural components into their learning process and experience (Rhein, 2018). Rhein (2018) conducted the study in the city, where individuals were busy living their own lives and appeared largely indifferent to one another. Snodin (2019) conducted the study outside of the city, namely in the northeast of Thailand, where significant contact between international students and Thai people, both students and staff, was developed. Outside of school, several international students were able to become

friends with Thai people and learn the local language and culture, which was a beneficial experience for both their education and their lives in Thailand (Snodin, 2019).

According to the studies above, there are both positive and negative outcomes for international students who study in another country. While there are signs of growth in intercultural skills, this growth is not exclusively due to living and studying abroad. The development is also influenced by other factors, such as the location of the university where the students studied (Rhein, 2018). In fact, research has shown that studying in another country alone is not enough to develop intercultural awareness and citizenship; preparation, support, evaluation, and reflection are also crucial (Baker & Fang, 2021; Humphreys & Baker, 2021; Jackson, 2012a).

According to Jackson (2012b), the development of intercultural competence and citizenship necessitates structured interventions such as pre-departure training, continuous support during the stay, and chances for reflection after returning. These components assist students in comprehending their experiences and incorporating new cultural perspectives into their own worldview. Moreover, Deardorff (2006) underscores the significance of intercultural competence as a crucial result of international education. This entails the capacity to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural circumstances, drawing upon one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Thus, the potential of student mobility to enhance intercultural citizenship is contingent upon several factors beyond mere exposure to a foreign culture. To fully capitalize on the advantages of international education and cultivate genuinely intercultural and global citizens, it is crucial to provide preparation and consistent support.

2.2.3.1 Cultural Adaptation

Research suggests that cultural adaptation plays a crucial role for university students who pursue their studies in a foreign country. It is evident that international experiences contribute to the development of intercultural growth. However, it is important to recognize that various factors, in addition to mere exposure to a foreign environment, greatly influence students' intercultural awareness and citizenship. According to the U-Curve theory by Lysgaard (1955), cultural adaptation encompasses several stages. These stages include the honeymoon stage, culture shock, adjustment, and mastery.

Brisset et al. (2010) provide an illustration of this process in their research on Vietnamese students studying abroad in France. Initially, these students

experienced a sense of enthusiasm, but soon encountered challenges when it came to navigating transportation systems and adapting to unfamiliar religious practices. These difficulties served to underscore the cultural disparities between their home country and the host culture. Subsequently, the individuals went through stages of adjustment and mastery, gradually becoming accustomed to the cultural norms and adept at navigating their new environment. This phenomenon is further explicated in the study carried out by Kang et al. (2019), which examines the satisfaction of Chinese students with their academic life in Thailand. The findings of this study emphasize the critical role of cultural adaptability in facilitating a successful experience of studying abroad.

Townsend and Lee (2004) elaborate on additional factors pertaining to cultural adaptation, including proficiency in the local language, understanding of sociocultural norms, engagement with the local community, fostering relationships, maintaining an open-minded approach, effectively managing uncertainty, and possessing problem-solving skills. These researchers also highlight the significance of confidence and psychological well-being in this process (Millora, 2011). Moreover, Hayward and U-Mackey (2013) emphasize the value of intercultural citizenship in cultivating multicultural encounters, fostering empathy, and facilitating an appreciation for diverse perspectives.

According to Yu and Wright (2016), engaging with individuals from the host culture can enhance one's cultural adaptation through the development of self-assurance and social integration. Additionally, these interactions promote the cultivation of empathy, intellectual curiosity, and cultural sensitivity, thereby fostering a sense of global connectedness through the acceptance of diverse perspectives and a commitment to lifelong learning (Shieh, 2014).

Two studies provide evidence of the significance of interpersonal relationships in cultural adjustment. McKinlay et al. (1996) demonstrate the influence of personal connections on the satisfaction of international students, emphasizing the importance of engaging in multicultural activities. Conversely, Townsend and Lee (2004) suggest that the attitudes of local students towards international students can impact intercultural interactions, thereby impeding effective adjustment. In addition to social experiences, successful adaptation to a new cultural environment necessitates acquiring new skills, bridging cultural differences, and establishing strong connections with individuals from the host culture. These factors underscore the crucial role that social experiences play in shaping the adaptation processes of international students.

An example of this can be seen in a study conducted by Zhou et al. (2008) which examined international students in the United Kingdom. The study emphasizes that actively engaging with the local residents and participating in cultural events within the community greatly contributes to cultural adaptation and overall satisfaction. Additionally, Montgomery (2010) conducted research that underscores the significance of academic support systems and peer networks in fostering cultural adjustment and academic achievements among international students.

Therefore, cultural adaptation is a complex procedure comprising numerous aspects such as interpersonal communication, socio-cultural understanding, and psychological adaptability. Proficient cultural adaptation not only enriches the experience of studying abroad but also nurtures the growth of intercultural skills and global citizenship.

2.2.3.2 Intercultural Adjustment and Cultural Adjustment

Intercultural adjustment involves adapting to various aspects of a host country (Parker & McEvoy, 1993), while cultural adjustment focuses specifically on adapting to a different culture (Gill, 2007). It requires acquiring knowledge and skills of the foreign culture, navigating cultural differences, interacting with other communities, and establishing positive relationships with members of the host culture. Cultural adjustment pertains to personal psychological adaptation to the norms, values, customs, and practices of the host society by learning, understanding, and modifying one's behavior and attitudes (Rujiprak, 2016). These processes occur simultaneously during one's experience in a new cultural setting.

A study by Chaiyasat (2020) explored cultural adjustment challenges faced by international students, particularly French students, revealing language and communication barriers, homesickness, and culture shock. The study highlighted the intertwined nature of intercultural and cultural adjustments, indicating that difficulties in cultural adjustment can negatively impact intercultural adjustment. Participants initially experienced stress and anxiety due to unfamiliar academic norms and cultural expectations in the host country (Gill, 2007). However, through active adaptation and participation in socio-cultural and academic activities, they were able to adjust to community of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This led to personal growth as a result of their interactions with others.

Rujiprak (2016) has also pointed out that international students faced challenges when moving across different cultures. The study has shown that sojourners may experience difficulties adjusting to a new culture, especially when there is a significant difference between the host and home cultures. Parker and McEvoy (1993)

noted that prior international experience positively influences intercultural adjustment by reducing culture shock, although achieving intercultural adjustment can be challenging due to differences between the host-country culture and one's home country culture.

Additionally, Ward et al. (2020) stress the significance of cultural intelligence and resilience in effectively managing the intricacies of intercultural adaptation. They posit that individuals possessing elevated cultural intelligence are more competent in comprehending, analyzing, and reacting to novel cultural settings, thereby fostering more seamless processes of adaptation. This assertion is corroborated by Zhou et al. (2008), whose research indicates that international students with heightened levels of cultural intelligence and prior exposure to multicultural environments demonstrate greater proficiency in intercultural adjustment.

Support systems play a pivotal role in promoting intercultural and cultural adaptation, an aspect that cannot be overlooked. Yeh and Inose (2003) emphasize that international students greatly benefit from social support offered by peers, family, and institutional resources, as it has a significant impact on their psychological well-being and adjustment. To ensure the successful assimilation of these students into their new surroundings, universities should prioritize the provision of comprehensive support services, encompassing counseling, language assistance, and cultural orientation programs.

To put it briefly, intercultural and cultural adjustment are closely connected procedures that encompass maneuvering within unfamiliar cultural settings, forging connections, and enhancing individual and intercultural skills. Achieving a successful adjustment necessitates the fusion of cultural intelligence, resilience, support networks, and active involvement in the local community.

2.2.3.3 Coping Strategies of International Students

International students face numerous challenges when adjusting to unfamiliar cultural environments. These difficulties can significantly impact their ability to navigate intercultural interactions and overall experience. Developing effective coping mechanisms is crucial for managing stress, overcoming cultural obstacles, and facilitating successful adaptation. According to Andrade (2006), coping strategies can be categorized into two broad types: problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies. Problem-focused strategies involve actively seeking resolutions to challenges, such as improving language proficiency or understanding local customs. On the other hand, emotion-focused strategies involve seeking social support and

engaging in stress-alleviating activities. Research by Smith and Khawaja (2011) highlights the importance of both types of strategies in promoting mental well-being and academic achievement among international students.

Problem-focused strategies, which are proactive approaches, enable students to directly tackle challenges. These strategies include enhancing language proficiency, adapting to the local culture, and utilizing university resources. Developing language skills is crucial for adapting to new academic and social environments. Proficiency in language not only enables effective communication but also boosts confidence and reduces misunderstandings (Cheng et al., 2004). Effective methods for improving language proficiency include taking language courses, participating in conversation clubs, and practicing with native speakers. Understanding and embracing local customs and traditions can greatly facilitate the transition process. Cultural orientation programs and cultural exchange activities can provide valuable insights into the host culture (Ward et al., 2020). Moreover, actively seeking to learn about and respect local customs increases the likelihood of successfully integrating into the new environment. Universities often provide various support services, such as counseling, academic advising, and student organizations. Taking advantage of these resources can help students navigate academic challenges and find community support (Glass et al., 2015). Academic workshops and writing centers can also assist in adapting to different academic expectations and improving performance.

Emotion-focused strategies aim to regulate emotions in challenging circumstances. These strategies include seeking social support and engaging in stress-relief activities. Developing a network of friends, family, and peers can offer emotional solace and practical guidance. Peer support groups, mentorship programs, and social clubs have been effective in alleviating feelings of loneliness and homesickness among individuals (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Research has shown that strong social support networks are associated with improved mental well-being and academic performance among international students (Russell et al., 2010).

Participating in stress-reducing activities, such as sports, hobbies, and mindfulness practices, can enhance overall well-being. Engaging in physical exercise, practicing meditation, and pursuing creative endeavors such as art and music can provide an emotional outlet and help manage anxiety (Sawir et al., 2008). Additionally, these activities can create opportunities to make new connections and build social relationships.

Research suggests that coping strategies may differ based on students' cultural backgrounds and the environment of the host country. Asian

students tend to utilize collectivist coping strategies, such as seeking support from their family and fellow nationals, while Western students may prefer individualistic approaches (Kim, 2001). For students from collectivist cultures, maintaining strong connections with their cultural community can provide a sense of belonging and continuity. Involvement in cultural associations, religious groups, and community events can offer a supportive network and help preserve cultural identity (Poyrazli et al., 2004).

Developing cultural intelligence and adapting behaviors to align with the norms of the host culture can facilitate better integration. Cultural intelligence encompasses cognitive, motivational, and behavioral aspects that enable individuals to function effectively in intercultural settings (Ang et al., 2007). Students who demonstrate high cultural intelligence are better equipped to navigate cultural differences and foster meaningful intercultural relationships.

Long-term adaptation involves coping strategies, developing resilience, and intercultural competence. This process is influenced by ongoing learning, self-reflection, and adjusting strategies when necessary. Reflective practices, such as journaling and discussing experiences with peers or mentors, can improve self-awareness and promote intercultural understanding (Mezirow, 1991). These reflective practices help students process their experiences, recognize personal growth, and identify areas for further development. Resilience, as the ability to bounce back from challenges, is crucial for long-term adaptation. Cultivating resilience involves nurturing a positive mindset, setting achievable goals, and maintaining a proactive problem-solving approach (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Therefore, resilient students are better prepared to handle the ongoing demands of living and studying in a foreign country.

Moreover, effective coping strategies are important for international students studying abroad. Both problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies can help enhance intercultural competence, academic achievements, and overall well-being. However, more research is needed to identify the most effective coping mechanisms for different groups of international students and determine how educational institutions can support these strategies.

2.2.4 International Students Studying in Thailand

The experiences of international students in a new cultural environment are influenced by various factors, such as language barriers, cultural disparities, and prior overseas encounters. These elements significantly shape the process of adaptation for these students. The largest groups of international students in Thailand consist of individuals from China, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia (Snodin, 2019;

Thanuttamanon, 2021). These students possess different cultural backgrounds and possess varying degrees of proficiency in the Thai language, which can impact their ability adapt and excel academically.

According to Snodin (2019), the primary areas of study among international students in Thailand in 2013 were business, Thai language, English language, hotel and tourism, and Buddhism. This prevailing trend is anticipated to persist, as Thailand endeavors to establish itself as a prominent destination for education in the region. The choice of these fields indicates a deliberate alignment with Thailand's economic and cultural assets, offering international students the chance to acquire knowledge that is both academically enriching and practically applicable.

A significant example of the rise of international students coming to study in Thailand was documented by Rattanaphumma and Visuttakul (2022), who noted that the number of Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions has grown significantly over the last decade (2011–2021). This increase reflects broader regional trends in educational mobility and underscores Thailand's growing appeal as a destination for higher education.

Moreover, it has been found through extensive research that foreign students studying in Thailand encounter distinct obstacles pertaining to language acquisition and cultural assimilation. As Hengsadadekul et al. (2014) assert, one's level of language proficiency plays a pivotal role in both academic attainment and social integration. Numerous international students encounter difficulties stemming from the language barrier, impeding their ability to actively engage in academic and social pursuits. In order to alleviate these challenges, Thai universities have adopted a range of support mechanisms, including language instruction, cultural orientation initiatives, and peer mentoring programs.

In addition, cultural variations can present substantial obstacles to adaptation. Thanuttamanon (2021) emphasizes that international students frequently undergo culture shock upon their arrival, which can adversely affect their psychological well-being and overall welfare. Higher education institutions have acknowledged the significance of offering comprehensive support programs to assist students in managing these cultural transitions. These initiatives encompass counseling services, cultural exchange events, and platforms for fostering intercultural dialogue.

Furthermore, the role of past international experiences cannot be underestimated when it comes to influencing the adjustment experiences of international students. Those who have had the opportunity to study abroad before have been found to adapt more readily to unfamiliar cultural settings (Hengsadadekul

et al., 2014). This group of students tends to possess a higher level of preparedness in terms of handling the academic and social challenges associated with studying in a foreign nation, thereby augmenting their overall contentment and achievements.

To conclude, as Thailand experiences a rising influx of international students, it is imperative to acknowledge the linguistic obstacles, cultural disparities, and assistance requirements faced by these students in order to promote their successful integration and academic accomplishments. The continuous endeavors undertaken by Thai higher education institutions to augment support services and cultivate a hospitable atmosphere are vital in maintaining and expanding the international student community.

2.2.4.1 Perceptions of International Students on Studying in Thailand

The viewpoints held by international students regarding Thai universities can be categorized into three primary themes: relationships, research support, and language barrier (Snodin, 2019). These perspectives provide a valuable understanding of the favorable and unfavorable encounters encountered by international students while studying in Thailand, thereby shedding light on areas of excellence and avenues for enhancement.

Relationships: International students tend to have a favorable perspective on the relationship between teachers and students in Thailand. This is exemplified by the experience of an international student from Egypt who was accustomed to a more hierarchical and formal dynamic between students and teachers. The student appreciated the egalitarian and accessible nature of the teacher-student relationship in Thailand (Snodin, 2019). Furthermore, research indicates that this positive perception extends beyond the classroom, as international students, local students, and local citizens actively participate in each other's communities despite cultural differences. Such interactions foster a sense of belonging and community, which are crucial for the overall well-being and academic achievement of international students (Krause et al., 2010).

Research support: In contrast to the commonly held notion that Thai universities lack research support, several international students have attested to the exceptional research support they received. This support encompasses various aspects such as the provision of research facilities, access to international research networks, and opportunities for funding to attend training sessions or conferences abroad (Snodin, 2019). These resources play a crucial role in the academic growth of international students and contribute to the global research reputation of Thai universities. The study conducted by Hengsadeeikul et al. (2014) validate these findings,

underscoring the significant impact that sufficient research support has on the academic experiences and achievements of international students.

Language barrier: One of the primary obstacles faced by international students is the difficulty in understanding and using the English language. Despite the claim of many Thai universities to be “international,” the policies regarding English proficiency do not always support this assertion. Certain international programs accept Thai students with limited English skills, and in some cases, instructors are required to deliver lectures in Thai, putting non-Thai-speaking international students at a disadvantage (Snodin, 2019). This inconsistency can impede the academic progress of international students and diminish the perceived worth of an “international” education. Research conducted by Hengsadeekul et al. (2014) and Volet and Jones (2012) indicates that language barriers can have a significant impact on the academic performance and social integration of international students. This highlights the importance of implementing more consistent and effective language policies in international programs.

2.2.4.2 Factors Causing International Students to Study in Thailand

Snodin (2019) identified several key factors that play a significant role in the decision-making process of international students who choose to pursue their studies in Thailand. These factors include the availability of scholarships, recommendations from friends and acquaintances, as well as the geographical and cultural proximity between their home country and Thailand.

Scholarship availability: The availability of scholarships is a major attraction for many international students from various regions in Asia. Thai universities have strategically utilized scholarships to attract more international students, and this approach has been successful. Scholarships such as those offered by the students' home countries, ASEAN scholarships, the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) scholarship, and the HRH Princess Sirindhorn Scholarship have played a vital role in this regard (Snodin, 2019). These scholarships not only help ease the financial burden on students but also increase the attractiveness of Thai universities as affordable alternatives to Western institutions. Research conducted by Hengsadeekul et al. (2014) and Suwanwela (2006) supports the idea that financial incentives significantly influence students' decision to study abroad.

Word-of-mouth referrals: Personal social networks and recommendations from acquaintances significantly impact the choices made by students when deciding to pursue their studies in Thailand. Snodin (2019) asserts that a considerable number of international students had the guidance and support of

individuals already residing in Thailand prior to their arrival. This network of contacts not only offers a comforting sense of security but also facilitates a smoother transition to a new country. The research conducted by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) and Li and Bray (2007) emphasizes the substantial role that social networks play in shaping students' educational decisions, emphasizing the value of personal referrals and the exchange of experiences among peers.

Geographical and cultural proximity: Geographical and cultural proximity to their home countries emerges as a pivotal aspect for numerous international students, particularly those hailing from neighboring Asian nations. This proximity plays a vital role in mitigating cultural shock and facilitating the adjustment period, as students find it comparatively easier to acclimate themselves to the similar climatic conditions, cuisine, and cultural practices (Snodin, 2019). For example, despite being offered a full scholarship by a Chinese university, a student from Lao PDR opted to pursue a PhD in the northeast region of Thailand, owing to the linguistic and cultural affinities shared between the northeast of Thailand and Laos (Snodin, 2019). Moreover, the prevalence of English in academic settings in Thailand offers an advantage over their home countries where English is less widely spoken, as illustrated by a Vietnamese student who witnessed a marked improvement in their English proficiency through their participation in an international program (Snodin, 2019). The studies conducted by Hengsadeekul et al. (2014) and Li and Bray (2007) bolster the significance of geographical and cultural proximity in the decision-making processes of students.

To summarize, the decisions of international students to pursue their education in Thailand are influenced by a combination of financial incentives in the form of scholarships, the influence of social networks, and the cultural and geographical proximity to their home countries. These factors underscore the complex nature of students' choices and the strategic significance of Thai universities in attracting a diverse international student population.

2.3 Culture

2.3.1 Definitions of Culture

Based on the Vygotskyan/social-historical perspective, Noels et al. (2012) define culture as a community's common activity or practice. This perspective emphasizes the importance of cultural contexts in determining the nature of human development, which involves the process of learning or obtaining self-regulation as an autonomous individual influenced by social and cultural factors. Different cultures produce diverse physical and symbolic artifacts that individuals use to mediate

learning. To understand another culture, one must first understand the metaphors and conceptual meanings produced by the culture's worldviews and cognitive patterns (Noels et al., 2012).

A widely recognized illustration of cultural distinctions can be observed in the juxtaposition between 'individualistic' Western and 'collectivistic' East Asian countries. Individualistic societies place importance on personal objectives, independence, and individual accomplishments, whereas collectivistic societies emphasize communal objectives, interdependence, and the success of the community (Triandis, 2018). However, due to the impact of globalization, this conventional understanding of culture has undergone significant changes. The focus has shifted from perceiving cultures in isolation to addressing the contact zone where multiple cultures interact and coexist (Noels et al., 2012). This contact zone represents an environment where individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds converge, resulting in intricate and dynamic cultural exchanges.

Despite the outward semblance of culturally diverse communities living in harmony, it is important to recognize that hidden discrepancies and historical conflicts may persist. One illustrative example of this phenomenon can be observed in the historical disputes between neighboring nations, such as Cambodia and Thailand, which can significantly impact the dynamics within a multicultural community. These historical frictions have the potential to resurface in diverse manifestations, thereby exerting an influence on the relationships and assimilation processes among individuals residing within the community.

In addition, comprehending culture entails acknowledging that it is in a perpetual state of change as a result of interactions and exchanges. Geertz (1973) characterizes culture as a framework of inherited ideas expressed through symbolic means, which individuals utilize to communicate, sustain, and advance their understanding and perspectives on life. This dynamic perspective on culture corresponds with the amplified intercultural interactions in our interconnected world.

To put it succinctly, culture can be comprehended from a Vygotskian/social-historical outlook, as well as through the contributions of modern researchers. It encompasses the customs, symbols, and cognitive frameworks that are inherent to a particular community. A comprehensive understanding of culture necessitates recognizing its historical origins and its continuous development through interactions on a global scale.

2.3.2 The History between Cambodian and Thailand

Cambodia and Thailand share a lengthy history of war, geographical disputes, and cultural conflicts, leading to numerous horrific events (Vail, 2007). As globalization continues to progress, there is a growing call to move beyond these conflicts and one-sided narratives (Noels et al., 2012). However, it remains crucial to address these issues, particularly for Cambodian students who will be studying in Thailand, to ensure their successful development of intercultural citizenship.

One significant point of contention has been the border dispute between Thailand and Cambodia over several temples, including the Preah Vihear temple, the Phnom Rung temple in Isan's Buriram province, and the Angkor Wat temple. These disputes highlight the intricate relationship between cultural heritage and national identity, especially within a multiethnic state (Silverman, 2011; Vail, 2007). Despite resolutions being reached, the outcomes often left one side feeling unsatisfied, perpetuating a sense of historical grievance (Vail, 2007).

The northeastern region of Thailand, culturally closest to Cambodia, has been central to many of these historical conflicts (Silverman, 2011; Vail, 2007). In this region, residents faced significant cultural suppression, such as the prohibition of preaching in Khmer and the burning of Khmer-language books, illustrating the impact of nationalistic policies on daily life (Vail, 2007). Consequently, Khmer-speaking residents in northeastern Thailand were compelled to adopt the Thai language to avoid repercussions.

The ongoing conflict between Thailand and Cambodia, rooted in nationalist sentiments, continues to manifest in occasional outbreaks of violence. This tension primarily stems from disagreements over cultural heritage and national identity. One illustrative example is Cambodia's decision to abstain from sending boxing teams to Thailand, as they assert that Muay Thai was appropriated from Cambodian boxing. This episode highlights the prevalence of cultural disputes between the two nations (Vail, 2007). Additionally, a more severe incident took place when demonstrators in Phnom Penh attacked the Thai embassy and vandalized Thai-owned establishments. This violent outburst was triggered by a false report published by a Cambodian magazine, falsely attributing a Thai television personality who claimed that Angkor Wat belonged to Thailand (Vail, 2007).

These occurrences highlight the fundamental cultural animosity between the two countries, intensified by nationalist emotions. Despite the appearance of cordial external relations, enduring tensions continue to influence intercultural exchanges and perspectives.

In brief, it is crucial to acknowledge and tackle the intricate and diverse historical conflicts between Cambodia and Thailand in order to encourage intercultural comprehension and promote good citizenship among students from both nations. By recognizing and addressing these historical grievances, we can open the door to more significant and considerate intercultural interactions.

2.3.3 Cultural Awareness

According to Srivirat (2015), there is a common belief that international students from neighboring countries of Thailand may have an easier time adjusting to Thai culture due to perceived cultural similarities. However, it should be noted that this assumption may not always hold true, especially when taking into account the historical and ongoing cultural conflicts between countries such as Cambodia and Thailand. Merely having cultural similarities does not necessarily alleviate the challenges of adapting to a new culture, especially when there are underlying tensions. As a result, Cambodian students studying in Thailand need to be aware of these disputes and should avoid discussing sensitive subjects during their interactions with Thai individuals. It is crucial for these students to have a deep understanding of the specific cultural contexts in order to promote both an appreciation for differences and shared similarities (Baker, 2011)

Malczewska-Webb (2014) defined "cultural awareness" as the acquisition of knowledge about a second culture. However, cultural awareness extends beyond mere knowledge of the host country; it involves understanding the culturally based norms, beliefs, and actions of both one's own culture and other cultures (Baker, 2011). This approach emphasizes the importance of recognizing and negotiating cultural identities and affiliations in intercultural communication.

In the study conducted by Baker (2011), the notion of cultural awareness challenges the notion of the monolingual native speaker as the ideal model, and instead puts forth the concepts of the intercultural speaker and intercultural citizen as viable alternatives. This viewpoint recognizes that when individuals from different cultures communicate, it is important to avoid imposing a single set of norms or an ideal model on one another. Instead, it promotes a dynamic exchange where both parties actively engage with each other's cultural frameworks, thus fostering a sense of mutual respect and comprehension.

Furthermore, the cultivation of cultural awareness holds immense significance in fostering intercultural competence, encompassing not only factual understanding but also encompassing attitudinal, skill-based, and behavioral aspects essential for successful and fitting cross-cultural engagement (Deardorff, 2006). By

nurturing cultural awareness, learners are better equipped to navigate the intricacies of cultural disparities, thereby augmenting their overall intercultural encounters and expediting their process of adaptation.

To summarize, the process of promoting cultural awareness among Cambodian students studying in Thailand encompasses more than simply acquiring knowledge about Thai culture. It necessitates a comprehensive comprehension of both their own cultural heritage and the intricate cultural dynamics of their host nation. Adopting this holistic perspective towards cultural awareness can effectively address potential conflicts and facilitate more profound intercultural exchanges.

2.3.4 From Cultural Awareness to Intercultural Awareness

Intercultural awareness is an extension of cultural awareness, encompassing the understanding of cultural influences that are diverse, dynamic, and evolving (Baker, 2011). Establishing intercultural awareness can be achieved through various means, including intercultural education (Byram, 2008), or direct experiences of intercultural exchanges that students encounter in their educational settings (Baker, 2011). These experiences help students navigate and appreciate the complexities of living and studying in a multicultural environment.

According to Malczewska-Webb (2014), intercultural awareness refers to the recognition of how our own culture and perspectives shape our perception of ourselves, the world, and other individuals (Baker & Fang, 2021). This understanding entails acknowledging the dynamic relationship between culture and communication, which holds significant importance in diverse communities. It assists individuals in navigating their own identity in relation to others, ultimately improving their aptitude for achievement in unfamiliar academic and social settings (Malczewska-Webb, 2014).

Moreover, with the ongoing process of globalization and the growing presence of international students in universities, it is imperative that communities are formed by individuals who possess the ability to navigate cultural differences and communicate effectively. This skillset is vital in order to foster mutual respect and facilitate meaningful interactions between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. The cultivation of intercultural awareness not only facilitates personal development and adaptability, but also plays a key role in building a more inclusive and harmonious global society.

Baker (2011) asserts the importance of intercultural awareness, highlighting the significance of recognizing cultural components in communication and comprehending how these cultural disparities can impact interactions. It is crucial to acknowledge that intercultural awareness is not a fixed state; rather, it evolves and

matures through individuals actively engaging in intercultural experiences and reflecting upon their interactions with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. By cultivating intercultural awareness, students acquire the skills to navigate cultural subtleties, thereby augmenting their intercultural competence and cultivating deeper and more significant connections with others.

Thus, the shift from cultural awareness to intercultural awareness necessitates a more profound involvement with the intricate cultural dynamics that exist within multicultural environments. This transformation is made possible through intercultural education, firsthand intercultural encounters, and the ongoing examination of one's own cultural biases and interactions. By cultivating intercultural awareness, students can enhance their comprehension and admiration of the diverse cultures they encounter, thereby fostering more fruitful and rewarding educational journeys abroad.

2.3.4.1 Cultural Identity

Understanding the complex web of identities that exist among cultures is crucial for effectively navigating intercultural interactions and moving from cultural awareness to intercultural awareness. Cultural identity, according to Holliday (2010), is shaped by a person's values, beliefs, and self-perception within their cultural environment, which in turn affects how they interact with others. These elements include religion, ethnicity, language, education, skills, and the physical appearance.

Intercultural citizenship and the experiences of international students studying in another country are deeply intertwined with the concept of cultural identity. Foreign students often negotiate different cultural identities while interacting with the culture of their host nation, yet they also maintain ties to their home cultures by through practices, including the use of English (Le Ha, 2013; Tran & Vu, 2017). This dual negotiation requires a balance between cultural adaptation and the preservation of one's own cultural identity.

Intercultural citizenship involves the understanding, embracing, and engaging with a variety of cultural perspectives (Bui, 2021). Individuals are tasked with the complex challenge of managing and reconciling their cultural identities in a manner that fosters genuine engagement with various cultural communities. This undertaking is of utmost importance for international students, as they must acclimate themselves to the societal customs of their host nation, all while preserving their own cultural roots.

Through the experience of residing and pursuing education in a foreign nation, individuals who are studying internationally are granted a unique chance

to engage with individuals hailing from diverse cultural backgrounds. Consequently, this interaction leads to the expansion of their knowledge and comprehension regarding cultural identity. Such encounters facilitate the growth of intercultural competence, which refers to the capacity to communicate proficiently and suitably within a multitude of cultural settings (Deardorff, 2006). The development of intercultural competence is of utmost importance in the promotion of intercultural citizenship, which encompasses active involvement within a multicultural community and the adeptness to navigate and manage cultural disparities.

The significance of acknowledging cultural diversity and actively participating in intercultural exchanges has been underscored in the studies conducted by Avcılar and Gök (2022) as well as Jackson (2011a). These scholarly works highlight that such interactions not only enhance individuals' ability to navigate different cultures but also foster mutual respect and comprehension among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Moreover, the process of cultural learning and exchange ultimately fosters collaboration and intercultural citizenship, thus playing a pivotal role in cultivating a more inclusive and harmonious global community (Holliday, 2010).

In essence, cultural identity is a fluid and intricate notion that holds great importance in intercultural engagements. Through comprehensive comprehension and sincere acknowledgment of the intricacies inherent in cultural identity, individuals can adeptly navigate intercultural interactions, thus fostering the growth of intercultural citizenship.

2.3.4.2 Intercultural Understanding

Holmes et al. (2015) emphasize the significance of cultural identity on intercultural understanding and the role that intercultural learning and awareness play in promoting mutual understanding across various groups. Su (2011), on the other hand, highlights the dangers of stereotypes and the necessity of a sophisticated grasp of culture to prevent misattributions. Intercultural comprehension encompasses the acknowledgement and regard for variations in culture, which holds immense significance in facilitating efficient communication and interaction within an interconnected world. The pursuit of education in a foreign country presents an invaluable avenue for students to directly engage with and navigate cultural disparities, thereby fostering the acquisition of intercultural aptitude.

The importance of international education in fostering a greater sense of civic responsibility, intercultural understanding, and engagement with cultural variety is emphasized by Gunesch (2013). For students who are studying in another country, this knowledge is very important since it whelp them adjust communicate,

and deal with cultural differences, which will improve their learning experience and cultural sensitivity (Baker, 2015). Furthermore, international education serves as a dynamic platform for students to engage with diverse cultural communities, expanding their horizons and nurturing a more profound grasp of global matters.

Furthermore, there is a strong link between intercultural citizenship—which involves contributing to various communities while acknowledging cultural differences—and intercultural knowledge (Baker, 2015; Perry & Southwell, 2011). Intercultural citizenship necessitates individuals' active participation and contribution to multicultural societies, with the aim of fostering social unity and fostering mutual admiration. International students, through their exposure to diverse cultures and perspectives, have the opportunity to augment their civic engagement and enhance their understanding of intercultural dynamics. This, in turn, positively impacts their personal growth and equips them with the necessary skills to navigate and thrive in heterogeneous environments (Gunesch, 2013; Perry & Southwell, 2011).

Intercultural understanding encompasses the important task of critically examining and acknowledging one's own cultural assumptions and biases. This process of introspection holds utmost significance as it facilitates the cultivation of a sophisticated comprehension of diverse cultures and the cultivation of empathy and open-mindedness. According to Deardorff (2006), intercultural competence entails possessing attitudes like respect, openness, and curiosity towards other cultures, which serve as foundational elements for fostering meaningful intercultural engagements.

According to Holmes et al. (2015) and Gunesch (2013), scholarly investigations reveal that students who actively participate in intercultural learning endeavors exhibit increased intercultural sensitivity and possess enhanced abilities to navigate the intricacies of cultural diversity. These experiences not only bolster their scholastic and occupational proficiencies, but also foster personal development and intercultural aptitude.

In essence, the concept of intercultural understanding encompasses a complex set of actions that entail acknowledging and valuing cultural distinctions, thoroughly examining one's own cultural presumptions, and actively involving oneself with various cultural collectives. Studying abroad offers students an unparalleled chance to cultivate these abilities, which are vital for advancing intercultural citizenship and cultivating a more comprehensive and concordant global society.

2.4 Intercultural Experiences

2.4.1 Definition and Importance of Intercultural Experiences

Intercultural experiences entail the direct interactions and engagements that individuals partake in with cultures that are distinct from their own. Such experiences may manifest themselves through endeavors like studying abroad, engaging in exchange programs, or becoming involved in multicultural communities. As Jackson (2011b) posits, intercultural experiences serve to augment cultural awareness and sensitivity, presenting individuals with invaluable prospects for personal and academic development (Fang & Baker, 2018; Jackson, 2011b).

Intercultural experiences play a crucial role in the contemporary globalized society, as they allow individuals to acquire the essential skills and competencies needed for effective cross-cultural communication and collaboration (Deardorff, 2006). Such experiences frequently bring about profound changes, enabling individuals to gain new insights and grasp the intricacies of cultural diversity (Bennett, 1993). The advantages of intercultural experiences go beyond personal development, as they also contribute to the establishment of more inclusive and unified societies.

Research indicates that students who participate in intercultural experiences exhibit enhanced critical thinking abilities, increased empathy, and improved adaptability (Berg et al., 2009). These students are better equipped to navigate and thrive in diverse cultural environments, both academically and professionally. Intercultural experiences also play a significant role in language acquisition, as immersion in a different cultural and linguistic context accelerates language learning and proficiency (Kinging, 2009).

Moreover, intercultural experiences contribute to the development of intercultural competence, which is the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds (Fantini, 2000). This competence includes a range of skills, such as cultural awareness, communication skills, and the ability to manage cultural differences (Byram, 1997). Developing intercultural competence is essential for individuals who seek to become global citizens, capable of contributing to a more interconnected and interdependent world (Deardorff, 2009).

In addition to personal and academic advantages, intercultural encounters have substantial professional implications. Employers are placing an increasing importance on intercultural competence and experience, acknowledging that these attributes are crucial for achieving success in a globalized labor market (Hunter et al., 2006). Individuals who have participated in intercultural experiences often

demonstrate greater creativity, effectiveness in multicultural teams, and skill in handling cross-cultural negotiations and relationships (Ang et al., 2007).

Hence, intercultural experiences play a crucial role in promoting personal development, academic accomplishments, and career advancement. They serve as a fundamental basis for acquiring intercultural competence, which is vital for thriving in a diverse and interconnected global society. Therefore, it is imperative for educational institutions and organizations dedicated to preparing individuals for the impacts and prospects of globalization to prioritize the promotion and facilitation of intercultural experiences.

2.4.2 Impact of Intercultural Experiences on Personal and Academic Growth

Research indicates that intercultural experiences play a significant role in personal growth by promoting increased cultural consciousness, flexibility, and understanding (Deardorff, 2009). Such experiences involve individuals immersing themselves in various cultural settings, thereby challenging their existing beliefs and expanding their global perspective. By being exposed to diverse cultural norms and practices, individuals develop the skills necessary to navigate and value cultural diversity, an essential aspect of intercultural competence (Fantini, 2000).

Intercultural experiences have the potential to bring about significant personal growth. For example, immersing oneself in diverse cultural practices and viewpoints can improve one's capacity to adjust to unfamiliar settings and promote a heightened sense of empathy towards others (Williams, 2005). This empathetic outlook is crucial in the present interconnected global society, where appreciating and acknowledging cultural disparities is increasingly esteemed (Bennett, 2008).

Moreover, having intercultural experiences has the potential to enhance one's self-awareness and self-efficacy. When individuals are faced with and successfully overcome the difficulties that come with navigating unfamiliar cultural environments, they tend to develop a stronger belief in their capacity to handle intricate scenarios (Ward et al., 2020). This improved sense of self-efficacy can then lead to increased resilience and adaptability in both personal and professional spheres.

Academically, cross-cultural encounters have the potential to improve linguistic abilities, analytical reasoning, and worldwide outlooks (Fang & Baker, 2018; Wagner & Byram, 2017). Acquiring a language is frequently expedited in immersive settings wherein learners are compelled to employ a second language for everyday interactions (Jackson, 2008). Furthermore, being exposed to diverse educational systems and teaching methods can prompt critical thinking and cultivate a more intricate comprehension of global matters (Byram, 2020).

A study conducted by Jackson (2008) revealed that students who took part in study abroad programs demonstrated notable enhancements in their ability to communicate across cultures and their awareness of global matters. Likewise, Deardorff (2006) emphasized the significance of intercultural experiences in fostering intercultural competency, which encompasses skills like cultural understanding, adaptability, and efficient communication.

Furthermore, the inclusion of intercultural experiences has the potential to significantly enhance students' academic achievements. By exposing them to diverse perspectives and encouraging them to engage with alternative viewpoints (Kramsch, 1993), these encounters can broaden their intellectual horizons. Consequently, students are empowered to approach complex problems with improved analytical skills and creativity (Gudykunst, 2004).

Thus, intercultural experiences play a crucial role in enhancing personal and academic growth. They encourage the development of cultural consciousness, flexibility, empathy, and analytical thinking abilities, all of which are fundamental for effectively navigating and achieving success in an ever more globalized society (Bennett, 2008; Fantini, 2000; Wagner & Byram, 2017).

2.4.2.1 Personal Growth

Intercultural experiences have the potential to increase cultural awareness, enabling individuals to recognize and value cultural differences. This increased awareness promotes a greater sensitivity to subtle cultural nuances and reduces ethnocentric perspectives (Bennett, 1993). Individuals become more aware of their cultural biases and more open to diverse perspectives, which is crucial for fostering mutual respect and understanding in interactions involving multiple cultures (Byram, 1997). Improved cultural awareness also allows individuals to develop a deeper understanding of cultural dynamics and power dynamics, which is vital for effective intercultural communication and collaboration (Deardorff, 2006). Furthermore, engaging in intercultural experiences can result in the development of a more complex cultural identity, as individuals learn to incorporate elements of different cultures into their own self-concept (Gudykunst, 2004).

Engaging with different cultures requires individuals to adapt to unfamiliar environments and societal norms. This ability to adjust is a valuable skill that enhances resilience and flexibility. People develop the capacity to navigate unfamiliar situations, manage cultural disorientation, and cultivate effective coping strategies. These skills are beneficial in both personal and professional contexts (Kim, 2001). Adaptability also entails the development of cognitive flexibility, which refers to

the ability to switch between different cultural frameworks and perspectives as necessary (Ward et al., 2020). This cognitive flexibility is particularly crucial in multicultural work environments, where employees need to navigate and integrate diverse cultural norms and practices to achieve shared objectives (Williams, 2005).

Engaging with diverse cultures necessitates individuals to acclimate themselves to unfamiliar environments and social norms. This adaptability is a crucial skill that enhances resilience and flexibility. People cultivate the ability to navigate unfamiliar situations, cope with cultural disorientation, and develop effective coping mechanisms. These skills offer advantages in both personal and professional spheres (Hammer et al., 2003). Additionally, intercultural experiences contribute to the cultivation of empathy, which involves comprehending and sharing the emotions of individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Jackson, 2008). Empathy is closely tied to emotional intelligence, which encompasses recognizing, comprehending, and managing one's emotions and those of others (Goleman, 2020). High levels of empathy and emotional intelligence are associated with improved interpersonal relationships, enhanced conflict resolution skills, and overall well-being (Bar-On, 2000).

2.4.2.2 Academic Growth

Being exposed to a different linguistic environment has a significant impact on improving language proficiency. It has been observed that students who participate in study abroad programs or engage in intercultural activities tend to achieve higher levels of language fluency and communication skills (Kinger, 2009). This linguistic ability extends beyond verbal communication to include the comprehension of cultural contexts and non-verbal cues. Moreover, immersion in a foreign language environment enhances pragmatic competence, enabling individuals to use language appropriately in various social situations (Taguchi, 2011). The continuous interaction with native speakers provides authentic language practice, promoting both the understanding and production of language skill (Freed, 1995).

Intercultural experiences provide individuals with the chance to encounter diverse modes of thinking and approaching problems. This exposure stimulates the development of critical thinking abilities by prompting individuals to critically analyze and evaluate various perspectives. It fosters intellectual curiosity and the ability to approach problems from multiple perspectives (Berg et al., 2009). Such experiences prompt students to challenge their assumptions, resulting in increased cognitive flexibility and a greater willingness to consider new ideas (Dervin, 2011). Furthermore, engaging with different cultural frameworks enhances metacognitive

skills, allowing individuals to reflect on their thought processes and enhance their problem-solving strategies (Deardorff, 2006).

Through direct exposure to diverse cultures, individuals develop a holistic understanding that enhances their academic and intellectual pursuits. This exposure enables them to gain a deeper comprehension of global issues, recognize the interconnectedness of our world, and appreciate the complexities of cultural interaction (Killick, 2013). The acquisition of a global perspective is highly advantageous in numerous aspects, including academic research, collaborative endeavors, and understanding international development. It cultivates a sense of global citizenship, motivating individuals to engage in activities that promote social justice and sustainability (De Andreotti, 2014). Additionally, students with global perspectives are better prepared to tackle transnational challenges such as climate change and human rights in their academic and professional endeavors (Reimers, 2009).

Studies have shown that students who participate in intercultural programs demonstrate improved academic performance. These individuals often exhibit increased engagement in classroom discussions, heightened motivation, and superior academic achievements (Paige, 1993). The experiential learning that comes from intercultural encounters complements traditional academic instruction, providing a well-rounded educational experience. Involvement in intercultural programs also fosters a lifelong commitment to learning by cultivating an interest in other cultures and a desire for continuous personal and intellectual development (Kolb, 2014). Moreover, the hands-on experience gained through intercultural interactions helps students apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts, leading to deeper understanding and retention of academic content (Braskamp et al., 2009).

Intercultural experiences offer students valuable skills that are in high demand in the global job market. Employers actively seek individuals who can collaborate effectively in diverse teams, possess a thorough understanding of global markets, and can communicate across cultural barriers. The acquisition of intercultural competence through these experiences greatly enhances employability and future career prospects (Hunter et al., 2006). Moreover, intercultural experiences aid in the development of leadership skills as individuals learn to navigate intricate social dynamics and motivate teams from various backgrounds (Jokinen, 2005). The ability to work proficiently in multicultural environments is increasingly crucial in today's interconnected world, where businesses operate across borders and cultures (Steers et al., 2017).

Intercultural experiences play a vital role in both personal and academic growth. They foster an appreciation for diverse cultures, enhance adaptability, empathy, and critical thinking abilities, and also bolster language proficiency and broaden our global outlook. These experiences provide individuals with essential skills to thrive in a multicultural society, thereby contributing to their overall advancement and accomplishments. By nurturing intercultural competence, individuals become better equipped to engage in meaningful cross-cultural interactions, pursue academic excellence, and succeed in their professional endeavors.

2.4.3 Transition from Intercultural Experiences to Intercultural Citizenship

While intercultural experiences are essential, they do not inevitably result in intercultural citizenship. The process entails the cultivation of enhanced intercultural competence, social accountability, and global participation (Baker et al., 2022). To achieve this growth, it is crucial

to comprehend cultural differences and employ this understanding within various societal environments (Deardorff, 2009; Wagner & Byram, 2017).

Intercultural citizenship goes beyond developing an understanding of and adapting to different cultures through intercultural experiences. It involves a proactive dedication to advancing social justice, human rights, and sustainable development on a worldwide level (Byram, 2008). This dedication necessitates individuals to progress from mere comprehension of cultural differences to actively involving themselves in initiatives that contribute to positive societal transformation. The process includes crucial stages like the development of intercultural competence, social responsibility, application in diverse contexts, and reflective practices.

Intercultural competence refers to the capacity to effectively and appropriately communicate in intercultural situations, drawing on one's knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward different cultures (Deardorff, 2006). This competence encompasses various abilities, such as empathy, open-mindedness, and the capacity to understand others' perspectives. Fantini (2000) emphasizes that intercultural competence is not an inherent trait, but rather a set of skills that can be cultivated through intentional practice and reflection. Programs aiming to foster intercultural competence often incorporate components like intercultural communication training, reflective writing, and experiential learning opportunities (Deardorff, 2009; Fantini, 2000).

A vital component of intercultural citizenship is the concept of social responsibility. This entails acknowledging the interdependence of the global community and comprehending that actions carried out on a local scale can have

worldwide consequences (De Andreotti, 2014). In the context of intercultural citizenship, social responsibility refers to advocating for fairness and fairness, engaging in community service, and participating in endeavors that enhance the welfare of all cultural groups. Educational establishments have the potential to greatly contribute to the cultivation of this sense of responsibility by incorporating global citizenship education into their syllabi (Banks, 2008).

Global engagement encompasses actively participating in tackling global concerns and making contributions to the global community. This entails engaging with international organizations, engaging in cross-cultural collaborations, and advocating for global causes (Hunter et al., 2006). Engaging globally necessitates possessing a profound comprehension of issues of global significance, such as poverty, climate change, and human rights, as well as being able to collaboratively work with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds in order to address these hurdles. It also involves a readiness to question ethnocentric viewpoints and to adopt a global perspective in both personal and professional spheres (Killick, 2013).

The progression from intercultural encounters to intercultural citizenship necessitates individuals to employ their intercultural expertise in a range of societal settings. This entails adeptly maneuvering through cultural disparities in different contexts, including workplaces, community organizations, and international forums. By actively engaging with varied cultures, individuals have the capacity to foster inclusive environments that appreciate diversity and foster intercultural comprehension (Bennett, 2004). Concrete implementations may comprise the formulation of culturally inclusive policies, involvement in multicultural teams, and spearheading initiatives aimed at tackling global issues (Gudykunst, 2003).

Reflective practices play a crucial role in fostering the growth of intercultural citizenship. Through reflection, individuals are able to analyze their intercultural encounters, acknowledge their biases, and establish methods for better intercultural engagement (Mezirow, 2003). Examples of reflective practices comprise maintaining a reflective journal, participating in discussions with peers, and soliciting feedback from intercultural mentors. Such practices enable individuals to internalize their intercultural learning and apply it practically towards promoting intercultural citizenship (Kolb, 2014).

Therefore, although intercultural experiences serve as the first introduction to cultural diversity, the shift towards intercultural citizenship necessitates a conscious endeavor to cultivate intercultural proficiency, societal accountability, and global involvement. This entails utilizing intercultural knowledge across different settings and

participating in reflective activities that foster continuous personal and professional development. Educational establishments, community groups, and international networks play a pivotal part in facilitating this transition and nurturing a sense of intercultural citizenship among individuals.

2.5 Intercultural Citizenship

2.5.1. Definitions of Intercultural Citizenship

The overall increase in the number of international students is facilitated by their active involvement with diverse cultures and perspectives, leading to a heightened sense of intercultural awareness and enhanced civic participation. It is essential to fully grasp the historical significance of promoting intercultural citizenship among students through intercultural education before delving into the concept itself.

Intercultural citizenship is not a new concept, but in the past, the focus of "intercultural citizenship" has been more on developing students to become intercultural citizens through the teachings of intercultural education. This concept is defined as the combination of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are needed to take social action based on an understanding of how other cultural groups see the purposes and goals of that action (Byram, 2008; Wagner & Byram, 2017). "Other" refers to cultural groups that often speak different languages (Jurgilė, 2019).

According to Wagner and Byram (2017), intercultural citizenship is a development of the theory of the intercultural speaker and mediator. As a learning outcome, it contrasts the study of one's own culture and identity, which in recent developments of citizenship education have required students to participate in multiple communities, from the national to the local to the international community. This definition focuses on educating students on how to participate and communicate with individuals from diverse cultures in a variety of situations.

In contrast to the definition above, the following definition of "intercultural citizenship" is not related to students receiving intercultural education. Instead, it describes the development of students in a new context that is distinct from their national surroundings and in a different community than their own. Intercultural citizenship is the extension of citizenship beyond national borders. One who develops intercultural citizenship respects and values cultural diversity, and interacts and participates with communities at multiple levels, from the local to the international (Baker et al., 2022; Baker & Fang, 2019, 2021; Fang & Baker, 2018). In other words, this term characterizes students who live in a foreign country and interact with people of different cultures rather than merely learning about them in a classroom.

This contemporary perspective on intercultural citizenship is in accordance with the concept of "global citizenship," which promotes the notion that individuals should perceive themselves as part of a worldwide society, accountable for and linked to others irrespective of geographical limits. This transition signifies a more comprehensive comprehension of citizenship within the framework of globalization, where the development of intercultural skills is of utmost importance for nurturing collaboration, mutual understanding, and harmonious cohabitation (Unesco, 2013)

It is important to acknowledge that this particular definition establishes the foundation for the present investigation. By transitioning from the theoretical understanding of intercultural citizenship to its tangible consequences, it becomes evident that the possession of intercultural competence is vital for students to thrive and adapt in diverse cultural environments. The cultivation of intercultural citizenship encompasses not only cognitive comprehension, but also emotional intelligence and behavioral adjustment, which are indispensable for productive and significant intercultural exchanges (Deardorff, 2006).

2.5.1.1 Intercultural Competence

For students studying in another country, the acquisition of intercultural competence is essential as it promotes both academic success and personal development. This skill helps individuals navigate intercultural interactions with tact and respect, promoting intercultural citizenship and fostering more tolerant and harmonious societies (Kural & Bayyurt, 2016; Schartner, 2016). Additionally, it equips students with the abilities necessary to adapt to various cultural circumstances, create meaningful connections, and gain insightful knowledge about different cultural perspectives (Kural & Bayyurt, 2016).

Intercultural competence is fundamentally a multidimensional skill set. Deardorff (2009) outlines that it includes a deep knowledge of cultural differences, comprehension of intercultural dynamics, inclusive views toward diversity, and proficiency in intercultural communication. The ability to understand cultural differences and respond appropriately to cross-cultural settings is crucial for students studying in another country (Byram, 2020; Tajeddin et al., 2022). Study abroad programs have a profound effect on improving students' intercultural competence over time, as evidenced in a research by Tajeddin et al. (2022).

However, academic exposure alone is not sufficient to attain intercultural competence. Schartner (2016) highlights the value of social support, cultural immersion, and ongoing intercultural encounters in helping students living and studying in another country develop this ability. Therefore, it is important to create an

atmosphere that encourages cross-cultural development to maximize the benefits of studying abroad.

Establishing an environment of this nature necessitates the implementation of organized intercultural education, mentorship initiatives, and platforms that facilitate intercultural conversations and undertakings for students. Initiatives that promote direct engagement with the host culture, such as residing with local families, participating in community service activities, and attending cultural exchange events, greatly contribute to the development of intercultural competence (Paige & Goode, 2009).

Intercultural competence is a significant advantage for students interested in studying in another country. This competence fosters their intercultural citizenship by strengthening their understanding of various cultures, enhancing their communication skills, and broadening their viewpoints (Byram, 2020). Developing intercultural competence empowers students to serve as intermediaries between different cultures, thereby fostering mutual understanding and collaboration both at the local and global levels.

2.5.2. Importance of Intercultural Citizenship

From an educational perspective, education for intercultural citizenship assumes that students can learn about their own country's citizenship while also gaining the knowledge and skills needed to work in a multicultural and multinational community with diverse values, beliefs, and behaviors (Wagner & Byram, 2017). Universities and English as a Medium of Education (EME) programs worldwide continue to incorporate intercultural education, communication, and awareness into their curriculums, recognizing its significance. These universities promise that students will not only gain academic knowledge and field expertise but will also develop intercultural competence and become intercultural or global citizens (Baker & Fang, 2019, 2021; Deardorff & Jones, 2012a; Killick, 2013).

However, students who have never received formal intercultural citizenship education are often expected to gain intercultural experiences independently, particularly in higher education. Developing intercultural citizenship involves demonstrating the ability to interact and participate in multilingual or multicultural communities, ranging from local to international levels (Baker et al., 2022). When students develop intercultural citizenship, it implies they can engage with people from different cultures, countries, and languages during their studies and beyond. This drives the provision of education in this area.

Even students who have not received formal intercultural citizenship education but study abroad are expected to develop these skills due to the immersive opportunity provided by living and studying in another country and interacting with people from diverse backgrounds (Baker et al., 2022; Baker & Fang, 2019, 2021; Fang & Baker, 2018). However, research has shown that studying abroad does not automatically lead to the development of intercultural citizenship (Jackson, 2012a, 2015). Despite this, there remains an expectation that students will learn to become intercultural citizens by the end of their studies, driven by the global market's demand for graduates who can interact and work effectively with people from different cultures.

According to Killick (2013), intercultural citizenship encompasses more than simply being exposed to various cultures; it necessitates thoughtful contemplation and active involvement with diverse viewpoints. Educational establishments play a vital role in facilitating this progression by offering structured occasions for intercultural engagement and urging students to reflect on their encounters (Deardorff & Jones, 2012b). Additionally, the cultivation of intercultural citizenship is intertwined with broader educational objectives, including fostering global consciousness, advocating for social equity, and equipping students to make meaningful contributions to a globally interconnected and interdependent society (Killick, 2013).

In brief, the significance of intercultural citizenship resides in its capacity to equip students for the intricacies of a globalized society. By fostering intercultural proficiency, students become better prepared to navigate the nuances of diverse cultures, establish meaningful connections, and actively contribute to heterogeneous communities. Educational institutions bear the responsibility of facilitating this growth through purposeful and introspective intercultural educational methods.

2.5.2.1 Intercultural Sensitivity

By being sensitive to cultural differences, international students can build meaningful relationships, avoid misunderstandings, and contribute positively to the host community, thereby enhancing their intercultural competence and fostering a sense of belonging and mutual respect (Avcılar & Gök, 2022; Boonsuk & Fang, 2021). Intercultural sensitivity is crucial for the intercultural citizenship of students studying in another country, enabling them to navigate and thrive in a new cultural environment (Engle & Engle, 2004).

The link between intercultural sensitivity and intercultural citizenship lies in the idea that individuals with high levels of intercultural sensitivity are more likely to engage effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds (Jackson,

2011a; Wu, 2018). Intercultural sensitivity is a foundational aspect of intercultural citizenship, as it enables individuals to understand, respect, and interact positively with others in a diverse cultural contexts (Williams, 2005).

Intercultural sensitivity refers to the ability to observe, respect, and adapt to cultural differences. It involves a complex worldview that allows individuals to navigate and appreciate diverse cultural perspectives and behaviors (Fang & Baker, 2018). Factors that contribute to the development of intercultural sensitivity and ultimately intercultural citizenship include direct, authentic contact with the host culture, skillful mentoring, experiential learning, and engagement with the local community (Boonsuk & Fang, 2021; Engle & Engle, 2004; Wu, 2018). These experiences help international students develop their intercultural sensitivity, adaptability, and cross-cultural communication skills, contributing to their growth as intercultural citizens.

According to a study conducted by Bennett (2004) on the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), it is proposed that intercultural sensitivity progresses through various stages. These stages range from ethnocentric stages, including denial, defense, and minimization, to ethno-relative stages, such as acceptance, adaptation, and integration. The DMIS emphasizes the transformative nature of this process, as individuals develop the ability to acknowledge and value cultural differences. Ultimately, this leads to more successful intercultural interactions and cultivates a stronger sense of intercultural citizenship.

Moreover, Hammer et al. (2003) highlight the significance of intercultural sensitivity and its quantifiable improvement through deliberate educational methods. These methods include intercultural training programs, reflective exercises, and facilitated intercultural exchanges. By incorporating these practices, students can advance through the stages of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), thereby augmenting their capacity to effectively navigate and positively interact with diverse cultures.

Thus, the development of intercultural sensitivity holds immense significance in the realm of intercultural citizenship. It empowers international students to establish favorable connections, engage in effective communication, and seamlessly assimilate within the host culture. Educational institutions play a crucial role in cultivating intercultural sensitivity by implementing well-structured initiatives and creating valuable opportunities for meaningful intercultural interactions.

2.5.3 Factors leading towards Intercultural Citizenship

Haskollar and Kohli Bagwe (2022) conducted a study to explore the complex connection between students' intercultural development and their individual traits. These traits included academic standing, major, gender, race/ethnicity, first-generation status, linguistic ability, household income, previous experiences with diversity, and experiences living abroad. The aim of their research was to determine which specific traits significantly influenced students' intercultural development. The results of the study showed that race, ethnicity, and gender had a significant impact on the ability of freshmen at Florida State University to collaborate with individuals from different cultures.

According to further research, various demographic and individual factors have an impact on the development of intercultural competence. For example, students' demographics, linguistic capacity, household income, age, gender (with female students generally demonstrating higher levels of intercultural competence than male students), field of study, level of education, and previous experiences with diversity or education in another country are all significant factors (Engberg & Fox, 2011; Lindsey Parsons, 2010; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015; Terzuolo, 2018). In addition, factors such as growing up in a different country, growing up in a multicultural environment, attending an international school, and early exposure to international students have been associated with higher levels of intercultural competence (Leung & Chiu, 2010; Stebleton et al., 2013; Westrick & Yuen, 2007).

The impact of these elements is supported by the contact hypothesis, which suggests that interpersonal interaction, under suitable circumstances, is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice among individuals from both majority and minority groups (Allport et al., 1954). Positive, long-lasting, and significant engagements can foster cross-cultural proficiency and promote good citizenship.

In the field of higher education, Engberg and Fox (2011) conducted a study that revealed students who participated in diversity-oriented initiatives, such as cultural gatherings, educational sessions, and academic courses, demonstrated a higher level of intercultural competency. Similarly, Luo and Jamieson-Drake (2015) found that study abroad programs significantly enhanced students' intercultural capabilities by providing them with the opportunity to personally experience, navigate, and appreciate cultural differences. Stebleton et al. (2013) highlights the importance of early exposure to diversity, noting that individuals raised in multicultural environments or attending international schools demonstrate higher intercultural sensitivity and competence. Similarly, Westrick and Yuen (2007) emphasize the positive link between

students' prior international experiences, such as living abroad or interacting with international students, and their intercultural growth.

The significance of education in promoting intercultural competence cannot be overstated. Deardorff (2006) outlines key elements of intercultural competence, including attitudes (respect, openness, curiosity), knowledge (awareness of one's own culture, culture-specific knowledge), and skills (listening, observing, interpreting). Educational institutions that incorporate these components into their curricula and extracurricular activities can greatly enhance students' intercultural growth.

In addition, Byram (1997) presents a framework for intercultural communicative competence, which includes linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and intercultural competence. This framework emphasizes the significance of language skills in promoting intercultural interactions and highlights the need for educational initiatives to address both linguistic and cultural aspects.

Chinese students form a significant portion of the international student population in Thailand. They often encounter unique challenges and advantages that impact their growth in terms of intercultural competence and intercultural citizenship. A study conducted by Zhang and Brunton (2007) reveals that Chinese students studying abroad face significant cultural and academic adjustments. Their time in Thailand, where they must navigate diverse educational approaches and social conventions, presents valuable opportunities for intercultural education and personal development.

Chinese students studying in Thailand must adjust to Thai cultural and academic standards. This adjustment process includes overcoming language barriers, understanding Thai social conventions, and adapting to distinct teaching and learning methods (Heng, 2018). Addressing these adaptation difficulties can potentially foster resilience, flexibility, and a deeper understanding of intercultural dynamics (Liu, 2013). While many Chinese students come to Thailand with a basic command of English or Thai, their ability to navigate intercultural encounters is often improved through immersive language experiences. Engaging in community initiatives, making friends with Thai counterparts, and participating in academic partnerships are crucial for enhancing their language skills and fostering intercultural communication (He & Chiang, 2016).

The involvement of Chinese students in both academic and social activities significantly impacts their intercultural growth. Studies show that Chinese students who actively participate in campus events, join student organizations, and engage in multicultural activities demonstrate enhanced intercultural competence (Li et al.,

2010). This active engagement allows them to establish social connections, understand different perspectives, and feel integrated into the host culture (Wang, 2018).

Support systems and resources play a vital role in facilitating the intercultural progress of Chinese students. Thai universities offer orientation programs, language support, and counseling services to help Chinese students adjust to the challenges of living and studying in a foreign country (Wu & Hammond, 2011). These resources are essential for reducing cultural shock and developing intercultural proficiency.

Chinese students' experiences in Thailand significantly contribute to their development as intercultural individuals. By participating in Thai culture and interacting with students from diverse backgrounds, they gain a comprehensive understanding of global issues and the skills necessary to address them. This progression not only enhances their personal and academic growth but also prepares them to be engaged, empathetic, and responsible global citizens (Zheng & Baker, 2022).

Therefore, intercultural citizenship is influenced by various factors such as demographic characteristics, personal interactions, and educational programs. The experiences of Chinese students in Thailand highlight the importance of adapting to different cultures, being proficient in the local language, actively engaging with the local community, and having access to support systems. These factors contribute to the development of intercultural competence. Since each student is in a different stage of their journey, it would be interesting to investigate how intercultural citizenship varies based on these factors and identify effective strategies for promoting intercultural proficiency among diverse student populations.

2.6 Previous Studies

Studies have identified the development of intercultural citizenship. As more international students come to study in Thailand and enroll in English as a medium of education (EME) programs, it is important to investigate whether they have gained a sense of intercultural citizenship during their time in Thailand.

Anderson et al. (2006) conducted a study on the development of intercultural competence among international students in non-Anglophone European nations. The study focused on their interactions with local students and integration into the host community. The findings revealed that students who actively participated in local communities showed higher levels of intercultural competence and a strong sense of intercultural citizenship. This research emphasizes the importance of engaging with local communities to facilitate intercultural development.

Gu et al. (2010) examined the experiences of international students in different cultures and how these experiences contribute to their personal and academic growth. The research highlights the importance of support systems in host institutions in nurturing intercultural skills and promoting global citizenship.

Salisbury et al. (2013) investigated the influence of study abroad programs on the development of intercultural competence among undergraduate students. Their study suggests that participating in international experiences has a significant effect on both personal and academic advancement, enhancing students' preparedness for global citizenship.

Soria and Troisi (2014) conducted a study to examine the influence of international programs on the development of students' global awareness and intercultural competence within the United States. Their findings revealed that engaging in international programs and participating in multicultural campus activities have a positive impact on students' intercultural comprehension and readiness for global citizenship.

Fang and Baker (2018) conducted a study on Chinese English learners who had returned from exchange programs in Ireland, Canada, New Zealand, and Hong Kong. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with a focus group of six participants who had studied abroad for four to five months. The findings revealed that most participants could relate to the concept of intercultural citizenship, but they reflected on their experiences after returning to China. Due to concerns about their identity, they spent less time with the native people of the host countries. As a result, the researchers were unable to determine the extent to which the students developed intercultural citizenship, possibly because of the cultural and linguistic settings in Anglophone environments.

Baker and Fang (2019, 2021) conducted two studies investigating the intercultural citizenship development of Chinese students before, during, and after their study abroad experiences. In 2019, Baker and Fang conducted a mixed-method study investigating the development of intercultural citizenship among Chinese students before, during, and after their study abroad experiences. The study included questionnaires, interviews, and a focus group conducted in the UK and China. In 2021, they interviewed Chinese postgraduates in China and the UK who planned to study abroad, were currently studying abroad, or had recently graduated. Both studies revealed similar findings: most participants valued the idea of intercultural citizenship. Some felt that they had already developed it, while others felt the need to develop it further. Those resistant to developing intercultural citizenship cited concerns about

threats to their identity, perceived irrelevance, discomfort in multicultural environments, and doubts about its academic benefits. Additionally, the 2021 study found a close link between students' intercultural citizenship development and their English language proficiency. The studies suggest that undergraduate students, who are more open to new experiences, may show different results, especially if they are aware of the importance of strong English proficiency for successful study in programs abroad.

In the context of Thai students, Boonsuk and Fang (2021) studied the intercultural experiences and knowledge growth of Thai and Chinese Master's degree students after returning from studying abroad at international universities in English-speaking countries (the US, UK, Australia, and Canada). This study demonstrated that studying abroad significantly assisted students in developing an understanding of intercultural citizenship. The exposure to various English dialects and participation in a range of activities facilitated this understanding. However, the study abroad experience alone was insufficient to foster greater acceptance of people from other cultures. The study's reflective nature, focusing on past experiences rather than real-time observations, highlighted the need for in-depth contextual studies.

The most recent study on intercultural citizenship was conducted by Baker et al. (2022), exploring how Thai Study Abroad (SA) students developed a sense of intercultural citizenship while participating in international higher education programs in English-speaking nations and the role of English Language Teaching (ELT) in supporting their SA programs. The study included 14 participants who had completed SA and returned to Thailand. The findings revealed a positive impact on the students' intercultural citizenship, with many noting the beneficial effects of SA on their intercultural awareness and growth. This indicates that the concept of "intercultural citizenship" is crucial in understanding students' learning and transformation during their study abroad experiences, aligning with the goals of international universities offering EME programs.

Despite recent contributions, there has been limited research on how students in EME programs living in non-English-speaking countries, such as Thailand, develop intercultural citizenship. Cambodian students, who form a significant population of international students in Thailand's international programs, present an important group for this investigation. These students have the opportunity to extend their intercultural citizenship by engaging with people from diverse cultures at various community levels, from local to international, while living and studying in Thailand (Baker et al., 2022; Baker & Fang, 2021; Wagner & Byram, 2017).

To expand upon the existing research, the objective of this study is to investigate the intercultural citizenship of undergraduate students who are non-native English speakers and are enrolled in EME programs in a non-English-speaking nation. The specific focus will be on Cambodian students studying in Thailand. Through this research, valuable insights will be gained regarding the development of intercultural citizenship among these students, as well as the various factors that impact their intercultural experiences.

2.7 Summary

This chapter discussed about concepts, theories, and prior studies regarding globalization, student mobility, culture, and intercultural citizenship. In addition, previous research on the topic of “intercultural citizenship of university students studying in another country” includes research aims, techniques, and conclusions. These studies served as inspiration for the present investigation. The study's research methods will be discussed in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter is divided into six sections: research design, which also includes research participants and setting; research instruments; research procedure; data collection; data analysis and trustworthiness; scope and limitations; and the positionality statement of the researcher. The summary of the chapter will appear last. Autobiography, in-depth interviews, and shadow observation were utilized as research tools, followed by data analysis of all collected data.

3.1 Research Design

This qualitative study investigates the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, who are studying at a university in northeastern Thailand. The research follows the principles of qualitative research, which emphasize the researcher as the primary instrument, gathering descriptive and detailed data, and maintaining self-reflexivity throughout the research process.

Qualitative research views the researcher as the main tool for obtaining and analyzing data (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). As a Cambodian graduate student studying in Thailand, my position enables me to build a connection with participants, thereby enabling the gathering of comprehensive and intricate data. Additionally, my comprehension of the cultural and educational environments enriches the significance and depth of the findings.

The present research employs a case study research design, which is particularly suitable for examining the intricate and situation-specific experiences of the participants (Yin, 2018). Each student is regarded as an individual case, and the data collection procedures encompass written autobiographies, in-depth interviews, and shadow observations. This approach yields a plethora of comprehensive insights into the students' backgrounds, intercultural interactions, and the difficulties they encounter when studying in an EME curriculum.

Self-reflexivity is a crucial aspect of qualitative research, as it necessitates researchers to consistently analyze their potential prejudices and acknowledge the influence their personal experiences might have on the research process (Walker, 2017). In this particular study, I diligently maintained a reflexive journal to record my

thoughts, reactions, and potential biases. This approach aimed to guarantee that my interpretations of the data remained as impartial as feasible.

The study design incorporates qualitative principles in several ways, including the researcher being treated as the instrument, the use of rich and descriptive data, and the practice of reflexivity. As the primary instrument, my role had a significant influence on every stage of the research, ranging from the formulation of interview questions to the interpretation of the collected data. My deep understanding of the educational contexts in Cambodia and Thailand added depth to the data collection and analysis phases. The use of autobiographies, interviews, and observations allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences. By employing multiple sources of data, the findings were more comprehensive and credible. Moreover, by acknowledging my own positionality and engaging in reflexive practice, I aimed to minimize biases and offer a transparent account of the research process. This reflexive approach ensured that the findings were based on the perspectives of the participants rather than my own preconceptions.

The case study design facilitates a comprehensive exploration of individuals' experiences within their unique circumstances. It allows for an in-depth investigation and comparison of recurring patterns and differences among cases (Stake, 1995). Factors such as previous encounters, language proficiency, and exposure to diverse cultures are considered. The objective of this research is to enhance intercultural comprehension in higher education.

3.1.1 Research Setting

The study was conducted at Suranaree University of Technology (SUT), a prestigious institution in northeastern Thailand. SUT offers EME programs taught in English to students from various countries and backgrounds, including a substantial number from Cambodia. These programs are available at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels, encompassing disciplines such as agribusiness, engineering, and food technology.

The university accepts many international students yearly, including those from Cambodia. These students have diverse backgrounds and varying levels of international experience, which enhances the campus's intercultural atmosphere. The university is dedicated to creating a multicultural environment, as shown through its efforts to foster intercultural exchange, provide support services for international students, and organize extracurricular activities that promote cultural understanding and cooperation. This aligns with the emphasis made by Knight (2004) on the advantages of

internationalization in higher education and the importance of diverse academic environments in fostering intercultural understanding.

Current literature emphasizes the importance of examining intercultural citizenship in EME programs. These programs provide unique opportunities for students to interact with different perspectives and improve their intercultural skills (Byram, 2008). This goal aligns with Suranaree University of Technology, making it an ideal environment to study the advancement of intercultural citizenship among Cambodian students.

The university's location in a region with strong historical and cultural links to Cambodia, combined with its extensive EME programs, provides a special opportunity to investigate how Cambodian students adapt to a diverse academic setting. Deardorff (2006) emphasizes that the cultivation of intercultural competence is a major goal of international education, and studying in such environments is essential for fostering intercultural citizenship.

Moreover, the lack of previous research in this particular context underscores the importance of the topics under investigation, thus making this study a valuable addition to the existing knowledge on intercultural education and citizenship. According to Guo and Chase (2011), they explored how the integration of international students into academic settings enriches intercultural experiences for all students, further reinforcing the notion that the environment at SUT is ideal for conducting this research.

Furthermore, Jin and Cortazzi (2017) shed light on the implementation of intercultural communication in educational contexts and the influence of language on the formation of identity and intercultural competence. This emphasizes the significance of creating multilingual and multicultural environments, like SUT, to cultivate these abilities. Additionally, Choudaha and De Wit (2014) emphasized the difficulties and advantages brought about by global student mobility, further emphasizing the importance of studying intercultural interactions within such a diverse academic environment.

Thus, Suranaree University of Technology is an ideal institution for studying the development of intercultural citizenship among Cambodian students due to its strong dedication to international education, diverse student population, and strategic location. The university's extensive EME programs and intercultural initiatives not only create a vibrant atmosphere but also offer valuable insights into these dynamics. Therefore, this research holds great significance in contributing to the field.

3.1.2 Research Participants

This study examines the intercultural citizenship of five Cambodian university students enrolled in Thailand's EME programs. The participants were chosen through purposive sampling to ensure a variety of perspectives (Rose et al., 2020). Each participant has been awarded the Royal Scholarship and is pursuing engineering and technology-related programs at various levels.

Table 3.1 summarizes the profiles of the five participants detailing their gender, academic year, major, hometown, duration in Thailand, language skills, education background, and extracurricular activities and experiences with people from different cultural communities.

Table 3.1 Profiles of the Participants

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Lita</i>	<i>Don</i>	<i>Hiro</i>	<i>Ron</i>	<i>Ben</i>
Gender	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male
Year	4 th	3 rd	3 rd	4 th	1 st
Major	Mechanical Engineering	Mechanical Engineering	Innovative Agripreneur	Civil Engineering	Food Technology
Hometown	Phnom Penh	Battambang	Kampong Speu	Phnom Penh	Phnom Penh (moved to Poipet)
Duration in Thailand	4 years (since 1 st year)	3 years (since 1 st year)	3 years (since 1 st year)	4 years (since 1 st year)	1 year (Master's), previously 4 years for Bachelor's
Language Skills	English, Japanese, Thai	English, Basic French	English, Korean, Thai, French	English, Thai	English, Thai
Education Background	International primary school, public high school in Phnom Penh, exchange program in Japan	Public primary & high school in Battambang	Public primary & high school in Takeo, former nursing science student in South Korea	Public primary school, private high school in Phnom Penh	Private primary & secondary school in Poipet, Bachelor's in Integrated Agricultural Technology and Food Safety Management in Thailand
Extracurricular Activities & Experiences	University Frisbee player, Christian church member, facilitator/staff for international events, exchange program in South Korea	Engaged in university events, Christian church member, gPBL camp participant/staff	Participated in Hackathon, Global Entrepreneurship Camp, Start-up Projects, OR Seeding Future ASEAN Camp, volunteered for international events	Participated in gPBL camp, Technopreneur, interned at engineering firm, traveled within Thailand	University Frisbee player, involved in events/camps with Thai and Filipino communities, Christian church member, gPBL camp participant, interned at start-up, traveled within Thailand

This study examines the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students in Thailand's EME programs. Five participants were chosen through purposive sampling. All of them are students who have received a scholarship called 'the Royal Scholarship' and are studying engineering and technology-related programs at different levels. Below, we provide detailed profiles of each participant, focusing on their backgrounds, language skills, and unique experiences.

Lita is a fourth-year Mechanical Engineering student from Phnom Penh. Notably, she has an impressive linguistic ability and a diverse educational background. She is fluent in English and can communicate proficiently in Japanese and Thai. Her educational journey includes attending an international primary school with English-based programs, a public high school in Phnom Penh, and a year-long exchange program in Japan during her 12th grade. In Thailand, Lita actively engages in extracurricular activities, such as playing Frisbee at the university, being involved in the Christian church community, and participating in international events organized by SEDA. Additionally, she has served as a facilitator and staff for CIA and WTUN conferences at her university and has taken part in an exchange program in South Korea.

Don, a third-year Mechanical Engineering student from Battambang, also possesses language skills. He is proficient in English and has basic knowledge of French, which he learned in high school and through supplementary classes. Don completed his primary and high school education in Battambang before coming to Thailand. At the university, he actively participates in various events organized by the Engineering department and CIA, and is a member of the Christian church community. Additionally, he has been involved in the gPBL camp as both a participant and staff.

Hiro, a third-year Innovative Agripreneur student from Kampong Speu, is another participant in this study. Hiro is multi-lingual, being proficient in English, Korean, Thai, and French. He completed his primary and high school education in Takeo Province and was previously a nursing science student at Jeju National University in South Korea. During his time in Thailand, Hiro has attended diverse events on and off campus, including Hackathon, Global Entrepreneurship Camp, Start-up Projects, and OR Seeding Future ASEAN Camp. He also volunteers for international events organized by SEDA and CIA. Ron Ron, a fourth-year Civil Engineering student from Phnom Penh, acquired fluency in English through self-study using social media and his high school education. He also learned Thai by interacting with his Thai peers.

Ron completed his primary education at a public school and attended a private high school in Phnom Penh. During his time in Thailand, he actively participated

in university events such as the gPBL camp and Technopreneur. He gained practical experience as an intern at an engineering firm and explored various destinations in Thailand, including Pattaya, Koh Larn, Koh Chang, Bangkok, and Khao Yai National Park.

Ben, a first-year Master's student in Food Technology, was born in Phnom Penh and later relocated to Poipet. He achieved proficiency in English and Thai through self-learning and interactions with friends. Ben attended private primary and secondary schools in Poipet before obtaining his Bachelor's degree in Integrated Agricultural Technology and Food Safety Management in Thailand. Beyond academics, he engaged in extracurricular activities such as university Frisbee competitions, collaborated with Thai and Filipino communities in events and camps, participated in the Christian church community, attended gPBL camps, and interned at a start-up spin-off company. Ben's exploration of Thailand took him to various locations, including Pattaya, Koh Larn, Saraburi, and Udon Thani.

The study presents detailed profiles of five participants, highlighting their backgrounds, language competencies, and experiences. This analysis contributes to understanding the factors that influence their intercultural encounters in Thailand. These profiles align with previous research on the significance of language proficiency, educational background, and extracurricular activities in shaping students' intercultural adaptation and experiences in EME programs (Andrade, 2006; Astin, 2014; Glass & Westmont, 2014; Kuo, 2011; Montgomery, 2010; Rubin & Wright, 2015; Ward et al., 2020).

3.1.3 Research Instrument

This qualitative study utilized three research instruments to collect data on the intercultural experiences of Cambodian university students in Thailand: autobiographies, in-depth interviews, and shadow observations. Each of these methods were chosen because they offer in-depth and detailed insights into the subject matter, contributing to a better understanding of their intercultural citizenship.

Autobiographies are utilized as a means of gathering persona narratives from participants, enabling them to reflect on their experiences. This method was selected due to its capacity to offer a thorough background understanding, including information about the participants' home provinces, their experiences with English language education in Cambodia, their expectations prior to arriving in Thailand, their experiences since arriving, their interactions with different cultures prior to coming to Thailand, and the challenges they encounter while studying and living in Thailand. By creating a platform for participants to share their stories, autobiographies aid in

comprehending the participants' social and personal contexts within cultural environments (Walker, 2017).

To gain a deeper understanding of the behaviors, interactions, and contextual influences of the participants, we conducted in-depth interviews. These interviews were used in addition to the data obtained from the autobiographies. The interview questions were developed based on the autobiographies and aimed to explore how different contexts impact the behaviors and interactions of the participants. Some questions were adapted from previous research (Baker & Fang, 2019, 2021) and modified to suit the specific context of this study. Prior to the main study, we piloted the interview questions with five Cambodian students and made adjustments based on their feedback during and after each interview. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for the use of emergent questions, which provided deeper insights and allowed the participants to provide more comprehensive answers (Prabjandee, 2019). The guiding interview questions can be found in the appendix.

Shadow observations were used to observe the participants' real-life experiences at the university. This method involved observing the participants in their natural university environment, allowing us to understand their daily interactions and experiences. By doing so, the data analysis was enriched with contextual information, adding depth to the autobiographies and interviews (Prabjandee, 2019).

The use of three different instruments - autobiographies, in-depth interviews, and shadow observations - allowed for triangulation, which improved the validity and depth of the qualitative data. This approach effectively answered the research questions and examined the participants' intercultural citizenship, helping to identify the factors that promote engagement and interaction with individuals from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

3.2 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure for this study took place over a period of three to four months. The main goal was to gain a better understanding of Cambodian university students' intercultural citizenship in a multicultural and multilingual environment in Thailand, where they were studying in English as a medium of education (EME) curriculums. To ensure a thorough exploration of the research topic, the study used three research instruments: autobiographies, in-depth interviews, and shadow observations.

Initially, interview questions were modified from previous studies to suit the specific needs of students studying in Thailand, a non-English speaking country. Before

using these questions in the main study, a pilot study was conducted with a group of university students from Cambodia. This pilot study was essential to ensure that the responses obtained would effectively meet the research objectives. The interview questions were adjusted based on the feedback received during the pilot study.

After completing the pilot study and refining the questions, we sought permission to conduct the main study with five Cambodian university students at a university in northeastern Thailand. We obtained consent from the participants before each data collection procedure.

The data collection process started by informing the participants about how to write their autobiographies. Clear instructions and guidelines were given to them, covering the content, format, and the aspects of their intercultural experiences, challenges, and reflections that should be included. Participants were given 30-40 days to complete their autobiographies and were encouraged to provide as much detail as they could. The autobiographies were submitted to me through their personal emails.

Once the written autobiographies were collected, in-depth interviews were conducted to further explore the participants' intercultural experiences. The purpose of these interviews was to allow participants to elaborate on the information provided in their autobiographies, reflect on specific instances and challenges, and discuss their thoughts and emotions during those experiences. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for additional questions to emerge and resulting in more insightful and comprehensive responses. Appointments were made with participants to select a suitable time for the interviews, which were conducted on-site either within the university premises or at various locations outside the university, such as cafes or restaurants, based on the participants' preferences. Each interview lasted between 3 and 4 hours, and the 30-day timeframe was necessary due to the availability of the participants.

In addition to autobiographies and in-depth interviews, shadow observations were conducted. At the end of each interview, the participants were asked for a specific time and date when they could be observed. Once the schedule was set, the researcher explained how the observation would be conducted, including the duration. It was also mentioned that the observation would take place multiple times to observe the participants in their environment, especially on different occasions within that environment. The researcher observed the participants as they engaged in their daily activities, such as socializing with peers and participating in cultural events. These observations provided context and helped to validate the data, enhancing our understanding of the participants' intercultural citizenship (Gilliat-Ray, 2011; McDonald,

2005; Prabjandee, 2019). Each participant was observed for a total of 10 hours, divided into three sessions. Therefore, the total observation time for all five participants was 50 hours.

The use of these three data sources-autobiographies, in-depth interviews, and shadow observations-was crucial in achieving data saturation. This approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the research subject and deepened our overall understanding of the intercultural experiences of Cambodian university students in Thailand.

3.2.1 Ethical Considerations

When employing these three research instruments, ethical issues were taken into consideration. First, the purpose of the study was explained to all participants, and their consent for participating in the interviews was obtained. Second, participants were asked to sign a consent form to formalize their participation. In a recently finished pilot study, written consent was not obtained; however, participants were requested for their consent a week before the scheduled interviews and were informed about the purpose of the interviews ahead of time. This was intended to prepare them for the interview and address any concerns or uneasiness they might have had regarding its purpose.

Thirdly, any information that may reveal personal details about the participants will be anonymized and protected by assuring them that all collected data would only be used for this specific study and that their information would remain confidential. Furthermore, it was made clear to participants that providing information would not impact them in any way or pose future risks. The researcher obtained permission from the Institutional Ethics Committee of Suranaree University of Technology to use any of the tools mentioned above. Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the research process for the study on intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students living in Thailand and studying in EME curriculums.

After collecting the data, the researcher proceeded to the analysis phase, which began with transcription. The following section will cover the analysis in detail.

3.3 Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

After collecting all the data, including written autobiographies, audio recordings from in-depth interviews, and observational notes from shadow observations, they were meticulously organized and analyzed (Heigham & Croker, 2009). The audio recordings were transcribed. For interviews conducted in Cambodian (Khmer), the

researcher manually transcribed them and subsequently translated them into English. The 'Descript' tool was utilized to transcribe English audio recordings. To ensure accuracy, the researcher cross-checked the automated transcriptions against the original recordings.

The data analysis in this study followed a thematic approach, which involved several steps: familiarizing oneself with the data, assigning initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing and refining themes, and finally defining and naming the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initially, the researcher thoroughly read the transcriptions multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. For instance, the autobiography of a participant described their challenges with language barriers, which was identified as an initial code. Through an inductive process, initial codes were created to capture the important aspects of the data that were relevant to the research questions.

The initial codes were grouped together to form potential themes. For example, codes related to "language barriers" and "academic challenges" were placed under the broader theme of "Challenges in Intercultural Adjustment." This process involved iterative review and refinement of themes until coherent and meaningful themes emerged that accurately depicted the participants' intercultural experiences.

To ensure the credibility of the thematic analysis, an inter-rater was included in the coding process. This coder independently reviewed a portion of the data and assigned thematic codes. Any differences in coding between the researcher and the second coder were addressed and resolved through agreement. This approach ensured consistent application of the coding scheme and reduced the possibility of biases stemming from a single coder.

The data analysis employed thematic analysis, which incorporated both concept-driven and data-driven coding, to analyze the interview transcripts. Concept-driven coding was guided by the interview questions, which covered participants' knowledge of others and intercultural experiences before coming to Thailand, as well as their experiences after arriving in Thailand and how they dealt with any intercultural challenges. For example, a concept-driven code could be "perceptions of others before arriving in Thailand." Following this, the data-driven coding was used to identify emergent themes within the interview transcripts. One emergent theme identified was "The Importance of Thai Language."

The data were first analyzed within each case, followed by a cross-case analysis to answer the final research question on the factors influencing the participants' intercultural citizenship. For example, a participant's within-case analysis brought

attention to their particular challenge in adapting to Thai cultural norms. On the other hand, the cross-case analysis showed shared factors, such as the significance of learning the Thai language and being able to use the language in promoting intercultural adjustment.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, various strategies (Lincoln, 1985) were employed. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation allowed the researcher to establish rapport with participants and gain a deep understanding of their experiences. The use of multiple data sources (autobiographies, interviews, and observations) through triangulation strengthened the credibility of the findings by cross-verifying information. For instance, we observed a participant in an environment surrounded by Filipino students and being accepted as one of them. This supports their claim of hanging out and spending time with the Filipinos to the point of being accepted as one of their own, despite being Cambodian. We also employed member checking, where participants reviewed and verified the accuracy of transcriptions and interpretations.

Self-reflexivity played a crucial role in this study. The researcher kept a reflective journal to record personal biases, assumptions, and reactions while analyzing the data. This approach aided in identifying and reducing the potential impact of the researcher's own position on the data interpretation. For example, acknowledging a preconceived idea about the adaptation challenges faced by Cambodian students enabled the researcher to approach the data with greater objectivity and impartiality.

Ensuring trustworthiness was crucial in qualitative research (Yilmaz, 2013). To achieve this, the data analysis process was transparent, with all themes derived from the data presented. The researcher avoided omitting any data based on personal bias, thus maintaining the integrity of the analysis. Additionally, member checking was implemented to enhance the credibility of the findings.

By following the principles of qualitative research and using rigorous methods to collect and analyze data, this study aimed to gain a thorough and reliable understanding of the intercultural citizenship experiences of Cambodian university students in Thailand. Because this is a qualitative study with a small sample size and a unique research setting, it cannot make generalizations. However, the researcher anticipates that the findings of this study could be applied to other situations involving similar participants and settings, thanks to the wealth of information collected from the study's participants.

3.4 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This research investigated the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students who were living in the northeastern region of Thailand and studying in English as a Medium of Education (EME) curriculums. The main goal was to gain insights into their intercultural journey by comprehending their experiences, challenges, and strategies in this specific setting. The objective was to enhance our understanding of the factors that contribute to the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students.

The study focused on Cambodian undergraduate and graduate students who were enrolled in a university in the northeastern region of Thailand. It aimed to examine their experiences in EME curriculums, offering valuable insights into their intercultural interactions and academic adaptation. By exploring these aspects, the study sought to develop a deeper comprehension of the concept of 'intercultural citizenship.'

It is important to acknowledge that the findings of this study were based on a sample from universities in the northeastern region of Thailand and may not be representative of Cambodian students in other regions or countries. Additionally, the focus on EME curriculums means that the findings may not be applicable to students in non-EME curriculums or those studying in their native languages. The study's sample size was limited and may not encompass the full range of experiences among Cambodian students, including those from different socioeconomic backgrounds or with varying levels of prior intercultural exposure. Furthermore, the research design, which included methods such as written autobiographies, in-depth interviews, and shadow observations, may have introduced biases or restricted the depth of understanding. It is important to acknowledge that this study provided a snapshot in time and may not capture changes in students' experiences or responses to evolving educational policies and practices.

By recognizing these limitations, this study aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of the intercultural experiences of Cambodian university students in Thailand. It also highlighted areas for future research to address these gaps and explore broader contexts.

3.5 Positionality of the Researcher

As the researcher, it was crucial to acknowledge my own positionality in conducting this study on the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students living in Thailand and studying in English as a medium of education (EME) curriculums.

This section addresses my personal background, experiences, and potential biases that may have affected the research process and findings.

I am a Cambodian graduate student currently pursuing a degree in English language studies in Thailand at the same university as participants of this study. However, there were differences in our educational paths. I completed my bachelor's degree in a Thai program at a different university and in a different province. In that program, my classmates and lecturers were all Thai students, and my environment was predominantly Thai. On the other hand, the participants in this study were primarily undergraduates, with one recently enrolled graduate student. Additionally, their majors differed from mine. Through my educational journey, I gained insights into the challenges faced by Cambodian university students studying in Thailand and how they navigated those challenges. While I could relate to the participants in terms of studying in the same country, the type of program we were in was completely different. I had no exposure to any foreign involvement apart from interacting with Thai individuals. The language used both inside and outside the classroom was entirely Thai.

The main focus of this study was to explore the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students living in Thailand, and studying in English as a medium of education (EME) curriculums. By using autobiographies, conducting in-depth interviews, and shadowing participants in their daily activities, I aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives, experiences, and the skills, knowledge, and attitudes they displayed in real-life situations and their interactions with diverse communities as they are lived and studied in Thailand.

As a researcher, I brought unique experiences and skills to this study. Before conducting this research, I actively sought opportunities to familiarize myself with the methods used, especially shadow observations and in-depth interviews. To gain first-hand experience with shadow observation, I sought advice from a researcher with practical experience in using the research method and also participated in a medical shadowing program at a hospital in Thailand, as an interpreter for medical students from the United States. This experience allowed me to observe the methods used by medical students as they shadowed medical staff in a hospital setting.

Additionally, to better understand and prepare myself to conduct in-depth interviews, I asked permission to attend a camp called "Global Entrepreneurship Camp". In this camp, participants were trained in entrepreneurship and how to conduct interviews with target customers to better understand their needs, wants, problems,

and solutions. As an interpreter and facilitator during these sessions, I had the opportunity to observe for myself how in-depth interviews were conducted in practice.

These experiences gave me insight into practical applications or research methods and increased my understanding of the complexities involved in conducting qualitative research. Based on these experiences, I approached this research with a nuanced perspective and a deeper appreciation for the complexities of data collection and analysis.

With my background as a Cambodian student studying in Thailand, I realized that my own experiences and cultural identity could influence the research process, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation. My familiarity with the educational context and language dynamics likely shaped the questions asked in the interviews and the observations made during data collection.

It was important to recognize the potential biases that may have arisen from my position as a researcher. For example, sharing the same cultural background as the participants may have fostered rapport and trust, but it could also lead to assumptions or oversights in data analysis. Additionally, my previous educational experiences in Thailand as well as my current experiences may have influenced my interpretation of the participants' narratives.

Being aware of my positionality allowed for reflexivity—the ability to reflect throughout the research process, allowing me to critically engage with the data and minimize potential bias. By transparently acknowledging my background and its implications, the results of this study can be placed in a broader context, thereby strengthening the trustworthiness of the research study's findings.

In summary, recognizing and addressing the positionality of the researcher was critical to maintaining rigor and reflection in qualitative research. By acknowledging my own background and potential biases, this study aimed to contribute to an enhanced understanding of intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students living in Thailand and studying in EME curriculums.

3.6 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the study's research methodology. The participants of this study were Cambodian university students participating in EME programs at a university in the northeastern region of Thailand. The research procedure commenced with the scheduling of meetings with the participants, followed by the determination of the interview setting and whether the participants wished to be interviewed in English or Cambodian. The data were then transcribed, translated (if in

Cambodian), and categorized based on the themes of the study. Next, the trustworthiness and consistency of this study are discussed. The chapter also discussed the trustworthiness of the study and clarified the researcher's position. Following this chapter on research methodology, the next next chapter will elaborate on the study's findings.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Chapter four presents the findings and discussion of the study, addressing three research questions: the intercultural experiences and knowledge of 'Others' prior to living in Thailand and studying in EME curriculums, the intercultural challenges faced by Cambodian university students while living and studying in the curriculums, and the factors shaping their intercultural citizenship. The chapter opens with an introduction, followed by a results section presenting findings and discussions of each case first. It then proceeds to a discussion that addresses comparisons and contrasts across each case based on the three research questions.

4.1 Research Questions 1 and 2: Prior Knowledge and Intercultural Challenges

In this section, I will explore the findings related to the first two research questions:

- 1. What knowledge of “others” and intercultural experiences did Cambodian university students have before coming to Thailand?**
- 2. What intercultural challenges did Cambodian university students in EME curriculums encounter, and how did they deal with them?**

The findings are based on data from autobiographies, in-depth interviews, and shadow observation notes of five individuals: Lita, Hiro, Ben, Ron, and Don. Each case provides insight into the participants' intercultural experiences before and after arriving in Thailand, including the challenges they faced, such as language barriers, academic expectations, and cultural differences.

Each case begins with the participant's background and prior intercultural knowledge. This is followed by an analysis of the challenges they encountered upon arrival in Thailand and their strategies for overcoming these challenges. The order of presentation-Lita, Hiro, Ben, Ron, and Don-reflects the varying degrees of intercultural competence and development observed among the participants, offering a nuanced view of their personal and academic journeys in Thailand's EME context.

By structuring the findings in this manner, this section provides both individual case insights and a foundation for cross-case analysis in later sections.

4.1.1 Case Study 1: Lita

4.1.1.1 Lita's Profile

Lita is a fourth-year Mechanical Engineering student in an international program in Thailand. Originally from Phnom Penh, Cambodia, she grew up in a multilingual environment, which helped shape her ability to navigate diverse cultural contexts. Attending Bak Touk High School, where she faced limitations in extracurricular activities but actively sought opportunities outside of school to engage with diverse communities, reflecting her drive for self-improvement and intercultural engagement.

Her intercultural journey expanded significantly when she participated in a year-long exchange program during her 12th-grade year. This experience not only enhanced her language skills but also deepened her understanding of different cultural perspectives. Upon returning to Cambodia, Lita enrolled in the Institute Technology of Cambodia (ITC) and later received a Royal Scholarship to study Mechanical Engineering in Thailand.

Lita's early interest in engineering was sparked by a fascination with machines and mechanisms, which was further nurtured through her participation in STEM events and coding classes. These experiences allowed her to engage with international participants, enriching her intercultural and technical skills. Lita is fluent in English, Japanese, and Khmer, having developed her proficiency in English through interactions with her father and participation in English-based programs. Her exposure to Japanese culture and language during the exchange program significantly enhanced her conversational skills in Japanese.

Phnom Penh, as a diverse and multilingual city, played a key role in shaping Lita's linguistic abilities and intercultural competence. Living in a multicultural environment where English is frequently used in business and education exposed her to different languages and perspectives, preparing her for the global academic and professional world. Her participation in various extracurricular activities—such as STEM volunteering, TED Talks, and university clubs – demonstrates her strong commitment to intercultural engagement and global citizenship.

Upon arriving in Thailand, Lita became actively involved in both academic and extracurricular activities, including the university's frisbee club, which fosters intercultural exchange. Her contributions extend to volunteering with the Filipino community and participating in international conferences and internships, such as representing her university at the WTUN conference. Lita's diverse experiences in

Cambodia, Japan, and Thailand have shaped her into a well-rounded individual with strong intercultural and academic skills.

Lita's profile showcases her adaptability and commitment to intercultural learning, qualities that align with Deardorff (2006) Model of Intercultural Competence, particularly in terms of openness, curiosity, and a willingness to engage with diverse communities.

4.1.1.2 Lita's Intercultural Experiences and Knowledge of 'Others'

Intercultural Experiences Before Coming to Thailand

Before arriving in Thailand, Lita gained significant intercultural experience in Cambodia and Japan, which laid the foundation for her intercultural competence. Her early exposure to foreign individuals through church activities and international schooling in Cambodia allowed her to engage with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In Japan, her year-long exchange program further broadened her understanding of cultural differences, particularly through interactions with her host family, international classmates, and Japanese peers.

Table 4.1 provides a summary of Lita's intercultural experiences before arriving in Thailand, followed by a detailed description providing more information about the summarized content.

Table 4.1 Lita's Intercultural experiences before arriving in Thailand

Social Contexts	Intercultural Experiences
Primary Education (Cambodia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enrolled in an educational program featuring an English-based curriculum and foreign teachers
Secondary Education (Cambodia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of a church community that included both foreigners and locals Facilitated cross-cultural exchanges as a volunteer
Exchange Program (Japan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lived with a Japanese host family Engaged with international students Initiated a debate club with her foreign friends Participated in intercultural programs

These experiences equipped Lita with both practical and theoretical knowledge of "Others." She developed a strong understanding of different cultures, particularly in how food, language, and social norms differ across contexts. For instance, Lita noted similarities between Cambodian and Filipino dishes, reflecting how cultural exchange occurred even in casual settings with friends from diverse backgrounds.

According to Lita, she was exposed to foreign individuals at a young age, which in this case during her primary education.

During her education in Cambodia, Lita attended an international school with an English-based curriculum. The school used English as the medium of instruction and had teachers from the United States, the Philippines, and Africa. This diverse faculty allowed Lita to improve her language skills and experience different English accents. These experiences provided her with a solid foundation in language skills and exposed her to a variety of nationalities and English accents.

Excerpt from interview

“When I was in elementary school, I went to the international school, so... they have, you know, like an English curriculum for students... I think some of them is like native speaker and some are also foreigner... 50% of them are American... a few of them are Filipinos... some of them are African.”

Lita continued her English language education by attending free classes at a church during her secondary education. The church provided a space for teenagers from various countries to learn and practice English. Classes were conducted in English, allowing for effective communication within the group. This environment enhanced her language education by facilitating interaction with individuals from different nationalities and cultures.

As she finished her primary school, Lita continued learning English by attending free classes at a church during secondary school. The church provided a space for teenagers from different countries to learn and practice English. Classes were conducted in English, allowing for better understanding and communication within the group. This environment enriched her language education by enabling her to interact with people from different nationalities and learn about their cultures at the same time.

Excerpt from autobiography

“Before Thailand, I went to church quite often and get to meet a lot of foreigners there and we even became friend.”

Excerpt from interview

“I think I think most of them are from America. And I also have a few friends from China. I also have Korean friends, a few of them... The Filipino. Also. Yeah, like a few from Thailand, a few from Vietnam... I'm not the only one because I have the other Cambodian. But in the

room... the Bible class... It's only me and the other girl, so only two Cambodians, the rest are American... The study was conducted in English. So, I mean, we need to use English, or else you don't understand the class."

Lita developed connections with individuals from different countries at the church, which became her main English language learning hub. The inclusive atmosphere fostered a sense of ease and encouragement, with shared high school experiences and similar interests as bonding elements. Conversations often centered on scientific subjects studied at school and cultural aspects of their respective countries, frequently discussed over shared meals after church gatherings.

Excerpt from Interview

"One thing that we have in common is that we are... in high school, yeah, like even the American student, and the Filipino is also in high school... in Cambodia, but in an international school. And since we are... similar age... we can relate to each other very much... The commonality, the common ground... like similar or same grades... after the church session, we always... go eat together and we always share about how thing is being done back home... And then we started to talk about, okay, how the food is made... and then we shared differences... So, I have like a Filipino friend. And the first time that they tried 'ส้มตำ'. They said that it's similar to what they had in the Philippines, which is called, Sinigang."

Lita demonstrated commitment to community service in high school by actively engaging in volunteer activities. One notable example includes her role as a volunteer at events, where she assisted a foreign guest speaker.

Excerpt from Interview

"I used to volunteer with Ignite Cambodia and also, Ted Talk... but I work solely with Cambodian people... but I think the speakers... a foreigner and I got to... assist them... Like as a facilitator."

In grade 12, Lita was awarded a MEXT scholarship exchange program to Japan, sponsored by the Japanese government. The program aimed to promote cultural awareness and mutual understanding by placing high school students from various countries in schools with Japanese and international students. By encouraging them to learn and live together, the program aimed to nurture a global citizenship perspective, as well as independence, responsibility, and leadership skills.

Excerpt from interview

“So, the program itself was initiated... By the Japanese government... MEXT. So... basically they just wanted to, you know, gather students... to study in Japan to get exposed to, you know, Japanese culture getting to know, you know, one another, like. Yeah. Like learning from, you know, each other and you know like also, having a cultural awareness... They wanted us to... basically go to school together and live together... think of ourselves other than just, you know, like Cambodian, Indian, anything like that, but as a global citizen in general... Despite, how different we are, you know, like... our background, we can still, you know, like live together in harmony... That's the aim of the program. Yeah. And also, one has to... live independently and... have the control of our lives, our perspective and as well as leadership.”

During her exchange program, she had the chance to interact with people from different nations. She was enrolled in an English-based program and studied with both local and international students. In her physical education classes, she engaged with students from Mongolia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Laos, and Thailand.

Excerpt from interview

“The U.S. India, Korea, China... Despite the American one. I also have one from Norway... Two from Switzerland. What else? Sweden... Oh, also one African. Yes, she's from Kenya... Yeah, in different class. But, you know, like, I think for a PE lesson... Yeah. Let's see, like in PE and one got to, you know, do it all together, so. Okay, we, we got to meet over there... Malaysia. Indonesia. Yeah. Laos, Thai... they also have student from Mongolia as well... because... I went to an English based program. So, I get to know, like a lot of people, you know, from different country, different culture, different nationality...”

Lita's engagement and participation extended to both the international and local communities. She initiated a debate club at her high school, recruiting Japanese and other international students from different classes and programs.

Excerpt from Interview

“I got to... initiate, like, a debate club in my school... with a group of friends... like after that... gathered people from different classes and... Yeah, like they joined us.”

Furthermore, she participated in a summer program for exchange students organized by the Japanese government. During this time, she lived with a host family and fully immersed herself in Japanese culture, aiming to gain firsthand experience and understanding.

Excerpt from interview

“So... when I was in Japan... Like I didn't only just, you know, go to school or anything like that. There's also... a summer program where I was placed in the host family... basically live in a Japanese household...”

These encounters and activities reflect a wide range of intercultural experiences prior to Lita's arrival in Thailand. Lita has engaged with individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in various social settings, both in her native country of Cambodia and abroad in Japan.

Knowledge of ‘Others’

Table 4.2 provides a summary of Lita's knowledge of ‘Others’ before arriving in Thailand, followed by a detailed description providing more information about the summarized content.

Table 4.2 Lita's Knowledge of ‘Others’ before arriving in Thailand

Timeline	Knowledge of ‘Others’
Church community in Cambodia (During high school period)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food commonalities in a diverse community (i.e., Filipino food and Cambodian food - ‘Sinigang’ and ‘ម្ហូប’)
One-Year Exchange Program in Japan (During high school period)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A deep understanding of Japanese lifestyle, education, and societal norms Appreciation and acknowledgement of cultural differences and similarities between individuals from different countries

Lita's experiences at church in Cambodia and as an exchange student in Japan contributed to her knowledge of other cultures. Her time in Japan was particularly formative, as she became familiar with Japanese societal values, such as discipline, work ethic and manners. However, she also observed the reserved nature

of Japanese communication, which posed challenges in building close relationships with Japanese classmates.

Lita's involvement in her church community in Cambodia gave her valuable insights into the cultural and gastronomic similarities and differences between her Cambodian heritage and her international acquaintances. One notable encounter happened when she connected with her Filipino friends and discovered the Filipino cuisine staple, 'Sinigang', which strongly resembled the Cambodian dish, 'ស្រូវ' (Sraov). This experience revealed the shared culinary traditions and customs of both cultures.

Lita's experience as an exchange student in Japan exposed her to intercultural learning with Japanese students and other international students. She became familiar with Japanese cultural values such as hygiene, manners, and honesty. However, she found their reserved nature surprising, which made communication challenging. She noted that the Japanese language's indirect nature and how people communicate their intentions also contributed to this reservation.

Excerpt from interview

“So, when we talk about Japan, you know, like what people see is like... a hygiene thing, you know, like behaviour, like manners and anything like that. Like honesty... And they're very well behaved... Japanese people, they you know, also they are very hardworking... they can work, like over 12 hours per day. Yeah, they have a very, very, you know, strong commitment and persistence... other than those good side... Japanese people... they don't, you know, like really open up to you... they're not very straightforward and.... I'd say that Japanese language, which is like, is like... ten times more indirect than English... And some time it took you like, like a long while to figure out what they really want. And that's the problem... for me personally... when people want something and they don't, you know, like, put it clear... when you make mistake, they wouldn't say it in your face. They would... like hide it and, yeah, basically they wouldn't, you know like confess to you, or you know like tell you what you did wrong, they will just, you know, like, you know, keep it...”

While Lita herself was not significantly affected by the challenge, it had a profound impact on another Cambodian student who was also chosen for an exchange program in Japan. This student faced difficulties in communication due to language barriers and attended a public school where they were the only non-Japanese student. As a result, this student experienced feelings of loneliness and even

suffered a mental breakdown. Witnessing these struggles underscored the importance of providing mental support, which was eventually received through the assistance of fellow exchange students and a few Japanese students residing in the same dormitory. Lita expressed gratitude for being placed in a program that allowed her to form connections with a diverse group of friends.

Excerpt from interview

"...another Cambodian friend who was placed in a public school and all she got is a Japanese friend. And yeah, as a mentioned earlier, Japanese friend did not really open up. So, she ended up... you know, very lonely. And I think she even had, you know, like a mental breakdown... I think it really got to the point where she couldn't even handle it... I was lucky enough that I was placed in, you know, like a school where I got to... I mean, I'm not very close to Japanese friends as well. I only have, like, a few Japanese friends, and I think it's because they live in the same dorm room that we get. So, you know... I have friends from America, I have friends from China, from India, you know, like the other participants from the same program that go to school with me."

In her pursuit of building relationships with other students, she found it challenging to make friends with the Japanese students. Later, a Japanese friend from her class explained that it might be due to differences in their English and her Japanese language proficiency levels.

Excerpt from interview

"Like I tried to... get to know them... I approached them first and yeah, like I talked to them and the other day they just stopped talking to me... And I was like, what is wrong with me? But it's just a few people. I mean, the other people, they are okay. Like, even if they don't speak a lot of English. I mean, when I first arrived in Japan, I don't speak a lot of Japanese as well. I think it's probably...they're very shy or maybe there's something wrong with me... But I asked some of my, you know, Japanese close friend. And they say that it's probably that... they don't speak English like zero English. And or maybe it's just that... they don't think that... I can like, you know, respond to them, maybe when they speak Japanese, they don't think that I could, you know, like, understand it..."

Another aspect she discovered during her time in Japan was the expectation of perfectionism as part of the Japanese societal norm. Lita added that their image of perfectionism has also been imposed on others, requiring them to exert maximum effort or more in order to achieve a perfect outcome. However, she viewed Japanese perfectionism as excessive. According to her experience, even if she put forth her best effort and the result was unsatisfactory, she was still blamed for not giving the task her all.

Excerpt from interview

“And one more thing is the Japanese people, they define the term perfectionists very seriously. Out of the boundaries, like, I mean, and everything they do, they expect, you know, like 100% like they expect the outcome, like very high... like they don't give up that easily and they expect you, the foreigner... to, you know, like to put like 100% or even higher than that effort in everything you do. And that's also the problem, because I think that we are a human. Sometimes we put 100%, you know, like we put our best foot forward for it. But it's, you know, sometimes thing doesn't work the way we wanted it. But I mean, you know, like when we make a mistake, when we fail, when we, you know, don't succeed in, you know, in anything or in things that we do, they would just, you know, blame us for not trying hard enough.”

When she was in Japan, she had to learn and practice the customs, especially the custom of saying a specific Japanese phrase before and after leaving the dorm where she stayed. This practice is mandatory in Japan, regardless of whether anyone is present. She was able to follow this custom without any difficulty.

Excerpt from interview

“...when you arrive in the dorm or when you leave... I think they got, you know, like, the expression like, like a specific phrase, which you have to say even if you're not living in a house, you're like living in it so on. But you have to like, say it out loud. Like, like when you arrive, you have to, like, say, okay, I'm arrive, like out loud like that. And when you leave, you have to, like, say it out loud. And I think it's not that I think it's a part of culture and it's mandatory. I think because everyone has to do it.”

However, there was one social custom that Lita could not adapt to when she was in Japan. She struggled to accept communal bathing, where nudity is

customary. She negotiated to opt out of this practice and was permitted to do as she pleased, but she sensed disappointment from others, particularly her dorm master.

Excerpt from interview

“Yeah, and also know the bathroom thing you know like everyone would just go naked... And that's what shocked me. And my dorm master, you know, like, she expect me to do the same. And I was like, No, I can't do that. And I mean, she was nice about it... it's not a part of my culture. But from what I see from her or from, you know, like my Japanese friend, they would like me to change for them... I think they did find it offensive... Like they don't show it, so you don't see it but, but I think they feel disappointed when, you know, you don't follow the rules. It's not the rule. It's just, you know, like a part of the, you know, culture. But still, I can see the disappointment.”

Another social norm she encountered in Japan was gossip, which surprised her and changed her perception of Japanese people. This was evident in one incident that occurred in her physical education class, where a girl stumbled. The rumors about this incident quickly spread throughout the school. This particular experience contradicted her previous belief that Japanese people were always respectful and polite. Nonetheless, she was careful not to generalize this behavior to all Japanese people.

Excerpt from interview

“So, there is that one thing... Japanese people gossip... I still remember... from my PE class... she's supposed to do, you know, like a shuffle run. And then she tripped up and then the whole school talked about it... for the international student wouldn't say anything to... like, reminded her about that, you know... Japanese side, they, you know, like they've been talking about it behind her back. I heard it... I was shocked because... like I mean... about Japanese people... We talk about... the behaviour... personality, the etiquette... But when they did that, I was shocked... but, um, I don't know... if it can be applied to other people as well, but it's at least this is just something that happened in my school...”

During a discussion with her Vietnamese friend, who was also part of the exchange program, she had another learning experience. They talked about food and national heroes, and at one point, a Cambodian peer became defensive. The

Vietnamese friend responded by emphasizing the importance of respecting different cultural perspectives and the actions of national figures in each country. Lita's Vietnamese friend demonstrated a resolution on how to handle such an issue while also maintaining respect and avoiding the dismissal of others' perspectives outright. This incident and her friend's response have shown her how to handle such situations and to accept and respect others.

Excerpt from interview

"We, we never, you know, actually initiated a conversation that goes to such sensitive topics. So, you know, basically you just talk about how, you know, like how Vietnamese food and how it was similar, like banh xeo, yeah, like pho or anything like that. Like, yeah, the things that we have in Cambodia and also what they got in Vietnam... And I think, the Vietnamese people... are very respectful. There was that one time when we talk about... history... I think one of my Cambodian friends... got into, you know, like that offensive mode when we talk about our hero... and then one Vietnamese friend, she was saying that sometimes you got to be respectful about that because, you know, no matter how bad a person is, their hero is their hero, our hero is our hero... Yeah, she shut it down like that."

Lita's experiences prepared her for future endeavors abroad, including coming to live and study in Thailand. Despite her diverse experiences, she still had initial concerns about historical tensions between Cambodia and Thailand, which may have led to her experiencing racism or mistreatment.

Excerpt from autobiography

"From my past experiences of joining... exchange programs, I would say that I am more open and interactive than I was in the past. I become more aware of culture differences and acknowledge it rather than being judgmental. For the most part, my experience did prepare me for living hood in Thailand. I know to make good impression with foreign or Thai people and get along well with them. I did have many concerns over racism in Thailand considering the fact we have had on-going conflicts and I was afraid that I would be left out or treated differently because I am Cambodian."

Lita's intercultural understanding was enriched through these experiences. It equipped her for her journey to Thailand and further strengthened her capacity to navigate and value diverse cultural environments.

The following section will outline Lita's intercultural challenges and coping strategies after arriving in Thailand.

4.1.1.3 Lita's Intercultural Challenges and Coping Strategies

This section offers insights into Lita's intercultural challenges and coping strategies after arriving in Thailand. Lita encountered challenges in communicating with Thai and other international students. She used strategies like Google Translate to improve her communication skills and navigate cultural confrontations, which were her initial concerns before arriving in Thailand.

Table 4.3 provides a summary of Lita's intercultural challenges and coping strategies after arriving in Thailand, followed by a detailed description providing more information about the summarized content.

Table 4.3 Lita's Intercultural challenges and coping strategies after arriving in Thailand

Intercultural Challenges	Coping Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Barrier – Miscommunication leading to misunderstanding with Thai peers • Differences in behavior between Thai and Cambodian classmates, potentially creating barriers to collaboration and support within the class. • Discussion on sensitive topics: Historical conflicts between two neighboring countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aiding communication through Google translate or identifying keywords during conversations • Learning the language of the host country and switching between Thai and English, ensuring everyone's full expression and understanding • Handling discussions of sensitive topics with respect and politeness • Avoiding confrontation or arguments when discussing sensitive topics

Lita participated in an international program where she studied with professors from Thailand and other countries. She also had classmates from Laos, the Philippines, and Thailand. One difficulty she encountered was the cultural differences in behavior between herself and her Thai classmates. Lita observed that the Thai students were less inclined to reach out to absent classmates or share study materials for exams, which made it more challenging for her to collaborate with them. This behavior hindered her efforts to establish interpersonal connections within this community.

Excerpt from interview

“in a class... we have the Cambodians... the Filipinos... We also have a Lao student... in my class and it's just seven of us. So, if someone, you know, like, I mean, for us, the Cambodian people, if we see that someone is missing, we'll... like text them or message them a little bit. Oh, class starting, where are you, are you coming or anything like... but for Thai people, they wouldn't do that. They would just leave it there. They wouldn't bother to, like, give you a text... The other thing is that... for my classmate, they're not willing to share... if they got, you know, like a very good book... and it's contained like, you know, like a bunch of exercise that would be on the final exam that would just keep it for themselves ...”

Lita faced challenges communicating in English with Thai students due to language barriers. Some Thai students struggled to express themselves in English. Efforts were made to overcome these obstacles by using resources like Google Translate and actively understanding each other by focusing on keywords during conversations. However, miscommunication still occurred at times, leading to misunderstandings.

Excerpt from autobiography

“... there are also challenges that I encountered during my stay here. Language has always been a barrier for me and my Thai friends in communication. They find it comfortable speaking and preferred to be spoken to, in Thai... they don't speak in the English at all or, you know, like when you speak, they don't even understand what you're saying... like most of the time we use Google Translate or of the, you know, like come up with the key words that we know that can describe... I remember... I asked... about like where or when the classes... And then... she gave me a wrong information... And then... I went to the wrong class on the wrong day. The class was actually two days ago. I think when it comes to a basic conversation, we would do it in Thai...so that they can, you know, like express themselves to the fullest... Like at some point we compromise... And when we get enough of English, let's go to Thai, and when we got stuck, and then to English, and then to Thai again.”

Lita faced challenges while interacting with Thai students. She skillfully overcame the language barrier by switching between Thai and English, facilitating her daily interactions. She also encountered a situation that highlighted a lack of intercultural sensitivity when discussing sensitive historical subjects in Thailand with one of her professors. In response, she decided to gracefully end any conversation that brought up such topics. She aimed to prevent conflicts by emphasizing sensitivity, ensuring accurate historical understanding, and fostering mutual respect in discussions.

Excerpt from interview

"...So before coming to Thailand... I was scared that people would, you know, like talk about history... and that really happened...in a class we have we have the Cambodians and then we have the Filipinos... We also have a Lao student... he started to, you know, like to talk about, you know, like what you have back home... tries to know more about us. I think we started from the king... like, he was asking who was the current king or anything like that... get to like that Angkor Wat things... he was asking what and what, and then we started to deep down... he insists on saying that it's this. So, he was saying that, you know, like he was saying that it's his ancestor who build Angkor Wat... the ruins, the things, it's left on our land... the whole territory belongs to Thailand. Yeah, it's Thai ancestors who you know, initiate the whole thing and, you know, it's like I get offended and I was like, okay, let's go grab lunch."

The following section will discuss Lita's intercultural experiences and knowledge of 'Others' before arriving in Thailand, and her intercultural challenges and coping strategies after arriving in Thailand, to help identify the factors that shape her intercultural citizenship within in the Thai context.

4.1.1.4 Lita's Intercultural Citizenship

This section examines Lita's growth as an intercultural citizen, employing an analytical framework that combines by Wagner and Byram (2017) with several influential theories of intercultural communication. These include the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) by Bennett (1993), the Cultural Dimensions by Hofstede (1984), the Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory by Kim (2001), the Contact Hypothesis by Allport et al. (1954), and Intercultural Pragmatics by Kecskes (2014). This analysis is anchored in empirical data drawn from Lita's autobiographies, interviews, and periods of observational shadowing, providing a holistic view of her intercultural citizenship.

Lita's formative educational experiences in Cambodia, where she was exposed to diverse teaching styles and accents, enhanced her adaptability and communication skills. Using Bennett's DMIS, it appears began at the 'minimization' stage, where she acknowledged basic cultural differences but focused more on universal similarities. As she participated in intercultural engagements, such as facilitating a foreign speaker for a TED Talk, she advanced to the 'adaptation' stage, adeptly shifting perspectives and adopting appropriate behaviors across cultures (Bennett, 1993).

In Japan, where Lita studied on a MEXT scholarship, she encountered the challenges posed by the cultural dimensions of Individualism versus Collectivism and Uncertainty Avoidance (Hofstede, 1984). Her strategies for adaptation in this group-oriented, high-context culture underscore her ability to navigate cultural complexities distinct from her own background.

Kim's theory, highlighting the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic, sheds light on Lita's transformative experiences in Japan and later in Thailand. Her resilience, in overcoming initial cultural and linguistic barriers and transitioning from isolation to active participation in her communities, illustrates her growth in intercultural sensitivity and competence (Kim, 2001).

Lita's interactions in diverse educational settings align with Allport's Contact Hypothesis, suggesting that her positive engagements with international educators and peers diminished prejudices and enhanced her social integration. These interactions were instrumental in developing her practical skills in intercultural communication, fostering deeper cross-cultural connections (Allport et al., 1954).

Furthermore, Lita's effective negotiation of communicative styles and norms in multicultural group projects and extracurricular activities showcases her adeptness in intercultural pragmatics. Her ability to mediate and lead in these settings demonstrates vital components of intercultural communication competence (Kecskes, 2014).

This integrated theoretical approach reveals the iterative nature of Lita's development as an intercultural citizen. It highlights the significance of early exposure, proactive engagement, and the continuous development of a broad-minded approach through the acquisition and application of intercultural skills and knowledge. Ultimately, Lita's journey not only illuminates her personal growth but also offers valuable insights into fostering intercultural understanding and competence in educational environments.

4.1.2 Case Study 2: Hiro

4.1.2.1 Hiro's Profile

Hiro is a male undergraduate student in his third year at Suranaree University of Technology in Thailand. He is majoring in Innovative Agripreneur in an international program. Hiro was born and raised in Kampong Speu Province, Cambodia, a region known for its agricultural productivity and cultural diversity. Kampong Speu is predominantly Khmer-speaking, but it also has linguistic diversity due to its proximity to Phnom Penh and its role as a trade and travel hub. This environment exposed Hiro to various languages, including Khmer, English, and some French, which are commonly used in business and education.

During his early education, Hiro attended public schools such as Angkor Meas Primary School, Sovankiri Secondary School, and Sok Ann Tramknar High School in neighboring Takeo Province. Takeo Province, like Kampong Speu, has a blend of linguistic influences due to its historical connections with both Vietnamese and Khmer populations. The province also emphasizes learning foreign languages, which is a growing trend in Cambodian secondary education.

Hiro developed a passion for math and science during his senior year of high school, which inspired him to pursue a Bachelor's degree in the medical field. With the support of his family and his deep fascination with Korean culture, he applied and was accepted into the nursing science program at Jeju National University in South Korea. However, his studies were interrupted by a serious health condition called Supraventricular Tachycardia (SVT), which required him to return to Cambodia for treatment and recovery. This challenging experience also led to a period of depression that greatly affected his educational path.

After his recovery, Hiro started working as a nursing assistant at the Royal Phnom Penh Hospital in Cambodia. Reflecting on his short education in Korea, he realized the importance of the fundamental medical knowledge he acquired. He attributed his time in Korea to developing resilience and adaptability, traits that proved invaluable in overcoming future obstacles.

Hiro moved to Thailand due to health concerns and a desire for a culturally comfortable environment. He was drawn to Thailand's reputation for innovation, research opportunities, and cultural diversity. Hiro believed that Thai culture provided greater personal freedom compared to Cambodian society. He also saw Suranaree University of Technology as a promising educational institution.

Hiro's proficiency in multiple languages, including English, Korean, Thai, French, and Khmer, demonstrates his dedication to learning languages and

exploring different cultures. Growing up in Kampong Speu, where English is increasingly used in schools and businesses, provided Hiro with early exposure to the language. His studies in South Korea further enhanced his linguistic skills, particularly in Korean, and his subsequent move to Thailand has allowed him to become proficient in Thai.

During his time in South Korea, he gained a deeper understanding of culture, education, and interpersonal interactions. He formed meaningful connections with colleagues and actively participated in cultural exchange events. These experiences shaped his approach to learning and adapting to new environments, making him more comfortable in diverse, multicultural settings.

Since arriving in Thailand two years ago, Hiro has been actively exploring the country, visiting different locations such as Bangkok, Samut Prakan, Rayong, and Khon Kaen. He has been particularly impressed by the locals' friendliness, whether it's at the university canteen or restaurants outside the campus.

In Hiro's international classroom, he is taught by lecturers from various countries, including Thailand, Sweden, the UK, the US, Switzerland, and France. His classmates come from Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, Myanmar, and Thailand, creating a diverse educational environment. This is Hiro's second experience with such diversity, as he previously studied in South Korea.

Hiro is not only focused on academics but also deeply involved in extracurricular activities both within and outside the university. He actively participates in programs, events, and activities that involve the international community and local students. Some notable events he has taken part in include the 'Hackathon,' 'Global Entrepreneurship Camp,' and 'Start-up Projects.' Additionally, he volunteers with the Student Entrepreneurship Development Academy (SEDA), where he contributes to event setups and takes on various responsibilities, earning a part-time fee for his efforts. Hiro's involvement extends beyond the university as well. Recently, he participated in the OR Seeding Future ASEAN Camp, where he had the opportunity to interact with individuals from various countries. He also engaged in an online U.S.-Japan conference.

4.1.2.2 Hiro's Intercultural Experiences and Knowledge of 'Others'

This section delves into Hiro's intercultural experiences and his knowledge of 'Others' prior to his arrival in Thailand. Hiro's journey began during his high school years, where he had the opportunity to interact with international visitors and tourists. His experiences were further enriched when he took part in an exchange program in Thailand. Furthermore, Hiro's cultural knowledge expanded when he made the decision to pursue a bachelor's degree in nursing science in South Korea. This

opportunity provided him with invaluable insights into Korean culture as well as the global community as a whole.

Intercultural Experiences Before Coming to Thailand

Table 4.4 provides an overview of Hiro's intercultural experiences before he arrived in Thailand. Afterward, a detailed examination of these experiences is conducted. This is achieved by using a combination of autobiographical narratives, interviews, and observational data to present a comprehensive depiction of Hiro's intercultural journey.

Table 4.4 Hiro's Intercultural experiences before arriving in Thailand

Social Context	Intercultural Experience
During High School Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learned Thai from Thai friends during an exchange program in Thailand • Interacted with Japanese volunteers from JICA • Engaged with foreign tourists at a local tourist site
In South Korea (Pursuing Nursing Science for two years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolled in an international program in nursing science in South Korea • Developed friendships with Korean peers, helping to navigate cultural norms and language barriers • Participated in Chuseok, a Korean new year's event, at a Korean household • Experienced biased behaviour in Korea • Participated in Culture Exchange event with individuals from various countries

Hiro's intercultural journey began long before he came to Thailand. His interactions with international visitors in his home country and his experience of studying abroad greatly shaped his worldview. Even in high school, Hiro actively sought opportunities to engage with diverse cultures, both inside and outside the classroom.

Hiro's first significant intercultural interactions occurred in high school when he interacted with Japanese visitors from the NGO–JICA. During this experience, Hiro acted as a mediator between his friends and the visitors. It greatly boosted his confidence in using English and engaging with people from different cultures. This early exposure laid the foundation for his adaptability and enthusiasm in connecting with individuals from diverse backgrounds, which has been a recurring theme in his intercultural journey.

Excerpt from autobiography

“Talking about my previous experience with people from other countries seems to be the common thing for me. I made many friends around the world, and joined some activities with international students made me interact with them so easily. Before coming to

Thailand, I also had experienced contact with diverse backgrounds people, since I was in high school.”

Excerpt from interview

“This is my first time that I communication in English with them... My classmate go like, wow... you speak English. Then they... bring the bag to my friend... And then at the time, also be like the representative... say thank you... to Japanese people that come to visit our... high school or something like that and really so honoured. That's why I more confident to talk.”

This experience not only increased his confidence in his language skills but also sparked a greater interest in intercultural communication. Hiro's later encounter with an Australian couple during his visit to Angkor Wat further showcases his growing ease in intercultural interactions. Despite initially feeling unsure, Hiro's enthusiasm to participate in this situation demonstrates his developing intercultural skills and curiosity.

Excerpt from interview

“And also like I have one... experience... in high school... I go to visit Angkor Wat and my friend really want to take a photo with a white guy, and they cannot speak English... I... go say hello, you so handsome, can I take a photo with you... He's from... Australia. They just laughing... And then they... like how old are you or something like that. Like where you from and I and like how long do you learn English? They keep impressed that. Oh... You can speak English. Wow.”

Hiro's participation in an exchange program in Thailand was a significant milestone in his intercultural journey. Through immersing himself in Thai culture, he not only acquired the language but also wholeheartedly embraced the local customs. This enabled him to gain invaluable insights into the process of cultural exchange. Ultimately, this experience greatly broadened his understanding of Thai culture and further deepened his curiosity for future intercultural exploration.

Excerpt from interview

“So, I starting interesting to learn Thai when I go to meet with my Thai friend. I think like, when I exchange program in 2017, when I was in high school. Because when I travel to Nakhon Si Thammarat at Walailak university.”

After graduating from high school, Hiro made the decision to pursue a bachelor's degree in nursing science in South Korea. He was motivated by his family's expectations and his growing interest in cross-cultural experiences. Sadly, Hiro had to shorten his time in South Korea due to health issues. Nevertheless, the two years he spent there left a lasting impression on him. Throughout his stay, he faced numerous challenges, such as adapting to unfamiliar cultural norms and overcoming language barriers. However, these experiences also provided Hiro with significant personal development opportunities.

Hiro's enrollment in an international nursing science program not only gave him the opportunity to meet peers from diverse backgrounds but also allowed him to delve into the intricacies of Korean culture. The friendships he formed with Korean students played a crucial role in his cultural adaptation, providing support in various aspects of daily life, such as ordering food and understanding social norms.

Excerpt from interview

"At first, it is very difficult... But after that, like, I also have Korean friend and they... introduce me... how to dress, how to prepare myself to like, go with Korean society... it's gonna be difficult, especially for people cannot speak Korean because like most of people in Korea, they don't speak English well... like I go to buy something like food is very difficult to communication with them... But some time I go, I hang out with my Korean friends, so it may be not difficult for me... And also, like take care us, also even though like we have a flu they always take care with like medicine. Also, they buy a supplement for us. They're really sweet, if we are friend. But for the people that we never know, they act like never know us."

Hiro's experience during Chuseok, the Korean New Year, serves as evidence of the strong connections he developed with his Korean friends. Being invited to celebrate Chuseok with a friend's family demonstrated that he had been fully embraced by a tightly-knit social group, highlighting the close relationships he cultivated in South Korea.

Excerpt from interview

"...when Korean people are starting to see you as a friend, that's a real friend. They keep us like a family. They invite me to her home to see her mom, and her mom cook a lot of food. And then we have fun... I feel like I'm a part of her family ..."

Despite having positive experiences, Hiro also faced challenges due to biased attitudes towards foreign students. He noticed a distinct contrast in the way Koreans treated European students compared to those from Southeast Asia. These instances of bias and exclusion had a significant impact on Hiro's intercultural journey, highlighting the complex nature of intercultural interactions and underscoring the importance of resilience and adaptability.

Excerpt from interview

"...it's not like most of Korean going to like greeting with Asian people... But if you compare with a white guy from Europe... one guy that from Ukraine and then he has a blonde hair and his skin is white, and then he has a lot of friends... Korean people always like go together with him... But for people from Thailand, Lao, Myanmar, or Philippines... Like they're not... very friendly to us. I'm not going to judge all Korean people... for people they really like open mind... my best friend, she really love Cambodia and Thai... And for making Korean friend... you must to act yourself more cool and smart all the time if you want to get more friend."

Despite the challenges he faced, Hiro's ability to navigate difficult situations and connect with both Korean and international peers showcases his increasing intercultural competence and resilience. Additionally, his participation in a cultural exchange event, where he proudly represented Cambodia, not only expanded his horizons but also enhanced his appreciation for global diversity.

Excerpt from interview

"...I used to be volunteer at the first time when I study in Korea, like it's called culture exchange. it has a lot of international student from other countries... and also have the country that I never heard before, for Ethiopia... Bhutan... And I learned more about the culture, the language... ...making new friends from a different country, it's can be a new knowledge for me. I can like understand what language they speak, what currency do that they use, and what like what's kind of country look like for example like food, the lifestyle..."

In summary, Hiro had a mix of positive and challenging intercultural experiences before coming to Thailand. From his interactions in high school to his university life in South Korea, Hiro demonstrated improvement in navigating these experiences and eventually became more interculturally competent.

Knowledge of ‘Others’

In this section, we will explore Hiro's knowledge and perceptions of various countries and cultures before he arrived in Thailand. These factors played a crucial role in influencing his decision to study in Thailand. Hiro's understanding was shaped by his experiences in Cambodia and South Korea, as well as by research and personal connections.

Table 4.5 Hiro's Knowledge of ‘Others’ before arriving in Thailand

Timeline	Knowledge of ‘Others’
In Cambodia (During high school period, and exchange program in Thailand)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thailand is a major agricultural exporter with strong commitment to R&D in the agricultural sector ● Thai culture: More freedom and self-expression than Cambodia ● Thai society: Less importance on appearances than Korea ● Thai cuisine: Delicious and spicy flavors ● Nakhon Si Thammarat, a province near Malaysia, featured a diverse environment, similar to Kampot in Cambodia. ● The locals at Nakhon Si Thammarat are Muslim and speaks Malayu alongside Thai. ● The tradition in Nakhon Si Thammarat is different from Cambodia, like traditional dances ● Locals at Nakhon Si Thammarat doesn't consume pork
In South Korea (Pursued nursing science for two years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● South Korean food ranks third in spiciness, following Chinese at first and Thai at second ● The seasons and festivals in South Korea, along with associated activities. ● Korean nightlife compared to Cambodia. ● Limited English proficiency among Koreans ● Korean teenagers favour fashion, makeup, and social media over books or history ● Friendliness of Korean locals ● In Bhutan, no meat or alcohol consumed ● In Brunei, no alcohol sold or consumed. ● In Lithuania, people speak Russian and French.
In Cambodia (After coming from Korea)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social media portrayal: India depicted as dirty and chaotic ● Friend's perspectives: Delhi described as a large city with wealthy individuals, offering higher allowances for studying there

This section provides a detailed narrative that expands on the summarized content presented in Table 4.5. Its purpose is to offer a more comprehensive insight into Hiro's perceptions and experiences.

Hiro's interest was sparked by Thailand's focus on innovation, research, cultural appeal, lifestyle, and the thriving agricultural sector. Through extensive research and his experience as an exchange student, Hiro gained an understanding of Thailand that included the country's commitment to agricultural

research and development, the freedom and self-expression offered by Thai culture, and the relatively lower importance placed on appearances compared to Korea. Hiro was particularly intrigued by the captivating aspects of Nakhon Si Thammarat, such as its diverse environment with a Muslim community and traditional dances.

Excerpt from autobiography

“Thailand is a major agricultural exporter, and it has a strong commitment to research and development in the agricultural sector... I am also drawn to Thailand’s culture and natural beauty. I am excited to learn more about Thai culture and to experience the Thai way of life.”

While conducting research on Thailand and as an exchange student, Hiro discovered that Thai culture offers individuals more freedom and opportunities for self-expression, in comparison to Cambodia. Furthermore, in Thai society, less emphasis is placed on appearances when compared to Korea. In addition, Thailand's cuisine, famous for its delicious and spicy flavors, is a significant attraction for many. Hiro acquired this knowledge through personal experience as an exchange student in Thailand and by befriending fellow students studying there.

Excerpt from interview

“I think like Thai culture and Cambodian culture is kind of similar... But I think like in Thai we can live freely. For example... we can do whatever we want... it's not quite difficult to show who I am, or who you are, who you like, who you love, who you want to be or something like this... Like we can wear anything. For example, like, when in Korea, you cannot wear the short go to eat... People are going to say like you are homeless... but in Thailand, when they get up, most of them, they just, like, wear the pajamas or something... So, we can wear, we can do whatever that make us happy and comfort. And I found out also like the food in Thailand, it also like delicious... it's not really similar with Cambodian food but it kind of like it can like surprise me with the taste and as myself I love spicy food also.”

As an exchange student, Hiro participated in a program located in the province of Nakhon Si Thammarat. This new environment was vastly different from his home country of Cambodia. Despite the variations in cuisine, surroundings, and Muslim communities, Hiro noticed some similarities to his hometown of Kampot, particularly in the coastal scenery. He also observed that the majority of the program

participants from the area wore hijabs and conversed in Malayu and Thai. Hiro found the fusion of Thai and Malay influences fascinating, particularly the traditional dances, which differed significantly from those in Cambodia. This immersion in a blend of cultures was a unique experience, distinct from central Thailand, which shares more similarities with Cambodia.

Excerpt from interview

"...when I come in Thailand for my first time... The area is close to the Malaysia. So, most of food or something is kind of like... that I never see before. And the culture, the environment, the food is kind of not similar in Cambodia, but for if you travel to Kampot, you can get that vibe. It's similar vibe. The sea, the coconut tree or something like that. Yeah. And the people over there, they also be a Muslim... most of them for example like the participant who join the same camp as me, like ten people of Thailand like eight of them are Muslim. They wearing hijab. And they also like speak the another language, not only Thai that they call it Malayu... the traditional is not similar with Cambodia. Maybe 80% different... the traditional dancing is not really similar with our culture."

Aside from the intriguing aspects of the province, there were certain observations that initially led him to make generalizations about Thailand as a whole. For instance, he was surprised to discover that pork was not commonly consumed in that area, and mistakenly assumed this to be true for the entire country. However, his time as an exchange student in Thailand brought about a blend of new experiences, perspectives, and misconceptions.

Excerpt from interview

"It can be like a new environment for me as well. And for the negative part when like when I started arrive there... they don't eat pork... like they don't have mookata at that area. And every food doesn't have pork, I think like I starting to judge that the whole country in Thailand, they don't eat pork. This is my first thing that I thought."

After receiving a scholarship to study nursing science in South Korea, he embarked on a two-year journey to immerse himself in Korean culture, society, and lifestyle. When reflecting on his experience in South Korea, he first mentioned his discovery of Korean cuisine, which he found to be the third spiciest cuisine in the world, after Thai and Chinese. Despite this, he developed a deep appreciation for

Korean food. Additionally, he observed that even eating out for something as basic as instant noodles was costly in Korea.

Excerpt from interview

"...most people always consider Korean food is very spicy... By watching the K-drama, the advertising, but actually not. If you compare with Thai or Chinese, I think Korean is number three, Chinese top one and Thai is top two... I really love like the pork grill that you already saw it in that movie or in K-drama that most of Korean people eat it, it is very delicious. Another one I really love is called Bulgogi. And also, the price of food in Korea is very expensive... Kimchi also very expensive. It cost around two US dollar in the convenience store. You think noodle is the best option when we're broke... But you cannot say that in Korea... the noodle in Korea is very expensive."

Regarding the weather, Hiro mentioned that the winter season in Korea is extremely cold. However, surprisingly, it doesn't snow. During his stay, there was a weather incident where the temperatures dropped so low that the toilets froze. Heaters were then required to thaw the ice. On the other hand, summers were lively. Locals would head to the beaches and enjoy traditional noodle dishes served with ice. Watermelon juice was particularly favored as a refreshment, especially in cities like Busan and Jeju, where Hiro studied.

Excerpt from interview

"But when you stay in Korea, it's super cold... like the temperatures at when I studied like -16. Yeah, but it doesn't have snow. The water in the toilet. Freeze... In every dormitory room also have the heater. So, you must to put the heater to melt the water. And at the summer, I think the summer is very good like most of Korean people really love enjoy with summer. They always spending time go to the beach, swimming in the ocean, having the... traditional dish that noodle that put the ice in... also like the watermelon juice. Yeah, it's very popular at Busan and Jeju."

Hiro explained that during spring, Korea is adorned with beautiful flowers and wild strawberries that grow near universities. These attractions often allure locals who enjoy hiking. The vibrant atmosphere can be felt throughout the year, with seasonal festivals such as cherry blossom festivals in spring and winter festivals featuring Christmas decorations. During these times, the city bustles with people going

about their daily activities. Hiro also contrasted this lively scene with Cambodia, where evenings are generally quiet after 8 PM, and people tend to stay indoors after work. This creates a different vibe compared to the bustling streets of Korea.

Excerpt from interview

"...the spring season in Korea is very beautiful. You don't have to go outside far away to the tourism place just around the university. It has a lot of flower. Also have the strawberry also. And they really enjoy hiking at spring... when I'm staying in Korea and every season also have that specific occasion for spring, they have spring festival, for winter they have winter festival, like to decorate as like Christmas... And especially in spring, they call it like cherry blossom... and it's very beautiful. And most of people, they go to take a photo and take a dog for a walk, picnic. It's like the city like, have the life is like people enjoy like go to work, come back to work, take a dog for work, take a photo, play some music, they dance on the street. And if I compare with my country, I feel like my country is sleeping. I feel like most of Korean people, every morning after they finish work, they always go to eat outside... take a photo, take a walk, play, walk around and sit at the park... in Cambodia, where I stay like after come back, it's kind of like around 8. My mom calls me go back home and street so silent."

Drawing from his personal experiences in South Korea, Hiro emphasizes the impressive English language proficiency of the local population. While Hiro encountered difficulties when trying to connect with the broader community beyond the university, he was fortunate to receive invaluable support from his Korean friends. This support was particularly evident among the younger generation, who showed a higher level of fluency in English. Additionally, Hiro's interactions with his Korean friends shed light on the priorities of certain Korean teenagers, who seem to place more importance on fashion, makeup, and social media rather than academic pursuits like literature or history.

Excerpt from interview

"But for like a new generation, like the teenager, the same age as me, they can speak English. Because like, mostly they cannot speak English well. And... in general knowledge, like they don't know as well. They just know about the brand name, the makeup, how to be good. Something like Instagram or something like that. But for the history, like the novel, the book or something they really don't know."

Drawing on his experiences and deep understanding of Korea, its people, and their culture, Hiro emphasizes the numerous advantages of living in Korea. He particularly highlights the convenience of daily life and the remarkable kindness shown by many Koreans, including the majority of non-academic staff on campus.

Excerpt from interview

“They also have positive in living in Korea because like everything is very convenient. For example, dormitory... And most of Korean people... are very sweet. If you are the best friend with them... For example, like, when we really stressed out and we get some people to ask you, are you okay? Let's go have lunch together or something... even though I have a bad day but I also meet a good person to make the bad day turn into a good day for me... like most of the seller, in the canteen, they always like say thank you and say like welcome. They use a sweet word also... most of them.”

One of his experiences involved engaging with a diverse community during a volunteer event called the 'Culture Exchange.' This experience expanded his knowledge of different countries, their cultures, and customs, including countries he had previously heard of and others that were completely new to him. This newfound knowledge enhances his ability to engage in discussions with sensitivity and awareness, enabling respectful communication with people from both familiar and unfamiliar cultures.

Excerpt from interview

“Lithuania... They speak Russian, and also French ...people in Bhutan, they said like they don't eat meat and you cannot drink alcohol in Bhutan... also people from Brunei and I think Brunei is like it's not too far... so Brunei you cannot drink alcohol and doesn't have any alcohol in Brunei. So, when I see people... I can understand more when... I meet the same person from the same country that I used to meet before... I can, like well-prepared before I talk... like, oh, the country, they, they don't drink alcohol. So, don't talking about alcohol with them. It can be easy to make friends if we can like prepare before we talk.

After two years, Hiro returned to Cambodia for health reasons. After recovering, he found work as a nurse assistant at the Royal Phnom Penh Hospital, recommended by a relative. He also researched scholarship opportunities in New

Zealand, India, and Thailand. While interested in India and New Zealand, he prioritized Thailand due to proximity and health concerns. Despite the appeal of India, Hiro decided not to pursue it because of his health and his mother's worries. His knowledge of geographical proximity and cultural closeness influenced his decision to study in Thailand.

Excerpt from interview

"...I would like to explore like India... because I watch a lot of video that is like India is very dirty and like the India society is going to be like so chaotic... But I also have the same people that apply with me. And he goes... stay in a big city like Delhi City... The rich of India people, they are very, very, super rich. They said and also got a higher allowance. So they got around like \$450 per month... But I'm not decide to go because I think like I also talk with my mom... She doesn't want me to study outside from Cambodia because like she really scared at what happened to me. So that's why... like Thailand, it has the same atmosphere like Cambodia – like environment, culture, food, people... it's not too different."

The following section will outline Hiro's intercultural challenges and coping strategies after arriving in Thailand.

4.1.2.3 Hiro's Intercultural Challenges and Coping Strategies

Following Hiro's intercultural experiences and knowledge of 'Others' before arriving in Thailand, the next section provides insights into his intercultural challenges and coping strategies after his arrival. In Thailand, Hiro faced various challenges, including the language barrier, difficulty understanding different accents, and cultural differences. He also had to navigate diverse communities. To overcome these challenges, Hiro drew on his past experiences and adapted them to his new environment. However, despite being prepared and open to engaging with other communities within the Thai context regarding cultural differences, there was an unintentional incident related to the use of the Thai language that should be noted.

Table 4.6 provides a summary of Hiro's intercultural challenges and coping strategies after arriving in Thailand, followed by a detailed description providing more information about the summarized content.

Table 4.6 Hiro's Intercultural challenges and coping strategies after arriving in Thailand

Intercultural Challenges	Coping Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Language barrier – Thai peers struggling to understand his English ● Understanding English accents of other communities i.e., South African and Filipino ● Approaching an introverted friend ● Thai students tend to be quiet ● Cultural difference i.e., unaware of the language usage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Speaking English with a Thai accent ● Mixing English and Thai together to aid in communication ● Make friends with a local ● Learn Thai language through communicating with Thai friends ● Be exposed to different accents ● Acknowledge the mistake and apologize

Hiro has been in Thailand for two years now, pursuing his bachelor's degree after switching from his previous program in Korea due to health reasons. Studying and living in Thailand, he found language to be one of his biggest challenges, and this challenge is still being addressed.

Excerpt from autobiography

"I am still learning Thai, and sometimes it can be difficult to communicate with people who do not speak English. This can be especially challenging in group activities, where everyone is trying to speak at the same time."

Expanding on that challenge, Hiro shared his experiences of communicating in English with his Thai friends. He noted that some of his classmates had difficulty understanding his accent, which is different from the Thai accent, especially during study sessions or group work. In order to promote better understanding, he adapted by using Thai-accented English and occasionally mixing English with Thai to explain concepts.

Excerpt from interview

"I found out some of my classmates... when I speak in the language that different accent than Thai... for example, like, I just talk in a normal way... they don't understand. I must to be adaptive. For example, like change the word from education, to education [with Thai accent] or something like that. And sometimes I mix with English and Thai together to explain them..."

Recognizing the importance and benefits it offers, he suggested that the most effective way to improve his Thai language skills was by befriending locals,

just like he did in Korea, but now in Thailand. This approach would not only enhance his abilities but also increase his confidence in interacting with others.

Excerpt from interview

"...if we can communicate in Thai, it very easy... most all my classmate they speak Thai, so that's why I start to communicate Thai with them... because most of Thai People like elder, they cannot speak English well... So, if you can speak Thai with them... going to be like make a joy when we go to visit the place. At the time, I go to like the repair store with another Cambodian student. So, she cannot speak Thai, I speak Thai with them and communication and then I translate for her... And then after we finished it... His wife come out and bring the banana for me..."

Understanding its significance and the convenience it brings, he mentioned that the best approach to improve his Thai was to befriend locals, similar to his strategy in Korea, but now applied in Thailand. This would not only enhance his language skills but also boost confidence in engaging with others.

Excerpt from autobiography

"The best way to make me more confident and never fear talking with foreigners is to make friends with other countries and cultures ...the first thing that I needed to do was make friends with a local ...learning some basic Thai phrases..."

On the other hand, he encountered another challenge distinct from the language barrier and more difficult to overcome. It involved connecting with an introverted classmate from Vietnam. Unlike language barriers, this challenge was more about social dynamics. Hiro speculated that the academic backgrounds between him and his Vietnamese classmate were different, and age might have made socializing seem unappealing to the Vietnamese classmate. Nonetheless, this experience didn't discourage Hiro from engaging with others.

Excerpt from interview

"...like when we finish the class, we going to have like meal together... But he didn't go with us... we try to invite him, but I feel like they are not the same age with us. So that's why we don't know how to convince him to play around with us. He's from Vietnam... only one person... already holding the bachelor's degree from Mahidol. That's

why the way that we play, he feels so annoying. He feels so, like, not interested.”

Once again, social dynamics became an issue. In the general education courses he attended, he had the opportunity to interact with students from both international and Thai programs, as well as peers from his own year and university students from diverse majors, programs, nationalities, and academic years. This expanded his network but also posed a challenge due to the reserved nature of Thai students in class. While some international students were outgoing and participatory, Thai students tended to be quieter, making it difficult for him to establish further relationships with them.

Excerpt from interview

“General education course is kind of like the course requested by the university to complete it before you graduated... not your main course. Like my main course study about food and business... like law in daily lives, ASEAN study, global citizen or something like that is called generation education. So, when we enroll... we going to meet a lot of people... from a different major... And different years and different programs... if the Thai people can understand, if they want to improve English, Ajarn also allow them to enroll with international program as well... but most of them is kind of quiet. They don't speak too much. It's not like from international program, like from Myanmar, Filipino, Cambodia... They making joke... But for Thai people is like they still quiet.”

Hiro was involved in various events both on and off campus. Some were organized by his university, while others were outside the campus. Through these experiences, he became familiar with different English accents, including those from South Africa and the Philippines. Although it was challenging initially, Hiro adapted over time and now comprehends these accents well. This experience not only improved his English skills but also broadened his understanding of linguistic diversity.

Excerpt from interview

“For example, for people from South Africa – they joined the camp with the SEDA. So, the accent is going to be difficult to listen as well, but I can adapt... And for people from Philippines also... when I join another camp in the Bangkok with the people from the university that doesn't have Philippine, they always come to whisper me like do you

understand what they say? And I say, like, yeah... because my classmate also like have the Philippines. So, I think I can adapt it, I can understand it well.”

Despite his exposure, experiences, and understanding of other cultures and sensitive topics when communicating, there was one surprising incident. Hiro made a comment intended to be amusing but inadvertently offended someone. Despite his knowledge and experience in speaking English mindfully, this incident occurred while he was using the Thai language to communicate with a university student from Thailand. It highlighted the cultural differences in language sensitivities.

Excerpt from autobiography

“People from different cultures have different ways of thinking and behaving, and this can sometimes lead to misunderstandings... For example, I once made a joke that was funny to me but offensive to someone from another culture.”

Hiro recounted an incident where he unintentionally offended a Thai student by saying something in Thai during a visit to a smart farm. It was clear that Hiro had said something without fully understanding the impact of his words. Despite intending to be careful with his language and actions, he made an error. However, by acknowledging his mistake and apologizing, he was able to resolve the situation. This incident represented the main challenge posed by cultural differences, particularly language sensitivities.

Excerpt from interview

“For one time, when we visit the smart farm. I mean, like, it's not ethical that you ask for the vegetable for free. And for the farmer plant it and they go to sell. When you ask for free, it's not ethical to say like that. And can I say in Thai, it's like ไม่มีความเหมาะสม... And then she got angry and... but she didn't act like she angry but she goes to post the story... she said like before you say that word to me, look at yourself. Are you professional all the time, are you ethical all the time? And after that I reached to her and I said like I'm sorry. I didn't mean to say that. I just like I just want to let you know, like, oh, it's not it's not suitable that you ask for free from the farmer or something like that. And then we got back together.”

The following section will discuss Hiro's intercultural experiences and knowledge of 'Others' before arriving in Thailand, and his intercultural challenges and

coping strategies after arriving in Thailand, in order to help identify the factors that shape his intercultural citizenship within in the Thai context.

4.1.2.4 Hiro's Intercultural Citizenship

This section explores the factors shaping Hiro's growth as an intercultural citizen, using autobiographical insights, interviews, and observational data to outline the skills, knowledge, and attitudes he has cultivated in navigating diverse cultural environments.

Central to Hiro's intercultural citizenship are his linguistic capabilities and interpersonal skills. His active participation in non-governmental organizations and interactions with international tourists highlight his enthusiasm for cultural engagement. His dedication to learning and teaching Thai illustrates his journey through the stages of adjustment and adaptation described in the U-Curve Theory by Lysgaard (1955), where initial challenges gradually lead to effective cultural and linguistic engagement.

Hiro's understanding of cultural differences is anchored in Deardorff's Model of Intercultural Competence. His experiences in Thailand and South Korea have significantly enhanced his cultural awareness, fostering his ability to engage in and promote cultural exchanges—a key component of Deardorff's model that emphasizes the importance of extensive cultural knowledge in developing intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006).

According to the Social Identity Theory by Tajfel (1979), it offers perspective on Hiro's intercultural interactions, suggesting that his involvement in diverse social groups has influenced his self-concept and enhanced his identification with various cultures. His engagement in activities across different cultural contexts suggests an evolving identity that integrates these experiences, essential for intercultural adaptation.

Kim's Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory underscores Hiro's openness and proactive approach to cultural diversity, critical for managing stress and promoting personal growth in new cultural settings (Kim, 2001). His determination to overcome linguistic obstacles and immerse himself in new cultures exemplifies the transformative potential of embracing cultural differences for effective adaptation.

Overall, Hiro's development as an intercultural citizen represents a dynamic interplay between his language skills, cultural knowledge, and a welcoming attitude towards diversity. His narrative illustrates the essential acquisition of intercultural competencies, fostering an appreciation for cultural variations and developing a flexible perspective that enables him to thrive across varied cultural

landscapes. The theories discussed contextualize Hiro's experiences and highlight the intricate processes essential for cultivating effective intercultural citizenship.

4.1.3 Case Study 3: Ben

4.1.3.1 Ben's Profile

Ben is a male master's student in his first year, studying Food Technology in the international program at Suranaree University of Technology (SUT). Originally from Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Ben relocated to Poipet City in Banteay Meanchey province at the age of 12 due to family circumstances. Poipet, a bustling town on the border of Cambodia and Thailand, is well-known for its active cross-border trade and cultural interaction, creating a unique multilingual environment. In this setting, various languages including Khmer and Thai are commonly spoken, particularly in commercial and educational contexts. Ben's exposure to this multilingual environment likely influenced his language skills and ability to adapt to different cultures.

Ben completed his primary and high school education at Sovannaphumi School Poipet 2 campus, a private school that incorporated English language education into its curriculum. This further exposed Ben to multiple languages from a young age. Moreover, the presence of Thai and international businesses in Poipet provided regular exposure to the Thai language, which contributed to his understanding and usage of it. This exposure fostered a strong foundation for multilingualism, which later supported his academic and social integration in Thailand.

Prior to starting his master's studies, Ben was awarded the Royal Thai Government Scholarship to pursue a degree in integrated agricultural technology and food safety management at SUT. Originally, he had plans to study Civil Engineering at the Institute Technology of Cambodia (ITC). However, upon discovering the scholarship opportunity in Thailand, Ben saw it as a promising pathway to explore new fields and entrepreneurial prospects in the agricultural domain. This decision to shift his focus, as revealed in interviews and his autobiography, was driven by his desire for improved career prospects and exposure on an international level, showcasing his proactive approach to personal and professional development. Ben is a multilingual individual who is fluent in Khmer, English, and Thai. He achieved fluency in English through a combination of self-teaching and formal education in middle and early high school. During his Bachelor's studies, his proficiency in Thai blossomed through interactions with Thai friends, showcasing his adaptability in both language and culture. This adaptability was confirmed through interviews and observations, which highlighted

how his language skills seamlessly integrated him into Thai society, especially in academic and social settings.

In high school, Ben's introverted nature and limited local opportunities hindered his involvement in international activities. Despite living in a border town, his interactions were mostly confined to the local community, and he lacked significant engagement in international programs or exchanges at that time. However, this changed during his Bachelor's degree as he actively sought growth opportunities and demonstrated adaptability. For instance, he participated in collaborative projects like gPBL camps, where he facilitated discussions and provided English interpretation for Thai and foreign students. This shift from limited interaction to active engagement represents a significant transformation in his involvement with different cultures, a consistent theme observed in various cases in this study.

Before moving to Thailand, Ben extensively researched the culture and language as part of his proactive approach to transition smoothly. Since his arrival in August 2019, he has traveled to various locations in Thailand, including Pattaya, Koh Larn, Saraburi, and Udon Thani. These experiences have provided him with valuable insights into Thai culture and facilitated his adaptation process. Ben's preparation and proactive approach stand in contrast to other participants in this study who often experienced culture shock due to insufficient preparation.

Ben has actively engaged with Thai and Filipino communities, primarily through academic collaborations and social interactions. Additionally, his participation in the frisbee club and Christian fellowship has offered further opportunities for intercultural exchanges. Through shared meals and games, these interactions have played a significant role in promoting the development of friendships and fostering mutual understanding. These proactive intercultural activities and Ben's ability to navigate diverse cultural environments were particularly evident during shadowing sessions. Ben's graduate studies involve extensive laboratory work, requiring him to effectively communicate with lab technicians and understand instructions in Thai. In addition to working independently, Ben also takes courses with graduate students from Thailand, Vietnam, and China who are majoring in biotechnology and animal technology. The lectures are delivered in both English and Thai, with English being the main language. Ben's ability to adapt and be proficient in both languages is crucial for his academic success, highlighting the role of language as both a barrier and a bridge in intercultural settings. His experiences align with other participants in the study, where language proficiency significantly influenced their academic and social integration.

Ben's profile emphasizes the importance of proactive preparation, linguistic adaptation, and active engagement in intercultural interactions. His journey from isolation to engagement illustrates the transformative process of becoming an intercultural citizen. To address challenges such as language barriers and cultural misunderstandings, Ben strategically and knowledgeably prepared for and navigated his intercultural environment. This strategic approach enabled him to overcome initial obstacles and contribute meaningfully to his academic and social communities, fostering his growth as an intercultural citizen.

4.1.3.2 Ben's Intercultural Experiences and Knowledge of 'Others'

This section examines Ben's intercultural encounters and his understanding of different cultures before he arrived in Thailand. It is based on a variety of sources, including interviews, autobiography, and observations from shadowing. By integrating these data, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of Ben's background and how his intercultural competency has developed over time.

Intercultural Experiences Before Coming to Thailand

Ben's previous encounters with different cultures were mostly constrained to his familiarity with Thai culture, as he resided close to the border. The details of these experiences are presented in Table 4.7, which were obtained from his interview, and autobiography.

Table 4.7 Ben's Intercultural experiences before arriving in Thailand

Social Context	Intercultural Experience
In Cambodia (In Phnom Penh and in Poipet)	• Studied English with foreign teachers

Ben received instruction in the English language during his 8th grade in Phnom Penh from a British instructor. After relocating to Poipet, Ben continued his English education with a Filipino teacher. These experiences with foreign educators were Ben's only direct exposure to different cultures before he arrived in Thailand.

Excerpt from interview

"In my 8th grade, at that time I haven't come to Poipet yet. At that time, I changed to a different school but still a private one. At that time, I studied with a foreign teacher. I think almost a year... he was from the UK... and then a Filipino teacher." [*“ដល់ថ្នាក់ទី ៨ ពេលនឹង អត់ទាន់មកដោយប៉ែកទេ ពេលនឹងដូរសាលាម្តង តែមកសាលាឯក ជនដដែល ចូលទៅពេលនឹងរៀនជាមួយគ្រូបរទេសបាន ដូចជាអត់ ដល់មួយឆ្នាំទេ...គ្រូនឹង UK ជនជាតិអង់គ្លេស... ពេលដែលដូរទៅរៀន នៅដោយប៉ែកនឹង... គ្រូហ្វីលីពីន...”*]

The limited exposure that Ben had suggests that his intercultural encounters were mainly educational and involved interactions with teachers. This is supported by the information in his autobiography, which emphasizes his limited participation in a variety of culturally diverse activities. This highlights the lack of opportunities in his immediate surroundings and underscores a deficiency in his intercultural exposure, which could potentially affect his ability to adapt and integrate into Thai society.

Knowledge of ‘Others’

Ben's knowledge of 'others' has been influenced by his experiences and observations in Poipet, with a specific focus on Thai society. To provide a clear overview of his knowledge prior to his arrival in Thailand, Table 4.8 has been included.

Table 4.8 Ben’s Knowledge of ‘Others’ before arriving in Thailand

Timeline	Knowledge of ‘Others’
In Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of the relation and commerce between Poipet and Sa Kaeo • Thailand's education system and overall development compared to Cambodia • Cultural similarities and connections between Cambodia and Thailand • Similarities and differences between Khmer and Thai language

As mentioned in the Ben’s profile, he currently resides in Poipet. He described the area as centered around the Thai market in Sa Kaeo province, which is vital for Poipet residents and serves as a key commercial hub. This market, primarily run by Cambodian vendors, specializes in selling locally sourced clothes and garments, underscoring its importance to the community.

Excerpt from autobiography

“The people there are mostly merchants that migrate into the Thai market in Aranyaprathet district, Sakeo Province in Thailand to sell their products. Thailand plays an important role in providing jobs and raising the Poipet economy's people immensely. As a tourist spot, Poipet is well-known for its casino since most Thai choose to enjoy their gambling there.”

Living near the Thai border, Ben had the chance to see firsthand the economic and cultural interactions between Cambodia and Thailand. He gained a greater understanding from his frequent visits to the Thai market in Sa Kaeo Province, a vital trading center for those in Poipet. Ben's perception of Thailand as a more

advanced country in terms of education, economy, and healthcare was largely influenced by his maternal relatives, who regularly interacted with the Thai market.

Excerpt from interview

“Like the family on my mother’s side, they did not receive a good education, they only knew about the educational system in Thailand is better than in Cambodia... They just know that in Thailand, things are more modern, so the universities there are also better too. And they know that the economy in Thailand is better, and also the medical service, too. Because Cambodian people would go to hospitals in Thailand. That means things in Thailand are better, because we go and find help from them. That’s all they know. So, they have better economy and better medical service, so they assumed that the educational system is also better. Also, there will be more opportunities too.” [“របៀបថាគ្រួសារខាងម៉ាក់គាត់មិនមែនអ្នករៀនទេ គ្រាន់តែគាត់ដឹងថាប្រព័ន្ធអប់រំនៅនឹងវាលជាស្រុកខ្មែរ... គាត់គ្រាន់តែដឹងថាថែវវាជឿនលឿនជាងយើងចឹងសាលាគេក៏ល្អជាងយើង។ ហើយគាត់ដឹងថាសេដ្ឋកិច្ចជឿនលឿន ហើយនឹងរឿងពេទ្យនឹងហើយ ពេលឈឺទៅពេទ្យថែវ ចឹងមានយថាថែវគេមិនល្អជាងយើង ដោយសារតែយើងទៅរកគេ អានឹងគឺអីដែលគាត់ដឹង ចឹងមានសេដ្ឋកិច្ចនិងវិស័យសុខាភិបាល ចឹងគាត់សន្មតថាប្រព័ន្ធអប់រំវាល្អតាមនឹង។ ហើយក៏មានឱកាសច្រើនជាងដែរ។”]

This excerpt reveals how Ben's understanding of Thailand is influenced by the beliefs held within his family and his observations of the economy. His perception aligns with the commonly held view among his relatives and community members that Thai society is more advanced and offers greater opportunities. This perspective is supported by corroborating evidence, such as the regular occurrence of cross-border trade and communication among the residents of Poipet.

Ben also noticed cultural similarities between Cambodia and Thailand. He observed common language elements, religious rituals, and societal traditions that he believed would help him adjust to Thai culture. These observations suggest that Ben sees cultural assimilation as less challenging because of these resemblances.

Excerpt from interview

“Like in Poipet, we also use the Thai baht currency... the food is also not so different. Also, the words, the language... even though we don’t know how to use the language... when I watched Thai movies, it didn’t seem different that much. Then there’s also

Buddhism. And the religious belief regarding shrines, talisman, necklace with the tusk of hogs, stuff like that is similar... the weather... And then there's the cultural custom like respecting the elderly, how we greet like putting our hands together, and how we express consideration to others are similar. So, in Cambodia, we are accustomed to that, so coming here there's no need for change, because it's the same..." ["... យើងនៅដោយប៉ែកចុងភ័យលុយ បាត្រ... ម្ហូបអីចឹង... វាអត់មានខុសគ្នាអីប៉ុន្មានទេ... អក្សរ ភាសា អី... ទោះបីអត់ចេះក៏ដោយ... ពេលមើលក្នុងរឿងទៅវាមិនមែន ទៅខុសគ្នាអីណាស់ណា។ ដូចវប្បធម៌ Buddhism ។ ហើយជំនឿដូច សែនប្រក្រមអីចឹង ហើយជំនឿដូចយានដូចអី ហើយរបស់ដែលគេ ជឿលើខ្សែកអី ចង្កូមជ្រូកព្រៃអីអានឹងវាដូចគ្នា... អាកាសធាតុ... ហើយបើវប្បធម៌ដូចរបៀបគោរពចាស់ទុំអាយុច្រើនអីចឹង យើងសំ ពះអីចឹងទៅរបៀបយើងធ្វើអីយើងចេះក្រែងចិត្តចេះអីចឹង ដូចគ្នា។ ចឹងយើងនៅខ្មែរយើងទម្លាប់ចឹង ចឹងយើងមកនេះយើងអត់មាន ត្រូវ change អីផង ព្រោះអីវាដូចគ្នា..."]

Ben's remarks demonstrate his understanding of communal cultural customs, as he sees them as a way to assimilate into Thai society. He reinforces this viewpoint by reflecting on his everyday experiences in Poipet, where Thai influences are noticeably present. However, it is important to note that this understanding is derived from indirect encounters rather than active involvement in the culture. This suggests that Ben may have limitations in navigating intercultural interactions.

While Ben primarily focused on Thai culture, he also showed an interest in Japanese culture, particularly in anime and historical accounts like the Samurai era. His appreciation for Japanese etiquette and ecological awareness was recognized, although he gained this knowledge through media sources rather than personal experiences.

Excerpt from interview

"If about the culture, I know a lot about Japan. I like Japanese culture, I like anime, and also about the Samurai... I like to read the history about Samurai since the Sengoku Shidai. They have a lot of clan. Like the emperor at that time would fight to divide the land. Also, the behavior of Japanese people, like they like to respect and be considerate of others. And also, about the trash management and their environment is clean." ["បើសិនជាវប្បធម៌ចឹង ខ្ញុំដឹងពីជំនឿ ប៉ុន្តែច្រើន ចូលចិត្តវប្បធម៌ជប៉ុនអីចឹង ចូលចិត្ត Animé ទាក់ទងទៅ នឹង Samurai អីចឹង... ចូលចិត្តអានអា history របស់ Samurai តាំងពី

*ជំនាន់ Sengoku Shidai អាជីវកម្មសម័យឆ្នាំច្រើន របៀបជាអធិបតី
មួយនឹងវាវៃគ្នាដើម្បីបែងចែកទឹកដីអីចឹង... ហើយនឹង behavior
របស់ជនជាតិជប៉ុន លក្ខណៈថាចូលចិត្តគោរពនិងក្រែងចិត្តគេ
ហើយរឿងសម្រាប់អីចឹង environment គេមានសណ្តាប់ធ្នាប់។”]*

Ben's comprehension of Japanese culture is not as profound as his grasp of Thai culture. This highlights a more limited intercultural sensitivity that focuses on individual interests rather than firsthand encounters.

Ben's intercultural knowledge and experiences are influenced by his proximity to Thailand and cultural influences within his family. This implies a restricted yet concentrated understanding of individuals from different cultures. His observations focus on economic interactions and shared cultural practices, which may help with his initial adjustment but could hinder his overall intercultural competence. Data from various sources highlight the importance of geographical and familial context in shaping intercultural understanding. Further analysis is needed to compare Ben's experiences with those of other participants, offering a deeper understanding of how Cambodian students engage with Thai culture.

4.1.5.3 Ben's Intercultural Challenges and Coping Strategies

During his time in Thailand, Ben has faced intercultural obstacles such as language barriers, cultural differences, and navigating social dynamics. However, he has acquired fluency in the Thai language, effectively mitigating the language barrier. Ben is now adept at reading, writing, speaking, and understanding Thai, enabling him to engage in class discussions with his Thai peers and communicate with university faculty, instructors, and fellow students.

Table 4.9 provides an overview of Ben's intercultural challenges in Thailand, along with the coping strategies he employed to overcome them. This is followed by a detailed explanation of these challenges and coping challenges.

Table 4.9 Ben's Intercultural challenges and coping strategies after coming to Thailand

Intercultural Challenges	Coping Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Language barrier – initial communication difficulties, specific terms, varying English language fluency levels, adapting to Thai instruction in Master's program. ● Mediating communication between Thai and Japanese students using English ● Cultural differences and difficulties in connecting with the Filipino community ● Cultural and religious sensitivities when approaching Indonesian women ● Adapting to communication styles of Western individuals ● Encountering and adapting to informal language with foreign individuals ● Tensions with Thai classmates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Self-teaching to improve his Thai language skills ● Utilizing google translate to aid in communication ● Adopting a direct communication approach, focusing on "hitting the point" ● Recognizing informal language as common in Western culture and remained composed despite discomfort ● Maintaining professional interactions while keeping a cautious distance to navigate social tensions and protect his well-being

When Ben started his undergraduate studies in Thailand, he struggled to have English conversations with his Thai peers. While he made friends with Thai people, language barriers remained, leading to a mix of English and Thai languages during interactions. When he joined the international program, he expected his peers to have excellent English skills, but he found that many of them still faced challenges. This affected communication effectiveness and group projects negatively. Ben admitted his initial misjudgments on this matter.

Excerpt from autobiography

“When I came here, I met with my Thai friends, some of them their English wasn't really good. So, when they spoke, they mixed English and Thai. So, at first, I couldn't understand them... Like when I read about the scholarship at first, I saw that it was an international program, so students will have to study in English. So, I didn't care much and I didn't study Thai either... I thought that coming to study in the international program, the people all could use English. But when I arrived the friend that studied in the international program with me, also couldn't quite speak English. So, it was difficult to communicate with each other and work in groups.” [“ពេលមកដល់យើងជួបមិត្តភក្តិថៃអីចឹង អ្នកខ្លះ អង់គ្លេសគេអត់សូវល្អអីចឹងទៅ ចឹងគេក៏និយាយលាយថៃលាយអីចឹងទៅ ចឹងយើងក៏ដំបូងៗចាប់អត់បានទេ... ដូចជាពេលខ្ញុំអានអាហារូបករណ៍នេះដំបូងចឹង យើងឃើញថាវារៀន international ចឹង

រៀនអង់គ្លេសចឹង ចឹងយើងអត់ខ្វល់ ហើយចឹងអត់មានបានទៅ រៀនថៃ... បានគិតថាមករៀន international នឹង អ្នករៀននៅក្នុង នឹងសុទ្ធតែចេះអង់គ្លេសហើយ។ តែដល់ពេលមកដល់មិត្តភក្តិថៃ ដែលរៀន international នឹងក៏និយាយអង់គ្លេសអត់សូវបានដែរ ចឹង វាពិបាកនិយាយគ្នាធ្វើការងារក្រុមអីទៀត។”]

To overcome the language barrier, Ben used Google Translate for specific Thai terminology, demonstrating his ability to adjust. His Thai colleagues acknowledged his pragmatic use of this tool. For example, when working on a sugarcane cultivation project, Ben had trouble explaining the concept of "burn" in Thai. He turned to Google Translate, which helped clarify the term.

Excerpt from interview

Sometimes I don't know what that word means, so I used to google translate. So, I communicate and use Google translate to aid at the same time. And the Thai students would also try to adjust as well, they would try to use google translate in order to communicate with me. And they try to listen and catch the keyword, and ask me back whether what they had understood was the right thing whenever I explained something to them. But they still spoke in Thai, they could understand but they found it challenging to respond back... At that time, we were doing a project related to the cultivation of sugarcane like before cultivating, one has to burn the stalk first for the leaves to die out. But at that time, I didn't know what the word burn in Thai was. So, I said the word in English and they confirmed the word with me, but they said it in Thai. [... ពេល ខ្លះយើងក៏អត់ដឹងថាពាក្យនិងន័យអោយចំអីគេដែរ ចឹងត្រូវរក google translate ប្រើ google បណ្តើរនិយាយបណ្តើរ ហើយពួកថៃក៏ ព្យាយាម adjust ជាមួយយើងដែរ គេព្យាយាមប្រើ google translate ដើម្បីនិយាយជាមួយយើង ហើយព្យាយាមស្តាប់ព្យាយាមចាប់ keyword នឹងសួរថាការដែលគាត់យល់ចឹងត្រូវអត់ពេលយើងពន្យល់ គាត់ម្តងៗ ប៉ុន្តែពួកគាត់នៅតែនិយាយថៃដដែល ពួកគាត់ស្តាប់ បានតែពិបាកនិយាយឆ្លើយតប... ដូចជាពេលនឹង project ធ្វើពីការ ប្រមូលផលអំពៅចឹងមុនប្រមូលផលគេដុតដើមអំពៅនឹងសិន ដើម្បីអោយងាប់ស្លឹក តែពេលនិងក៏អត់ដឹងពាក្យថាដុតនិងជា ភាសាថៃចឹងក៏និយាយអង់គ្លេសថា burn ហើយពួកគាត់ក៏... សួរថា ដុតមែនតែជាពាក្យភាសាថៃ”]

Ben's experience highlights the importance of using practical resources, like Google Translate, to aid communication, despite the limitations of such

tools. However, relying on these resources also draws attention to the broader issue of language dependence in intercultural environments. In these situations, comprehension may be achieved, but genuine engagement and meaningful interaction may still be limited.

During his time as a facilitator at the gPBL camp, Ben faced intercultural communication challenges. He had to mediate discussions between Thai and Japanese students, ensuring clear understanding of complex ideas. This required precise communication and cultural sensitivity. Although the use of translation aids helped, Ben recognized that it was time-consuming.

Excerpt from interview

“At that time, the Thai and Japanese student wanted to discuss each other about a problem regarding their project. But for the solution part, it needs to be explained both the pros and cons. So, before the Thai students wanted to explain the Japanese students, they needed to explain everything to me first. Then I tried to translate everything in English to the Japanese, but they also didn’t understand. So, I resorted to using google translate, at that time that’s how I helped them... it was time-consuming... but it was the only option...” [“ពេលប្តឹងដូចជាថៃនិងជប៉ុនចង់ពិភាក្សាគ្នា យើងយល់ពី problem របស់ project តែចំពោះ solution យើងត្រូវពន្យល់គុណវិបត្តិនិងគុណសម្បត្តិរបស់វា អញ្ជើងមុនពេលដែលថៃចង់ពន្យល់ទៅជនជាតិជប៉ុន ពួកគាត់ត្រូវមកពន្យល់ប្រាប់ខ្ញុំសិន។ យើងក៏ព្យាយាមជួយបកប្រែវាជាភាសាអង់គ្លេសទៅកាន់ជនជាតិជប៉ុនតែជនជាតិជប៉ុនស្តាប់មិនទៅបាន។ ហើយយើងក៏ត្រូវប្រើ google translate ពេលប្តឹងខ្ញុំព្យាយាមជួយគេដោយរបៀបប្តឹង... យើងត្រូវការពេលច្រើន... ប្តឹងហើយដោយសារវាជាជម្រើសតែមួយ...”]

This experience illustrates the relationship between language and cultural comprehension and the importance of tools like Google Translate. However, it is important to recognize that these tools cannot fully replace the need for deep cultural engagement. Additionally, his role as a mediator showcases the challenges of facilitating intercultural communication when different cultural norms and languages are involved.

Reflecting on his internships, Ben encountered similar language obstacles. Although the lab assistants had some understanding of English, his limited fluency in Thai created communication barriers, especially during important discussions. As a result, conversations became lengthy, underscoring the challenges of

engaging in in-depth and nuanced communication despite having basic conversational skills.

Excerpt from interview

“Like when I was an intern, I was always inside the lab during that time. For the lab assistant, it’s not that he couldn’t use English entirely, he could understand but it’s just that he couldn’t speak. So, when I communicated with him, especially regarding important matters. Just speaking English consumed a lot of time, so it’s difficult...” [“ដូចពេលទៅintern ពេលនឹងនៅតែក្នុង lab ផង អ្នក lab assistant អីចឹងមិនមែនថាគាត់អត់ចេះអង់គ្លេសតែម្តងទេ គាត់ស្តាប់បានតែគាត់និយាយអត់បាន។ ចឹងនៅពេលដែលយើង communicate ជាមួយគាត់ដូចរឿងណាសំខាន់ៗអីចឹង។ បើយើង គ្រាន់តែនិយាយវាស៊ីម៉ោងបាត់ទៅហើយនឹង ចឹងវាពិបាក...”]

Ben initially struggled to understand the Thai language, especially in everyday situations like buying food from local vendors. However, he took the initiative to gradually learn basic phrases by using resources such as YouTube. This proactive approach helped him overcome language barriers and fully embrace Thai culture.

Excerpt from interview

“The most common thing was when I went to purchase food. When I ordered beef, and then they didn’t have beef, so they came and explained to me. And I didn’t understand what they said, I could only respond ‘What?’ and I asked the seniors for help because they know how to speak Thai... Later on, I learned the basics on my own, I would watch Youtube and use them little by little, and that led me to know the language one word at a time... like going out I could go anywhere I want; I could contact Song Thaew to transport this and that.... then I learned from what I read, and I was able to upgrade my Thai little by little...” [“អីដែល common ជាងគេនឹងគឺ យើងទៅបាយ ហើយដល់ពេលយើងហៅសាច់គោ គេអត់មានសាច់ គោគេមកប្រាប់យើងវិញគេក៏និយាយមួយរ៉ូចឹងមក ពេលដំបូង យើងស្តាប់អត់បានទេ យើងចេះតែអីកេរ ហើយយើងអោយស៊ីស្ប ច្បងដែលចេះថែជួយប្រាប់អីចឹងទៅ... តែដល់យូរៗទៅ ទៅរៀនអា basic ខ្លះៗ ទៅមើល YouTube អីចឹងទៅហើយយកមកប្រើយូរៗ ទៅវាចេះមួយពាក្យៗមករហូតចឹង... ហើយដូចទៅក្រៅអីចឹង ចង់ ទៅណាមកណាចឹង យើងទាក់ទងជាមួយឡាន Song Thaew ដឹកភ្នំ សំដឹកអីចឹងបាន... តែដល់ពេលយូរៗទៅយើងចេះអាពីអានទៅ យើង upgrade ថែគិតៗទៅ...”]

Other challenges were connected to cultural differences of other communities. Ben encountered challenges in connecting with the Filipino community due to differences in background, culture, language, and religion. He also struggled with their energetic and chaotic nature, as they often engaged in lively activities like running around and playing.

Excerpt from interview

"I'm not close with the Filipinos because I feel like our vibes are different. Like we don't go together... that could be due to the different background and culture... the language and the religion... like the Filipinos are quite loud and chaotic... like for us, we don't run around and play too much..." [... គឺអត់ close ជាមួយពួកហ្វីលីពីន ព្រោះអីដូចមានអារម្មណ៍ថា vibe ខុសគ្នា ដូចអត់ចូលគ្នាអីចឹង... កន្លែងនឹងអាចនិយាយថាមកពី background និងវប្បធម៌ខុសគ្នា... ភាសានឹងឯង ហើយនឹងសាសនា... ហ្វីលីពីនពួកគាត់រៀង loud អីចឹង ហើយរៀងរញ្ជ័រញ្ជើអត់... យើងអត់សួររត់រញ្ជ័រញ្ជើវៃគ្នាគាត់លេងអីចឹង..."]

He faced challenges in approaching Indonesian girls, particularly those wearing hijabs, due to cultural and religious differences. Uncertain about norms like avoiding physical contact, he hesitated to initiate interactions. To overcome this, he adopted a direct communication approach, focusing on work-related discussions during group tasks and respectfully asking questions about their culture or religion.

Excerpt from interview

"For example, like the Indonesian, the girls that wear hijab, I don't dare to talk to them. I don't know how to approach them... but that's because I used to hear that they have a lot of prohibition that prohibits men from touching women's hands. So being close or near them, sort of resembles like an offence. So it was difficult and I didn't dare to speak with them ...So, if I had to work in groups with them, mostly I would just speak like hit the point. I don't joke around a lot. Sometimes I would ask them about the culture or religion as well and they didn't think too much about it as well." [... ឧទាហរណ៍ជនជាតិIndonesian, ស្រីដែលពាក់ hijab ខ្ញុំមិនសូវហ៊ាននិយាយជាមួយ អត់ដឹងថាត្រូវ approach គេយ៉ាងមិច... តែមកពីខ្ញុំធ្លាប់លឺទាក់ទងទៅនឹងបំរាមរបស់ជនជាតិIndonesia ដែលហាមមិនអោយមនុស្សស្រីប៉ះដៃជាមួយនិងមនុស្សប្រុសចឹងកាលដែលយើងនៅក្បែរឬស្ថិតស្នាលជាមួយគេប្រៀបបានទៅនឹងយើង offence គេ ចឹងវា

ពិបាកហើយអត់សូវហ៊ាននិយាយជាមួយគេ... ចឹងបើមានការងារជា
ក្រុមអីភាគច្រើននិយាយ hit the point យកម៉ង់ អត់សូវនិយាយ
លេងសើចច្រើន ពេលខ្លះមានការសួរពីរបៀបធម៌ឬសាសនាខ្លះដែរ
គេក៏មិនសូវប្រកាន់យើងអីប៉ុន្មានដែរ។]

During one of the Frisbee game, Ben faced intercultural challenges while interacting with a Western teammate. He hesitated to respond quickly to their questions, aiming to avoid potential offense. However, his cautious approach was misinterpreted as a lack of understanding, causing tension. To prevent escalation, he chose to walk away from the argument. Fortunately, the situation was resolved when his Western teammates apologized and acknowledged the cultural differences.

Excerpt from interview

“A clear example was when I went to compete in a frisbee competition. From the Western perspective, they wanted us to be active or respond to them back quickly. At that time we had a meeting, planning strategies for the next match, there was a teammate asked us and we didn’t respond quickly because mostly for our people, we would think first before we speak like thinking whether what we’re going to say would affect other people. But for Western country, they responded quickly, so they thought that we didn’t understand. That caused a misunderstanding, and that led to an argument with the Western teammate. But I didn’t say anything back, I just walked away... But after that, he came to apologize saying that earlier he forgot that our cultures were different.” [“ឧទាហរណ៍ជាក់ស្តែងពេលដែលខ្ញុំទៅប្រកួត Frisbee សំរាប់កីឡាករនិរទេស Western ពួកគាត់ចង់អោយយើង active ឬ respond ជាមួយពួកគាត់ភ្លាមៗ ពេលនឹងពួកខ្ញុំមាន meeting រៀបចំ គ្រួសារនៃការលេងទៅវគ្គបន្ត មានសមាជិកក្រុមម្នាក់បានសួរមក កាន់ពួកខ្ញុំតែយើងមិនបានឆ្លើយតបភ្លាមៗទេ ដោយសារជាធម្មតា ជនជាតិយើងគិតច្រើនមុននឹងឆ្លើយដូចជាបើឆ្លើយចឹងប៉ះពាល់ ដល់គេអត់តែ Western country ពួកគាត់ឆ្លើយលឿនៗ ចឹងពួកគាត់ គិតថាយើង... អត់យល់នឹងសំនួរគាត់ វាធ្វើអោយមានការយល់ច្រឡំ គ្នា ចឹងវាបង្កើតជាជម្លោះបន្តិចបន្តួចជាមួយគាត់... តែខ្ញុំអត់បាន និយាយតបអីទេគ្រាន់ដើរចេញ... ប៉ុន្តែបន្ទាប់ពីនឹងមកគាត់មក សុំទោស គាត់ថាមុននឹងគាត់ភ្លេចចិត្តពីរបៀបធម៌យើងខុសគ្នា”]

In the Frisbee team, there was a player from Canada who would swear a lot, which initially shocked Ben. However, he later realized it was common in

Western culture. During their hangouts, the Canadian would jokingly use such language. This prompted him to question the casual use of such words in jest.

Excerpt from autobiography

“When they cursed out of surprise or for a joking purpose, I sometimes felt offended which led to my self-isolation from them.”

Despite feeling uncomfortable, he remained composed and continued to interact normally.

Excerpt from interview

“I would act normally. But inside, it was strange but I didn’t show my honest reaction... how I would act towards him in the past, I would still act the same...” [“ធ្វើធម្មតា តែក្នុងចិត្តរាងប្លែកតែ យើងមិនបានបង្ហាញពីអារម្មណ៍យើងពេលនឹង... ធម្មតាពីមុន និយាយជាមួយគាត់ម៉េចនៅនិយាយចឹងដដែល...”]

During his second year, Ben faced a negative experience with his Thai classmates related to exam scores. Despite excelling in an exam, he was accused of receiving preferential treatment by them, who were struggling academically. This strained his relations with his Thai classmates following the incident.

Excerpt from interview

“At that time, I think we were taking exams... for the Thai students, some of them failed, some of them barely passed. At that time, I had the highest score. So, there were two or three Thai students... said because the lecturer like me more that’s why I got a higher score... I sent the exercises, the homework for them all the time. Like after I completed it, I would send it to them and have them correct theirs following mine. I also gave them the format and told them about the website as well, and when the result came out, I still got a higher score than them... They were wondered as to why they got that score after following what I wrote but they still got lesser. So, they thought that the lecturer liked me more. But the lecturer actually liked me more, like I tend to talk with him more often...” [“ពេលនឹងដូចជាប្រឡង... ពួកថៃមានខ្លះធ្លាក់មានខ្លះ បានមួយជាប់អីចឹង ហើយពេលនឹងខ្ញុំបានពិន្ទុច្រើនជាងគេ ទៅ មានថៃពីរបីនាក់.. ថាមកពីគ្រូនឹងចូលចិត្តយើងបានគ្រូនឹងអោយ ពិន្ទុយើងច្រើន... ខ្ញុំ send លំហាត់អីចឹង homework អីអោយវាមើល ទាំងអស់ ដូចយើងធ្វើហើយយើង send អោយវាមើលអីចឹងអោយវា កែតាមអីចឹង ហើយប្រាប់លំនាំប្រាប់ website ប្រាប់អីទៀត ដល់

ពេលចេញមកយើងនៅតែបានច្រើនជាងវា... វាឆ្ងល់ថាម៉េចបានវាមើលរបស់យើងហើយនៅតែបានគិតទៀតចឹង ទៅវាថាមកពីគ្រូនឹងចូលចិត្តយើង តែគ្រូនឹងចូលចិត្តយើងមែន ដូចយើងឧស្សាហ៍និយាយលេងអីជាមួយគាត់ចឹង...”]

While he continued to work with them, he admitted feeling a barrier of trust towards them. This shift led him to behave more cautiously, maintaining a level of distance compared to before. Although still friendly, there was a noticeable decrease in trust and closeness in their interactions.

Excerpt from autobiography

“I ignored and never treat them the same. To prevent further awkwardness in the future, my best approach is to accept that we are from different backgrounds, so this kind of problem is common and continue to treat them like before as usual.”

After completing his Bachelor's degree, Ben enrolled in a Master's program in food technology at the same university under a different scholarship. However, most courses, including laboratory lectures, transitioned to Thai, posing a significant challenge as he had primarily studied in English during his Bachelor's. Although proficient in Thai from his previous studies, adapting to predominantly Thai-taught classes in his Master's program required time to grasp the course material. Despite feeling like he was in a Thai program, his enhanced Thai proficiency ultimately helped him overcome this challenge.

Excerpt from interview

“It's related to the language. When I was in the bachelor's, everything was in English even though there were Thai students. But in the Master's program, most of the time everything was in Thai because I changed my major. So I had to study extra classes with Thai students. And when the lecturers explained inside the lab, it was also in Thai. Even though I can use Thai, but I still need time to fully understand everything. So, it's like I'm studying in the Thai program. Still, it may be challenging but I could still do it because I could use Thai.” [“មានទាក់ទងនឹងភាសា។ ការរៀន bachelor រៀនជាភាសាអង់គ្លេសទោះបីជាមានសិស្សថៃក៏ដោយតែពេលរៀន master ភាគច្រើនជាថៃដោយសារយើងដូរជំនាញអញ្ចឹងយើងត្រូវទៅរៀនបន្ថែមជាមួយសិស្សថៃ ហើយពេលគ្រូពន្យល់នៅក្នុង lab ក៏ជាភាសាថៃ ទោះបីជាយើងអាចប្រើភាសាថៃបានក៏ដោយតែយើងក៏ត្រូវការពេលបន្ថែមដើម្បីយល់ឲ្យកាន់តែច្បាស់។ អញ្ចឹងវាដូចជាយើង

*កំពុងតែរៀននៅក្នុងថ្ងៃ program យើងគិតថាពិបាកតែវាអាចនៅ
រួចដោយសារយើងចេះថែវែវ””]*

The following section will discuss Ben’s intercultural experiences and knowledge of ‘Others’ before arriving in Thailand, and his intercultural challenges and coping strategies after arriving in Thailand, in order to help identify the factors that shape his intercultural citizenship within in the Thai context.

4.1.3.4 Ben’s Intercultural Citizenship

This section explores the experiences, skills, and attitudes that define Ben’s journey as an intercultural citizen, drawing on various sources including interviews, autobiographies, and shadow observations to reveal how he navigates and enriches multicultural settings.

Ben’s intercultural engagement began in Phnom Penh, where interactions with foreign educators ignited his curiosity and prompted his initial steps toward cultural exchange. His relocation to Poipet, known for its dynamic cross-border interactions, further developed his communication skills. In Poipet, Ben played a pivotal role as a mediator in the local Frisbee club, leveraging his multilingual abilities to bridge cultural divides, illustrating the impact of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1979) on his evolving social identities shaped by diverse cultural engagements.

Cultural Intelligence (CQ), as defined by Earley and Ang (2003) , is crucial in understanding Ben’s navigation through multicultural landscapes. His appreciation for the Thai education system and decision to pursue further education in Thailand demonstrate his strategic CQ, highlighting how cultural understanding guides his choices. Moreover, Ben’s observations of cultural nuances between Cambodia and Thailand have sharpened his cognitive CQ, enabling him to adjust his behaviors and expectations in varied cultural interactions.

Ben’s commitment to cultural integration exemplifies a successful adaptation process as framed by Young Yun Kim’s Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory. His respectful engagement with local customs and active participation in Thai social circles indicate effective adaptation strategies that reduce intercultural stress and encourage personal development (Kim, 2001)

Through his narrative, Ben exemplifies how effective intercultural citizenship requires a harmonious integration of cognitive, emotional, and motivational aspects of CQ, underpinned by a robust understanding of social identity dynamics and adept cross-cultural adaptation. His story highlights the essential competencies needed to thrive in diverse cultural environments and enriches our understanding of the processes that facilitate successful intercultural interactions. This analysis provides

insights into the mechanisms that enable individuals like Ben to become effective intercultural citizens, contributing significantly to the multicultural contexts they inhabit.

4.1.4 Case Study 4: Ron

4.1.4.1 Ron's Profile

Ron, a fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in Civil Engineering at Suranaree University of Technology's (SUT) international program, comes from Phnom Penh, the bustling capital city of Cambodia. Phnom Penh is an urban area known for its diverse cultural influences and multilingual environment. While Khmer is the predominant language, the city's status as a commercial and educational hub has led to a mix of languages, including English, French, and increasingly, Chinese. This multicultural setting, particularly in educational institutions and international businesses, exposed Ron to different languages and cultures from an early age.

Ron attended Chbar Ampov Primary School and BELTEI International School, both known for their focus on bilingual education, specifically in Khmer and English. These schools provided Ron with an environment where he could regularly learn and practice English, nurturing his language skills from a young age. The presence of international schools and institutions in Phnom Penh also exposed Ron and other students to various languages and cultural perspectives, influencing their early educational experiences.

Throughout high school, Ron's academic focus grew stronger, leading him to seek further education abroad for more advanced opportunities. After studying Telecommunication Engineering at the Institute of Technology of Cambodia (ITC) for two years, Ron felt compelled to broaden his academic horizons. Limited educational resources in Cambodia and his father's belief in the value of studying abroad motivated Ron to pursue Civil Engineering at SUT. His interest in the practical applications of engineering projects, sparked by games like Minecraft, played a role in his decision.

Mastering the English language quickly became an essential aspect of Ron's academic journey. He understood that English serves as a vital tool for accessing global information and facilitating cross-cultural communication, especially through online gaming platforms. These platforms provided Ron with an informal yet effective means to enhance his language skills, further preparing him for an international academic environment. Ron's pre-Thailand experiences were primarily limited to Cambodia, which he symbolically described as "like living in a box." His exposure to the outside world only extended to family trips to Bangkok, and he had

not engaged in any international programs before enrolling at SUT. This limited exposure greatly influenced his initial encounters with different cultures in Thailand.

Since arriving in Thailand two and a half years ago, Ron's experiences with other cultures have been influenced by both formal academic settings and casual interactions. The first year of his studies was conducted online due to the pandemic, with in-person classes starting in his second year. Initially, his group consisted of 8 or 9 students, including Thai nationals, but eventually decreased to five students-3 from Cambodia and 2 from the Philippines-since Thai students shifted to other programs.

Ron's interactions with Thai students were primarily limited to shared general education courses and university events. These courses, like pre-electives and design thinking, provided a platform for students from various disciplines and cultural backgrounds to interact. Ron's participation in university-organized events, such as trips to places like Khao Yai National Park and the gPBL camp, further expanded his exposure to different cultures. These events brought together students from Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, creating a diverse environment for intercultural exchange.

Aside from studying, Ron also engaged in social activities with his Filipino classmates, which included exploring local markets and playing sports together. These informal interactions played a crucial role in helping Ron adjust to cultural differences and settling into life in Thailand. Furthermore, they provided a stark contrast to his experiences in Cambodia, where he had limited contact with people from outside Cambodia, even in academic environments.

Ron's case highlights the challenges of adapting to a new culture within an educational setting. While in Cambodia, he initially felt confined to a narrow perspective, making the differences in his life before and after moving to Thailand even more noticeable. Adjusting to a diverse cultural environment required significant changes, particularly in terms of language proficiency and social interactions.

By participating in university events and taking general education courses, Ron discovered structured opportunities for intercultural exchange. Moreover, his casual social activities with classmates provided a more personal and relaxed environment for cultural adaptation. Ron's personal experience highlights the significant role that both formal and informal settings play in the process of adapting to a new culture. His narrative suggests that while structured academic environments are essential for initial exposure, it is the day-to-day, casual interactions that truly enhance intercultural understanding and promote a genuine sense of belonging. In

essence, Ron's story underscores the value of blending academic experiences with informal encounters in navigating and assimilating into a new cultural milieu.

4.1.4.2 Ron's Intercultural Experiences and Knowledge of 'Others'

This section explores Ron's intercultural experiences before he arrived in Thailand, as well as his understanding of other cultures. It provides a context for his future cultural adaptation.

Intercultural Experiences Before Coming to Thailand

Ron had limited intercultural experiences before moving to Thailand. His main exposure to foreign cultures occurred during his high school years in Cambodia, where he interacted with foreign teachers. However, Ron found these interactions to be superficial and lacking in meaningful cultural exchange. He felt that the foreign teachers, mainly from Canada and the USA, were merely passing through rather than dedicated educators, which hindered genuine intercultural learning from taking place.

Table 4.10 provides a summary of Ron's intercultural experiences before arriving in Thailand, followed by a detailed description providing more information about the summarized content.

Table 4.10 Ron's Intercultural experiences before arriving in Thailand

Social Context	Intercultural Experience
In Cambodia (During High School Period)	Studied English with foreign teachers

Excerpt from interview

"I think both like some of them are from Canada and I think one from USA... but I mean they are not qualified, they just like come to for a trip in Cambodia and they just find something to do during their time there."

This quote demonstrates Ron's disappointment with the quality of cultural exchange he encountered. The temporary presence of his teachers restricted opportunities for more profound intercultural engagement.

Apart from the classroom, Ron's main exposure to other cultures occurred through online gaming. While he did interact with players from various countries, such as Thailand and the Philippines, these interactions were largely confined to the gaming environment. The anonymity of online gaming, combined with the primarily task-oriented nature of these interactions, left little space for substantial

cultural exchange. Additionally, Ron observed that many players, including himself, were introverted, which further hindered the depth of these interactions.

Ron's pre-departure intercultural experiences were mainly passive and limited in scope. Although he had some exposure to different cultures through foreign teachers, it wasn't enough to develop a comprehensive understanding of cultural diversity. The lack of structured opportunities for cultural exchange, combined with the temporary presence of the teachers, contributed to this limitation.

While Ron had some interaction with individuals from different countries in the online gaming context, it didn't lead to significant cultural learning. These interactions were primarily focused on completing tasks and lacked the face-to-face element that could have deepened his understanding of cultural nuances. Moreover, the introverted nature of the players involved further restricted the potential for cultural exchange.

Knowledge of 'Others'

This section explores Ron's familiarity with different cultures prior to his arrival in Thailand. It will highlight the various sources that contributed to his understanding of these cultures and examine how they shaped his expectations and perceptions.

Table 4.11 provides a summary of Ron's knowledge of 'Others' before arriving in Thailand, followed by a detailed description providing more information about the summarized content.

Table 4.11 Ron's Knowledge of 'Others' before arriving in Thailand

Timeline	Knowledge of 'Others'
In Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Japanese history
(During high school)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No extreme culture shocks or differences, and language similarity due to cultural proximity Conflicts between Cambodia and Thailand in social media

Ron's understanding of different cultures was largely shaped by media sources such as social media, movies, music, news, and games. While these platforms provided him with a glimpse into various cultures, the information he obtained was often superficial and entertainment-focused. Take, for instance, his fascination with Japanese culture, which was sparked by his engagement with video games that showcased historical elements, particularly the samurai code of conduct. However, this exposure, while informative, had its limitations as it primarily emphasized idealized aspects of the culture rather than providing a comprehensive understanding.

Excerpt from interview

“From social media. From movies and also gaming as well. Yeah, I do play a lot of like old, old like the past Japan like samurai and stuff. And like, committing suicide for samurai is like, considered an honour. Yeah. Like people would ask for it. Instead of some other consequences.”

Ron's decision to study in Thailand was greatly influenced by his limited understanding of other cultures, particularly in relation to the similarities he perceived between Cambodia and Thailand. Ron believed that these similarities, such as festivals, conversational styles, culinary preferences, and traditional practices, would facilitate his adaptation to life in Thailand. His belief was shaped by personal observations and the cultural narratives prevalent in Cambodian society.

Excerpt from autobiography

“To avoid extreme culture shocks or differences, I chose Thailand since both countries show enormous cultural similarities.”

However, the belief in cultural similarity also led to assumptions that were later proven incorrect. For instance, Ron initially believed that the Thai language would be easy to understand due to its similarity to Khmer. Additionally, he assumed that shared cultural aspects would make it effortless for him to assimilate into Thai society.

Excerpt from interview

“...as we are neighbors, we probably have a lot of similarities, like the festivals are one of them. How we talk, how we, the food is also one of them as well. Like the tradition is similar. It just helps me better, easier for me to blend in with them, to adapt.”

Although Ron felt confident about the cultural similarities between Cambodia and Thailand, he still had reservations. His exposure to online conflicts between Cambodians and Thais, particularly on social media, made him concerned about the potential for racism and hostility. These concerns were amplified by the negative portrayal of Thailand in Cambodian education, where historical and geographical disputes were emphasized. Ron's knowledge encompassed both an understanding of cultural proximity and an awareness of historical tensions, which created a complex set of expectations regarding his potential experiences in Thailand.

Excerpt from interview

“...in the social medias that they post like propaganda. Information like that. And in the comment section there will be Cambodian and Thai clashing with each other... like the ក្បួនខ្មែរ or the boxing. The culture, the festivals... even in high school class, some of the... history or geography teacher, like sometimes they... gave you an idea like... those people are not good. Like they always try to steal anything from you.”

These conflicting perceptions had an impact on Ron's emotional preparedness for relocating to Thailand. While he was enthusiastic about participating in an international program, he still had concerns about the Thai language and the potential social challenges he might encounter. He attempted to address these worries by independently studying Thai and researching his university. However, he soon realized that these efforts alone were insufficient without proper guidance.

Ron's perception of 'Others' before he came to Thailand was shaped by the media, educational narratives, and his own assumptions. While these sources provided him with a framework to understand and anticipate his new surroundings, they also created expectations that were not entirely accurate. Ron's tendency to rely on cultural familiarity as a defense against the challenges of adapting to a similar cultural context is a common pattern among individuals in similar situations. This can lead to underestimating the complexities of intercultural adaptation.

This analysis emphasizes the importance of critically engaging with one's own cultural knowledge and the need to develop a more nuanced understanding of cultural dynamics, especially when transitioning to a new environment. Ron's experiences serve as a case study in the limitations of shallow cultural knowledge and the difficulties that arise when solely depending on this knowledge for intercultural adaptation.

The following section will outline Ron's intercultural challenges and coping strategies after arriving in Thailand.

4.1.4.3 Ron's Intercultural Challenges and Coping Strategies

Expanding on Ron's previous intercultural experiences, this section delves into the difficulties he faced upon arriving in Thailand and the strategies he used to cope with them. When Ron first arrived, he encountered various intercultural challenges, including language barriers, cultural differences, and the need to adjust his introverted nature to fit in with local social norms. Through his experiences, we not

only witness his personal growth, but also gain insights into the broader patterns of intercultural adaptation among international students in similar situations.

Table 4.12 provides a summary of Ron's intercultural challenges and coping strategies after arriving in Thailand, followed by a detailed description providing more information about the summarized content.

Table 4.12 Ron's Intercultural challenges and coping strategies after arriving in Thailand

Intercultural Challenges	Handling Intercultural Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language barrier in everyday interactions and at the internship place • Swearing in friendly interactions • Cultural norms regarding punctuality • Understanding Burmese students' English accent • Thai greeting customs • Senior-Junior relationship culture • Thai students' reluctance to communicate in English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritizing practical, real-life scenarios over formal self-study, utilizing body language, Google Translate, and preparing in advance • Understanding cultural context through previous online gaming • Adapting to the punctuality of Filipino peers by adjusting his own expectations • Actively listening and seeking clarification when needed • Gradual adjustment through continuous practice despite initial discomfort • Acceptance of hierarchical terms while navigating age-related dynamics • Substituting Thai for English in communication with Thai peers • Focusing on overall meaning when listening to Thai

Ron's initial challenge was adapting to the friendly banter among students from different countries. This banter occasionally included swearing in various languages, including English. Although it caught him off guard initially, he quickly became accustomed to it and understood that it was all meant in good humor. His previous experience in online gaming had already prepared him for this type of interaction, where swearing was quite common.

Excerpt from interview

"...like it's them swearing is an example like they swear at each other but in like in a friendly way. Well, I'm very used already because it's from the online game. People swear a lot. Like they just say it in a friendly way. Sometimes to me, sometimes to their friends. Sometimes I say it back like."

Since arriving in Thailand, Ron has faced another challenge - adjusting to the punctuality norms of his Filipino friends. During group meetings, he noticed that Filipinos usually arrived 30 minutes late, which initially created some issues with meeting times. However, after discussing the matter, they explained that it was a cultural practice for them. In order to maintain harmony and accommodate their expectations, Ron decided to adapt his own arrival time accordingly.

Excerpt from interview

“It was like, bro, it's not, it's not 4, it's 4:30 already... they just say it's the Filipino way, bro. And then I just accepted it. And then next time they say 4, I go at 4:30 as well.”

Ron also encountered difficulties when interacting with the Burmese community in extracurricular activities outside his major. One of the primary hurdles was comprehending their accent. Nevertheless, despite grappling with this issue, Ron exerted a conscious effort to listen attentively and seek clarification when needed. He acknowledged that adapting to their accent was the most efficient approach to establish effective communication with them.

Excerpt from interview

“And then the Burmese students, mostly we don't understand each other when communicating with one another, which was because of the accent... so if they said something and I didn't understand, I would try to ask them more if I don't understand.”
 [“ហើយបើជនជាតិភូមា ភាគច្រើននិយាយទៅស្តាប់គ្នាមិនសូវបានដោយសារតែ accent គេមកច្រើន... បើគេនិយាយមកយើងស្តាប់អត់សូវបានអីចឹង យើងខំប្រឹងស្តាប់គេហើយសួរគេបន្ថែមទៅបើមិនទាន់យល់។”]

Interacting with the Thai community presented unique challenges compared to interacting with international communities. Although their greeting customs were similar to those in Cambodia, he noticed that Thai greetings were more frequent. This initially made him uncomfortable, particularly with the frequent handshakes. Even to this day, he is still adjusting to this aspect of Thai culture.

Excerpt from interview

“The tradition is the same as in Cambodia, the way we greet like putting our hands together, but I feel that here people do that more than in Cambodia... It was difficult at first. Because when greet people like that it felt unfamiliar, like the hands were not straight

because when I do that normally it's to parents. So, if I go to the temple, seeing the monks, I also don't do that. So, it felt uncomfortable. I still feel like that even now. But if I do it to my parents, it's straight and done correctly." [*“ទំនៀមទម្លាប់ដូចខ្មែរ យើង របៀបជួបគ្នាសំពះអីចឹង តែមានអារម្មណ៍ថានៅនេះគេសំពះ ច្រើនជាងនៅខ្មែរ... ពិបាកដែរ បងដំបូង។ ដោយសារពេលសំពះដូច មានអារម្មណ៍ថាមិនទំនង ដូចដែលមិនត្រង់អីចឹងព្រោះពេលសំពះ ធ្លាប់តែធ្វើដាក់តែម៉ាកនិងប៉ា។ ទោះបីជាទៅរក្ខត្តទៅអីជួបព្រះសង្ឃ ជួបអីក៏ខ្ញុំមិនសូវសំពះ ដល់ចឹងវារៀងអៀនៗដែរ។ ឥឡូវនៅតែចឹងដ ដែល។ តែបើសំពះម៉ាកប៉ា ត្រង់ ត្រឹមត្រូវធម្មតា។”]*

He also encountered a culture that initially surprised him and posed a slight challenge to adapt to—the 'senior-junior' culture. It was odd for him when people referred to him as "น้องๆ" (a term for someone younger), as he believed he might actually be older than those who addressed him that way.

Excerpt from interview

“Sometimes, I was older because I got in the university late by two years so when I addressed them as older, I felt uncomfortable. But after that, when I addressed them as older... no one cared. Like the Thai student that I'm currently living with, as a senior they addressed me as น้องๆ, which I think that it's possible that I'm older than him too. That Thai student who's sharing a room with me, he just came in this term, but when he first came, he called me น้องๆ.” [*“...ពេលខ្លះខ្ញុំអាយុបងទៀត ព្រោះអីខ្ញុំរៀនយឺតពីរឆ្នាំទៀត ចឹង ពេលហៅគាត់បងរៀងអៀនៗមាត់។ តែដល់ពេលក្រោយៗមកពេល ហៅបងនឹងទៅយើងគិត... អត់មានអ្នកណាខ្មោចទេ... ដូចថាអី ចឹងឥឡូវខ្ញុំនៅជាមួយថៃចឹង សិស្សច្បងចឹងគេហៅយើង น้องๆ មិន ស្រួលខ្ញុំបងពួកគាត់វិញទៀតមិនដឹង ម្នាក់ថៃដែលមកនៅជាមួយ ខ្ញុំថ្មីនឹង គាត់ទើបតែបានមកនៅ term មុននឹង តែពេលចូលមក ដំបូងគេហៅน้องๆ... ។”]*

The Thai language presented a challenge for him, despite thinking he was prepared beforehand. At first, he assumed it would be easy to learn. However, upon arrival, he encountered difficulties with tones, grammar, and the alphabet, which made it appear difficult to grasp.

Excerpt from autobiography

“The language barrier was one of the biggest challenges since my arrival... For instance, getting food sometimes stressed me out by just imagining myself in awkward situations with the sellers... This

could have been easily avoided if I had learned Thai language before coming to Thailand.”

Ron felt stressed when interacting with food sellers, especially in public places where he had to rely on body language. Being introverted, these situations were even more challenging for him. However, he managed to overcome his discomfort by adopting an indifferent mindset. He realized that other people didn't pay much attention to his actions, which made it easier for him to navigate these situations comfortably.

Excerpt from interview

“You know, as an introvert, it's hard to deal with awkwardness. Like... if I go and buy something and I was doing, like, sign language and stuff, and the sellers are doing back to us and there are other people watching us, like awkwardly, I might feel like it's a very hard situation, you know, but at the end of the day, like... no one cares. So, it's better for me to... deal with awkward situation.”

To overcome language barriers, he prioritized practical, real-life situations over formal self-study methods. While he occasionally utilized self-study materials to learn Thai, he discovered that practical experience produced more favorable outcomes. To improve communication, he relied on Google Translate or prepared pre-written food names ahead of time when interacting with restaurant staff.

Excerpt from interview

“At that time, I brought books to study on my own. ...mostly I need to overcome when I got to purchase something or eat something. Before I want to buy something, I think about it, open google translate and listen to how it's said. If not, I will write the words down beforehand and when I get there, I would copy the words of the food that I want to order and then hand it to the seller. That's when I don't want to experience awkward situation.” [“ពេលនឹងដូចជាខ្ញុំយកសៀវភៅយកអីមករៀនម្តងទៀត។ ...ភាគច្រើនខ្ញុំចាំបាច់ត្រូវ overcome នៅពេលដែលខ្ញុំទៅទិញអី ទៅញ៉ាំអីចឹង។ មុនខ្ញុំចង់ទិញអីចឹង ខ្ញុំនឹកក្នុងចិត្ត បើក google translate ចុចស្តាប់ថា គេនិយាយថាម៉េចអោយហើយ បើមិនចឹងទេ ខ្ញុំសរសេរអីមួយទុក មុនហើយទៅដល់កន្លែងនឹងខ្ញុំចម្លងឈ្មោះម្ហូបអីចឹងអោយគេ។ អា នឹងនៅពេលដែលខ្ញុំអត់ចង់ជួប awkward situation អីចឹង។”]

His challenge in communication extended not only to Thai individuals outside the university, but also within the university setting. Initially, he tried to speak English with his Thai friends, but they often didn't respond or understand him. To adapt, he relied on body language during his first and second years.

Excerpt from interview

"It depends on the people. Sometimes they don't say anything back, sometimes they don't understand. Then when they don't say anything back, so I used body language again. At first the Thai student spoke English... during first year, second year. But after that, there were no more Thai students. Now when I meet Thai students, I will just use Thai with them. I don't speak English with them anymore. But these days... I don't get to meet the Thai students much. So, it was difficult. So, I have been thinking about playing games with the Thai students in order to improve my Thai language." [*“តាមមនុស្ស ពេលខ្លះគេមិននិយាយអីមកវិញ ពេលខ្លះគេអត់យល់ដែរ ដល់ចឹងពេលដែលគេអត់ទៅ ចឹងយើងប្រើកាយវិការអីដែលចឹងទៅ។ ថៃដំបូងៗនិយាយដែរ... ឆ្នាំទីមួយ ទីពីរអីនឹងនិយាយដែរ។ ដល់ក្រោយមកលែងមានថៃរៀនមួយហើយ។ ឥឡូវជួបថៃនិយាយថៃវិញនឹង។ លែងនិយាយអង់គ្លេសជាមួយថៃហើយ។ គេឥឡូវ... អត់មានសួរថៃបានជួបទេ ចឹងទៅពិបាក។*]

During his internship, he faced language barriers despite his efforts to learn Thai by studying "Thai for Foreigners" and watching Thai movies. He found it difficult to understand Thai speakers and, looking back, regretted not having learned Thai earlier. He came to the realization that achieving fluency in the language was a significant challenge.

Excerpt from interview

"There was one time I did my internship. Before I went there, I read a book called Thai for foreigner. And at that time, I read the book, watch Thai movies. And it has helped. But it was already late when I decided to learn Thai before my internship, because I should have learned the language before this. And from that time, it has already been half a year. And so, I thought that I could go out and understand others even more. It's just I couldn't speak well. But when I learned Thai, the purpose was to be able to communicate with people outside the university when I go outside." [*“... ពេលមួយនឹងខ្ញុំទៅ intern... មុនខ្ញុំទៅនឹង ខ្ញុំអានសៀវភៅ Thai for foreigner ។*]

ហើយពេលនឹងខ្ញុំអាន... មើលរឿងថៃ... ពេលនឹងបានជួយខ្លះដែរ...
តែពេលនឹងរៀង late ដែរហើយ ព្រោះយូរហើយមិនរៀន មករៀន
ពេល intern ហើយបើគិតទៅ តាំងពីពេលនឹងមក ដូចជាកន្លះឆ្នាំ
ហើយ ដល់ពេលចឹងទៅខ្ញុំគិតថាខ្ញុំអាចចេញទៅក្រៅស្ថាប័នគេយល់
បាន តែគ្រាន់និយាយមិនសូវកើត... តែពេលដែលខ្ញុំរៀនថៃនឹង គឺ
គោលបំណងរៀនដោយសារទំនាក់ទំនងអ្នកនៅក្រៅនៅពេលចេញ
ក្រៅអីចឹង។”]

Initially, he wanted to learn Thai to facilitate daily interactions outside of university, such as dining out or shopping. However, he found it more challenging than anticipated and regretted not studying the language beforehand upon arriving in Thailand. This assumption was based on the belief that Thai would be easy due to cultural similarities and shared word meanings, which ultimately led to underestimating its complexity.

Excerpt from interview

“I studied for about a week. Because I thought that it would be easy to learn because we are close to each other, and thinking that we have some words that are the same. Because of that, I thought Thai language was easier to learn.” [“រៀនដែររហូត រៀនបានមួយអាទិត្យ។ ដោយសារខ្ញុំគិតថាស្រួលរៀន ដោយសារយើងនៅជិតគ្នា ដោយសារតែយើងគិតថាពាក្យខ្លះមានន័យដូចគ្នា។ តែប៉ុន្តែនឹងទេ គិតប៉ុន្តែនឹងខ្ញុំគិតថាភាសាថៃស្រួលរៀនទេ។”]

In an attempt to overcome his language barrier, he sought assistance from his university. The university provided Thai language courses through the Center of International Affairs (CIA). These courses were offered for a week, with each session lasting 4 to 6 hours. To ensure convenience, the sessions were held after regular class hours. He initially attended some of these courses but eventually decided not to continue. His reason was that the courses mainly focused on daily conversation, a skill he already felt proficient in. Looking back, however, he regrets not fully utilizing this opportunity. He believes that if he had continued with the courses, he would have been better equipped to communicate with others who attended.

Excerpt from interview

“At that time, CIA offered Thai language course for a week long, lasting about 4 to 6 hours. But that’s extra classes, any student can go to study if they want. But at that time, because I thought I knew quite enough already, and they studied just daily conversation. So, I decided not to continue joining... but at that time, if I continued

studying, I would have had people to practice Thai with.” [“កាលនឹងដូច CIA... បើកថ្នាក់ថៃ ថ្នាក់ភាសានិយាយមួយអាទិត្យ។ ពេលនឹងដូចគេមានរៀន 4 ទៅ 6 ម៉ោង។ តែអានឹងម៉ោងក្រៅ បើយើងចង់ទៅរៀន យើងទៅរៀនចឹងទៅ។ តែកាលនឹងដោយសារតែខ្ញុំគិតថា ខ្ញុំរៀនចេះរៀនគ្រាន់ហើយ ដល់ចឹងទៅ បើគេរៀនតែ daily conversation ចឹងដដែល។ ចឹងទៅក៏អត់បាន join គេទៅ... តែពេលនឹងបើបានចូលរៀន អាចមានគ្នានិយាយអាចល្អដែរឯង។”]

During his internship in his third academic year in Thailand, Ron encountered significant language barriers at his workplace, where English was rarely spoken. These barriers hindered his ability to fully engage in tasks, leaving him frustrated with his limited Thai proficiency. Additionally, communicating with construction workers who spoke neither Thai nor English proved to be a challenging task. Ron had expected fluent English usage among engineers, but the language barrier put pressure on him during fieldwork.

Excerpt from interview

At the site that I worked, there was only one person who could use English. So, I didn't receive many task when I was there, because giving me a tasks requires them to explain to me in English thoroughly. And at that place, everyone uses Thai. But there were Thai students who were there with me, they were the only be tasked to do this and that. Then when it came to me, I had to go ask those Thai students about what to do and how to do them... Sometimes when I listen to them, I tried to get a grasp on the meaning of what they said. I could follow them and observe them, but if I was tasked to observe the workers, I couldn't do that... and the workers were also Burmese. And they also didn't speak Thai. But because I am in Thailand, most of the workers are Cambodians, Burmese, or Thai. So, the engineers with the workers would communicate through sketches or drawings. There was a Cambodian senior with me, we would stick together, at that time, without him, I would be lost. When we're completing a task, I could ask him and I could help him, too... for engineers, I think that we need to be able to use English but in reality, most of the engineers here used Thai. At that time, because I thought that doing field work was challenging due to difficulty in communication. So, I requested to work in the office. But I still had to do both. If not, what can I do? There's no other

way, other than do both office and field work... I still follow them... I still try to listen to them. [“មួយ site ខ្ញុំនឹង អ្នកប្រើនិងចេះភាសាអង់គ្លេសនឹងមានតែម្នាក់។ គេមិនសូវប្រើអោយយើងធ្វើអីដោយសារគេដឹងថា ប្រើខ្ញុំចឹងត្រូវមានការពន្យល់ មានការបកស្រាយជាភាសាអង់គ្លេសអីចឹងទៅ ហើយដល់ពេលនៅកន្លែងនឹងគេប្រើតែថៃសុទ្ធចឹងទៅ តែមានមិត្តភក្តិថៃដែលគាត់ជាជនជាតិថៃនៅកន្លែង intern នឹង គេហៅតែពួកគាត់ចឹងទៅ ដល់ពេលយើងទាល់តែទៅសួរពីរបីនាក់នឹងថាត្រូវធ្វើអី និងត្រូវធ្វើម៉េចៗ... ពេលខ្លះខ្ញុំស្តាប់គេ គាត់ន័យៗបាន ដូចយើងនៅតែដើរតាមគេមើលគេធ្វើអ្វីៗបានចឹង តែគ្រាន់ថាឧទាហរណ៍គេអោយយើងទៅឈរមើលជាង ឈរមើលអីខ្លួនឯងយើងធ្វើអត់បាន... ជាងនឹងក៏សុទ្ធតែជាជនជាតិភូមាដែរ។ ប៉ុន្តែដោយសារតែយើងនៅថៃ កម្មករភាគច្រើនមានខ្មែរ មានភូមា មានថៃ... ចឹងទៅវិស្វករជាមួយនឹងជាងភូមានឹងនិយាយគ្នាអត់បានទេ បានតែត្រូវបកស្រាយអីចឹង។ មានសិស្សច្បងខ្មែរមួយ ពេលនឹងខ្ញុំមានតែពីរនាក់គាត់នឹង ដើរតែពីរនាក់គាត់ទៅ ពេលនឹងបើអត់មានគាត់ទេ ខ្ញុំមិនដឹងខ្យល់អីទេ។ ដល់ពេលធ្វើអីៗចឹងខ្ញុំសួរគាត់អីចឹងទៅ ដល់ពេលមានអីត្រូវជួយយើងអាចជួយធ្វើបាន... engineer ខ្ញុំគិតថាយ៉ាងណាក៏ត្រូវចេះអង់គ្លេសចេះអី តែដល់ពេលមែនទែន វិស្វករអីភាគច្រើនថៃៗសុទ្ធ។ ពេលនឹងដោយសារតែខ្ញុំគិតថាវា field ចឹងវាពិបាក communication វាពិបាកអីចឹង។ ចឹងខ្ញុំសុំគេធ្វើ office work អីចឹង។ តែដូចនៅតែធ្វើ ព្រោះថាធ្វើម៉េចបង ខ្ញុំមានទៅតាមណាកើត ខ្ញុំមានតែធ្វើចឹង... នៅតែដើរតាមគេ... គេនិយាយអីៗចេះតែព្យាយាមស្តាប់គេចឹងទៅ។”]

During that period, he managed the difficulties by prioritizing the understanding of the main message rather than focusing on every detail while listening to spoken Thai. He relied on drawings, sketches, and gestures instead of verbal communication. Despite the language barrier, he conscientiously completed assignments, making an effort to comprehend and observe to the best of his ability.

The following section will discuss Ron's intercultural experiences and knowledge of 'Others' before arriving in Thailand, and his intercultural challenges and coping strategies after arriving in Thailand, in order to help identify the factors that shape his intercultural citizenship within in the Thai context.

4.1.4.4 Ron's Intercultural Citizenship

This section explores the complexities that shape Ron's development as an intercultural citizen, drawing from autobiographies, interviews, and shadowing observations to provide a view of his intercultural skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

Ron's journey highlights the pivotal role technology plays in contemporary intercultural exchanges. Initially limited in direct cultural interactions,

Ron utilized digital tools such as Google Translate and various social media platforms to bridge language gaps and connect with diverse cultures. His proficiency in digital literacy illustrates Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986), which posits that the effectiveness of communication technologies varies based on their capacity to convey complex information.

Furthermore, Ron's understanding of cultural differences has been significantly shaped by digital media, reflecting trends in Intercultural Communication Theory (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992). His use of online platforms to explore Japanese history and Thai culture exemplifies an adaptive learning method, extending traditional intercultural education into the digital realm and showcasing how digital environments can enhance cultural knowledge acquisition.

The evolution of Ron's attitudes towards cultural diversity is analyzed through Social Penetration Theory (Altman, 1973). This theory suggests that relationships deepen over time through gradual, layer-by-layer disclosure, leading to increased understanding and connection. Ron's transition from reliance on stereotypes to engaging directly with diverse cultures demonstrates a significant shift. He has moved from superficial encounters to authentic interactions, particularly within Thai culture, where his experiences illustrate a deepening of cultural understanding and integration.

Ron's intercultural citizenship exemplifies a seamless integration of traditional and digital experiences. His ability to navigate cultural complexities through both face-to-face and online interactions highlights his versatile intercultural competence. His story illustrates the importance of combining modern communication tools with conventional methods of engagement, underscoring the evolving nature of intercultural citizenship. This narrative reflects the expanded role of digital literacy in contemporary intercultural settings and emphasizes its critical importance in fostering comprehensive intercultural understanding and interaction.

4.1.5 Case Study 5: Don

4.1.5.1 Don's Profile

Don is a third-year male university undergraduate student majoring in Mechanical Engineering at Suranaree University of Technology (SUT), Thailand. He was born and raised in Battambang province, Cambodia and has had a blend of public and private schooling. Battambang is the second-largest city in Cambodia and known for its historical significance and cultural heritage. The province has a diverse population that includes ethnic Khmer, Chinese, and Vietnamese communities,

creating a multilingual environment where languages like Khmer, English, and French are commonly used.

Don began his primary education in a public school until 2nd grade before transferring to Newton School, a private institution, for 3rd to 6th grade. The presence of private schools like Newton reflects the growing importance of English as a medium for education and business in Battambang. After his primary education, Don completed his secondary education at Preah Monivong High School.

During high school, Don attended supplementary classes with a foreign tutor in Battambang for three months to improve his English language skills. However, most of his English learning came from high school classes taught by Cambodian teachers. Learning French was not as successful for Don due to inadequate instruction, resulting in a weak foundation in the language. This is a common challenge among Cambodian students in multilingual environments.

After high school, Don received a scholarship to pursue engineering at the Institute of Technology of Cambodia (ITC), where courses are taught in English or French but instructions are given in Khmer. The trilingual academic setting posed challenges for Don, highlighting the difficulties of managing multiple languages in a technical field. It also sheds light on the broader issue of multilingual education in Cambodia.

With the support of his family and friends, Don applied for and received a scholarship to study at Suranaree University of Technology (SUT) in Thailand. This decision brought significant changes to his academic and social life. Don completed his first year of studies remotely and arrived in Thailand in 2021 to start his second year. Don describes himself as introverted and lacking confidence, which hindered his participation in extracurricular activities, volunteering, and international events during high school. This self-perception, along with limited exposure to foreign interactions, highlights an issue among Cambodian students. Cultural and educational barriers often prevent them from engaging in international or intercultural activities.

When Don arrived in Thailand, he found himself surrounded by a diverse community of students from the Philippines, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar. In his third year, the size of his class decreased as students started to specialize in different areas of engineering. However, Don still grew his social circle by actively participating in various activities organized by the university. These activities included informal gatherings, trips organized by the department, and events organized by the Center of International Affairs (CIA). Through these events, Don was able to network with both international and Thai program students. He even took part in events like

the gPBL camp, where he both participated as a participant and worked as a staff member.

Don's intercultural competence and social confidence experienced substantial growth through these experiences. His involvement with the international community at SUT, including interactions with Thai seniors, visiting students from Indonesia and Japan, and peers from various programs, indicates a noticeable change from his previous introverted demeanor. This transformation underscores the importance of international educational environments in promoting intercultural learning and personal development.

4.1.5.2 Don's Intercultural Experiences and Knowledge of 'Others'

Following the profile description, this section delves into Don's intercultural experiences and knowledge of 'others' before his arrival in Thailand. Don had limited exposure to different cultures, and these experiences were largely superficial, lacking in-depth intercultural exchanges. His interactions primarily involved brief encounters with foreign tourists and basic communication in English during his high school years. Table 4.13 provides a summary of these experiences, followed by a detailed exploration of each context.

Table 4.13 Don's Intercultural Experiences Before Arriving in Thailand

Social Context	Intercultural Experience
During Primary Education (In Cambodia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interacted with foreign tourists
During Secondary Education (In Cambodia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studied English with a teacher from Australia
After Graduating from High School (In Cambodia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travelled to Thailand with his family • Interacted with his relative in Thailand

Intercultural Experiences Before Coming to Thailand

Don had very limited intercultural experiences before coming to Thailand, which means he had little knowledge or understanding of other cultures. In fact, his earliest interactions with people from different countries happened when he was a child and helped his mother sell items to tourists near a park. However, because he didn't speak much English at the time, these encounters were mostly limited to basic greetings and simple transactions.

Excerpt from interview

“Back then, I was young. At my house, we sold things... because at that place was the park, foreigners would walk and pass by that park... and sometimes there were foreign customers, and my mom would force me to go and talk to them but I don't know how to

talk to them... so I could only say hi, my name is... like what can I get you... something like that... like my English was not good enough.” [“ពេលនឹងកាលនៅពីក្មេងៗ ផ្ទះខ្ញុំលក់ភ័ន្តលក់អី... ព្រោះកន្លែងនឹងសួរច្បារនឹង ជនជាតិបរទេសដើរមកលេង... ហើយពេលខ្លះក៏មានភ្ញៀវជនជាតិមក ហើយពេលនឹងម៉ាក់ខ្ញុំដេញអោយខ្ញុំទៅនិយាយជាមួយជនជាតិគេនឹង តែខ្ញុំអត់ចេះនិយាយទេ... ចឹងពេលនឹងយើងគ្រាន់តែនិយាយបានថា hi ខ្ញុំឈ្មោះអីៗចឹង ចង់បានអីចឹងក៏ចក្កច... ចង់និយាយថាពេលនឹងអង់គ្លេសយើងនៅស្នាក់ស្នើរ”]

Don's first formal exposure to a foreign culture occurred during his high school years when he enrolled in English classes at a private education center. It was a notable change for Don, as he had primarily been exposed to English spoken with a Cambodian accent. At first, he struggled to comprehend the Australian teacher's accent, but with time and the teacher's deliberate effort to speak slowly, Don eventually adjusted and could understand the lessons.

Excerpt from interview

“Used to study with a foreigner for three months... if I remember correctly, he was from Australia. At that time, I was in my 10th grade... because when I got into the 11th grade, I stopped studying English. At first, it was difficult to understand the accent because it was different. Like Khmer accent, it was monotone, there was no accent, then hearing the teacher for the first time, it was challenging. But later on, the teacher tried to speak slowly, and I adapted, I got used to the teacher's accent, and I understood.” [“ធ្លាប់រៀនជាមួយបរទេសបានបីខែ... ដូចជាមកពីអូស្ត្រាលីតាមចាំៗ ពេលនឹងថ្នាក់ទី 10... ព្រោះពេលឡើងទី 11 ខ្ញុំឈប់រៀនអង់គ្លេសដំបូងៗ ពិបាកស្តាប់ពីព្រោះ accent វាខុសគ្នា យើងខ្មែរ accent យើងរៀនស្នើ ក្នុងវាអត់មាន ដល់ជួបជាមួយគាត់ដំបូងៗទៅវាពិបាកស្តាប់។ តែដល់យូរៗទៅគាត់ព្យាយាមនិយាយយឺតៗហើយ យើង adapt យើងស្តាប់ទៅនឹងក្នុងរបស់គាត់ ទៅយើងក៏ស្តាប់បាន។”]

After graduating from high school, Don had the opportunity to travel outside of Cambodia for the first time. He visited Thailand with his family, which gave him the chance to observe and compare cultural similarities and differences. However, his interactions with the local culture were superficial, mostly limited to observation. Don noticed that Thai and Cambodian markets were similar, but the main distinction was the larger crowds in Thailand.

Excerpt from interview

“At that time, I finished my 12th grade, and my family took me to visit... Pattaya, Bangkok... At that time, I didn’t pay much attention about Thai people because... like going to Pattaya, there wasn’t many Thai people as well, mostly there were foreigners, and as for the sellers – they are Cambodians. And I also used to cross a border, like that border is called border 400 at Pailin. At that border, you can walk around the market... it’s similar to the Cambodian side, but the difference is that they were more crowded.” [“ពេលនឹង កាលប្រឡងទី 12 ចប់ភ្លាម។ ទៅក៏អ្នកផ្ទះនាំមកលេងនៅ... Pattaya, Bangkok... ពេលមកលេងនឹងខ្ញុំអត់សូវបានចាប់អារម្មណ៍ អីច្រើនជាមួយជនជាតិថៃដែរ ព្រោះ... ទៅPattaya អីចឹង ក៏ថៃមិន សូវមានច្រើនអីប៉ុន្មានដែរ ភាគច្រើនជនជាតិ ហើយបើអ្នកលក់ដូរ អីក៏សុទ្ធតែខ្មែរ។ ហើយ... ធ្លាប់ទៅតាមច្រកព្រំដែន... ហៅថាច្រក 400... នៅប៉ៃលិន។ ចូលច្រកនឹងយើងដើរមកផ្សារអីធម្មតា... ដូច ខ្មែរអីយើងដែរ គ្រាន់តែគេរៀងអ្វីអរជាងយើង។”]

In addition, Don had a Cambodian uncle who resided in Thailand and was married to a Thai woman. However, their communication was hindered by a language barrier, as his nephew only spoke Thai. This barrier further hindered any substantial intercultural exchange between them.

Excerpt from interview

“Actually, I also have an uncle in Thailand. And he got married to a Thai woman. And, his son, is a full-fledged Thai because he couldn’t speak Khmer, he could only speak Thai. I used to speak with him, but we couldn’t understand each other.” [“តាមពិតទៅ ខ្ញុំមានអ៊ីនៅថៃ។ ហើយគាត់រៀបការជាមួយប្រពន្ធថៃ។ ហើយដល់ចឹង ទៅកូនគាត់លក្ខណៈថៃតែម្តង ព្រោះកូនគាត់អត់ចេះនិយាយខ្មែរ ទេ ចេះតែថៃទេ។ ធ្លាប់និយាយគ្នាជាមួយគាត់ តែនិយាយស្តាប់គ្នា អត់បានទេ។”]

Don's exposure to foreign individuals was limited before arriving in Thailand. He had only surface-level interactions and did not have the chance for meaningful intercultural exchange during his high school years.

Excerpt from autobiography

“During my high school years, I lived in a somewhat insulated environment where opportunities to interact with people from other countries were... non-existent.”

Knowledge of ‘Others’

Table 4.14 provides a summary of Don’s knowledge of ‘Others’ before arriving in Thailand, followed by a detailed description that elaborates on the summarized content.

Table 4.14 Don’s Knowledge of ‘Others’ before arriving in Thailand

Timeline	Knowledge of ‘Others’
In Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural proximity between Thailand and Cambodia • Geographical proximity between Thailand and Cambodia • Education system in Thailand

Don’s perception of Thailand before he arrived was heavily influenced by a friend who was studying there. This friend shared insights about Thai society and the education system, which only strengthened Don’s belief in the cultural and historical similarities between Thailand and Cambodia. This belief was rooted in the shared histories of the two countries, further solidifying Don’s conviction that they were closely interconnected in terms of culture and traditions.

Excerpt from interview

“I also had friends who came to study in Thailand, too, and I asked my friend, which I received the response saying that it was not that different from Cambodia. I think Cambodia and Thailand, in the past, is the same. So that made me thought both countries borrow each other, therefore it’s similar to each other.” [“ខ្ញុំក៏មានមិត្តភក្តិមករៀននៅថៃដែរ ចឹងទៅខ្ញុំសាកសួរគេទៅ គេក៏ប្រាប់ថាវាមិនសូវខុសគ្នាពីខ្មែរប៉ុន្មានដែរ។ គិតថាខ្មែរនិងថៃពីមុនវាដូចគ្នា ចឹងបានខ្ញុំគិតថាវាមានការខ្ចីគ្នាខ្លះអីខ្លះ ចឹងបានរស្រដៀងគ្នា”]

However, his friend also pointed out significant differences, specifically in the education systems of the two countries. According to his friend, Thailand’s education system was superior, providing more practical learning opportunities and better resources, such as equipment for hands-on learning. These advantages strongly influenced Don’s choice to study in Thailand, as he believed that obtaining a degree from there would be more prestigious and globally recognized.

Excerpt from interview

“...based on what I asked my friend about the education there, my friend said it’s good. In Cambodia... like for a whole year, there was no actual practice. In Thailand, there are equipment for

students, most importantly there are equipment for us to conduct tests. And also like, studying in Thailand is cooler. Like the country here is more popular than Cambodia, and most countries know Thailand, so if I got a degree from Thailand, it's like cooler than Cambodia.” [“...តាមដែលខ្ញុំស្ម័គ្រចិត្តក្នុងការរៀននៅនេះ ម៉ែចដែរ គាត់និយាយថា ដូចនៅរៀននៅខ្មែរចឹង.. ពេលខ្លះមួយឆ្នាំចឹងសឹងតែជាអត់មានអនុវត្តអីតែម្តង។ ដល់មកនេះគេមានឧបករណ៍អោយយើងត្រឹមត្រូវ និយាយអោយច្បាស់គេមាន equipment អោយយើង test ។ ហើយលក្ខណៈថា ការដែលយើងរៀននៅប្រទេសថៃ វា cool ជាង។ លក្ខណៈប្រទេសគេនៅនេះ គេលក្ខណៈល្បីជាងប្រទេសយើងនៅខ្មែរ ហើយប្រទេសច្រើនស្គាល់ប្រទេសថៃ ចឹងបើយើងបានសញ្ញាបត្រពីប្រទេសថៃ យើងលក្ខណៈ cool ជាងខ្មែរ។”]

Furthermore, the fact that Thailand is geographically close to Cambodia was a significant factor in Don's decision to study there. He appreciated the convenience of being able to visit home frequently, which helped him avoid distractions and homesickness that could have affected his studies had he chosen a more distant country.

Excerpt from interview

“When it's closer from school to home, riding on a car home, it would take about 6 hours until I arrive home. Leaving from here at 8 am, I will arrive home at around 2pm. So, it's easier to visit home. But if it was far from home and I didn't get to go home, every day I would just sit and miss home like when could I go home. It's distracting, which I couldn't focus on my studies.” [“ពេលទីតាំងជិតគ្នាចឹងទៅ ពីសាលាទៅផ្ទះ ជិះឡានខ្ញុំចំណាយពេល 6 ម៉ោងអីទេដល់ផ្ទះ ចេញពីនេះម៉ោង 8 ដល់ផ្ទះប្រហែលម៉ោង 2 អីទេ។ ដល់ពេលចឹងងាយស្រួលក្នុងការទៅផ្ទះ។ តែប្រសិនបើយើងនៅឆ្ងាយ យើងអត់បានទៅផ្ទះ មួយថ្ងៃៗអង្គុយនឹកតែផ្ទះនឹងឯង ដូចកាលបានទៅផ្ទះ អីចឹងទៅ វា distract ។ វាធ្វើអោយយើងអត់ focus ទៅលើការរៀន។”]

The following section will outline Don's intercultural challenges and coping strategies after arriving in Thailand.

4.1.5.3 Don's Intercultural Challenges and Coping Strategies

This section explores Don's intercultural challenges and the coping strategies he used after moving to Thailand. Drawing on his previous intercultural experiences and knowledge of different cultures, this analysis focuses on the specific challenges Don encountered. These challenges included his limited English proficiency, difficulties in understanding different English accents, language barriers, adjusting to

Thai classroom culture, and feeling anxious when interacting with communities that followed different cultural norms. It is important to note that these challenges were not solely linguistic but also closely linked to cultural transitions and adapting to new norms and practices.

Upon his arrival during the pandemic, Don faced the immediate challenge of navigating online classes. The language barrier was made even more difficult by the varying English accents during virtual lectures. This initial hurdle emphasized the limitations of his English language proficiency in an EME curriculum, which posed significant challenges to his academic success.

Table 4.15 provides a summary of Don's intercultural challenges and coping strategies after arriving in Thailand, followed by a detailed description providing more information about the summarized content.

Table 4.15 Don's Intercultural Challenges and Coping Strategies After Arriving in Thailand

Intercultural Challenges	Coping Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English language proficiency • Language Barrier in daily interactions • Understanding diverse English accents • Transitioning from Cambodian to Thai classroom culture • Norm-related anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using application to review lessons • Utilizing Google Translate for communication • Finding support among fellow Cambodians • Language assistance provided by peers • Learning Thai through media and interactions • Receiving language assistance from peers

Don faced various challenges while trying to pursue his education in Thailand. In order to overcome these challenges, he adopted several coping strategies. The next sections will thoroughly explore these challenges and strategies, using Don's narratives and interview excerpts to provide a better understanding of his experiences.

During the pandemic, Don faced a significant challenge with online classes, especially when it came to understanding the various English accents of his Thai and foreign lecturers. This difficulty was made worse by technical issues like unreliable internet connections, which further hindered his ability to follow the lectures. Don's reflection on this experience highlights the importance of language proficiency in an English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) context.

Excerpt from autobiography

“Among these challenges, the most significant one has been the language barrier. My proficiency in English was limited when I first

arrived and since most of the lectures are conducted in English, it was quite challenging for me to keep up with the coursework.”

Don's academic background in Cambodia did not equip him for the linguistic diversity he encountered in Thailand. In Cambodia, his education was solely conducted in Khmer by Cambodian teachers, making it a monolingual experience. However, when he arrived in Thailand, he found himself in an environment with foreign students and instructors, which meant he had to quickly adapt to new linguistic and cultural norms.

Don used a recording application to help him deal with these challenges. This application allowed him to listen to lectures again and go over difficult material at his own speed. This approach shows how Don takes initiative to overcome language barriers and improve his academic performance over time.

Excerpt from interview

“Actually, when I first arrived in the first term, I failed almost every subject... like when I came here, some of the lecturers were Thai or Canadian, so the accents were different, so it was difficult to understand, adding on to the Zoom sometimes the internet was not stable too... so it was hard to understand. And then from the on, I tried to search for new strategy to overcome it. I downloaded an application for recording video... any points in the lecture that I didn't understand, I could listen again. Then I noted them down, and so I improved than before.” [“និយាយតាមគ្រង់នៅពេលដែលខ្ញុំមកដំបូង term ដំបូង ឆ្លាក់សឹងគ្រប់មុខ ... ពេលមកនេះអីចឹងនៅគ្រូខ្លះថៃ គ្រូខ្លះគាត់មកពីកាណាដាអីចឹងនៅ accent គាត់ផ្សេងៗគ្នា ចឹងពិបាកក្នុងការស្តាប់មែនទែន ហើយគ្រូបង្វៀននៅនឹង zoom ពេលខ្លះអ៊ីនធឺណិតវាអត់ stable... វាពិបាកស្តាប់។ ហើយបន្ទាប់មកចាប់ផ្តើមពី term ក្រោយខ្ញុំក៏ស្វែងរក strategy ថ្មីសម្រាប់ overcome it ។ ខ្ញុំ download application មកសម្រាប់ record video នឹង... កន្លែងណាឃើងអត់យល់ឃើងស្តាប់សាឡើងវិញ ហើយកត់ note ទុក ដល់ចឹងនៅខ្ញុំក៏លក្ខណៈ improve ជាងមុន...”]

The language barrier went beyond the classroom and affected Don's interactions with his classmates. At first, he found it difficult to communicate effectively due to his limited English proficiency and unfamiliarity with the informal, conversational English used by his peers. However, with consistent practice and

support from his friends, especially from the Filipino community, Don was able to enhance his language skills and gain confidence.

Excerpt from interview

“When I came here, my friends spoke English. And then at first, I couldn’t understand English well. So, I felt awkward, everyone spoke English, and I just stood there and I couldn’t say anything... When I used English, it’s like it’s taken straight out of a book, it’s not daily life English speaking. So, some of the words felt unnatural, but my friends helped me in telling me about the pronunciation because sometimes I also pronounce incorrectly like the words snack and snake, so they helped ... like this word is used like this, and that word is used like that. They also helped teach me the spelling, like which one is correct. Like right now, sitting with the Filipino students, I never check the dictionary. Like when I write my report, words that I don’t know how to write, I asked them...” [“...ពេលមកនេះជួបមិត្តភក្តិអីចឹង គេនិយាយជាអង់គ្លេស ហើយពេលមកដំបូងៗខ្ញុំស្តាប់អង់គ្លេសក៏អត់សូវបានហើយនិយាយអង់គ្លេសក៏អត់សូវបានដែរ ពេលនឹង។ ដល់ពេលនឹងចឹងយើងមានអារម្មណ៍ថាវា awkward គេនិយាយអង់គ្លេសព្រាកហើយយើងឈរឆ្លឹងៗនិយាយអីជាមួយគេអត់បាន... នៅពេលដែលខ្ញុំប្រើទៅវាលក្ខណៈអង់គ្លេសដែលដកចេញមកពីសៀវភៅ វាមិនមែនជា daily life អង់គ្លេស speaking ដល់ចឹងទៅពាក្យខ្លះវាស្តាប់ទៅរៀងឆ្គងៗ តែពួកគាត់ពេលខ្លះក៏ជួយប្រាប់ចឹងទៅថា អានេះប្រើចេះហើយ pronunciation ចេះ ព្រោះពេលខ្លះខ្ញុំក៏ pronounce ខុសដែរ ដូចពាក្យ snack និង snake អីចឹង ពេលខ្លះយើង pronounce អីចឹងទៅ... ពាក្យនឹងយើងត្រូវនិយាយចេះៗអីចឹងទៅ គាត់ជួយបង្រៀនយើងដែរថាអង់គ្លេសម៉េចវាត្រូវហើយ spelling ចេះៗ ព្រោះដូចគ្នាៗនឹងអង្គុយជាមួយហ្វីលីពីនចឹង ខ្ញុំអត់ដែល check dictionary ទេ។ ខ្ញុំសរសេរ report អីចឹងទៅ ពាក្យណាខ្ញុំអត់ចេះសរសេរចឹង ខ្ញុំសួរពួកគាត់...”]

Don faced challenges when interacting with the local Thai community, especially when it came to basic communication in Thai. His inability to speak the language made everyday tasks, like buying food or communicating with university staff who didn't speak English, incredibly difficult. At first, he relied on body language, but he quickly realized that this approach had its limitations.

Excerpt from autobiography

“Another obstacle I faced was my inability to speak Thai. When I initially arrived here, it was daunting for me to venture out on my

own, whether it was to buy food or other essentials. Communication with Thai people, such as dormitory guards, shopkeepers, or individuals on campus, was also a challenge”

During his hospital quarantine, this challenge became even more difficult for him due to the language barrier. Communicating with medical staff became a challenge. However, Don found a way to overcome this obstacle by learning important Thai phrases and utilizing Google Translate. He did acknowledge that there were limitations to using this tool, particularly in technical or medical situations.

Excerpt from interview

“When I took the bus, like I wanted to go to B1 but I didn’t know how to tell the driver... I could only say a few words. Like when I went to buy thing... I don’t know how eat spicy... so I wanted to ask them if it’s spicy or not, but I didn’t know how. And sometimes, when they asked what I wanted, I didn’t know how to respond to them either... I could only point. And when they asked if I wanted more rice, I didn’t understand them, I could only nod.” [... ពេលខ្ញុំ ជិះឡាន យើងចង់ប្រាប់គេថាចង់ឈប់នៅ B1 តែអត់ដឹងប្រាប់គេ ថាម៉េច... ពេលនឹងយើងចេះមួយម៉ាត់ៗ ដែរ។ ដូចពេលយើងទៅ ទិញអី... ខ្ញុំអត់ចេះញុំាហិរទេ... ចឹងចង់សួរគេថាអាត់ហិរអត់ តែ អត់ដឹងសួរម៉េច។ ហើយពេលខ្លះ ពេលគេសួរថាចង់បានអី ក៏មិន ដឹងថាប្រាប់គេម៉េចដែរ... បានត្រឹមចង្អុល។ ហើយពេលគេសួរថាម បាយអីចឹង ស្តាប់អត់បានទេ ចេះតែងក់ក្បាលទេ...”]

Another challenging situation he faced due to the language barrier occurred during his hospital stay. As he arrived, he was immediately placed in quarantine due to the ongoing pandemic. Throughout this period, he encountered difficulties in communicating with the hospital staff, who did not speak English, while he had no knowledge of Thai. At first, he relied on non-verbal communication, such as pointing or gesturing, but soon realized its limitations. Moreover, when he attempted to communicate in English by speaking or writing down terms, the staff often didn't understand him because they used more specialized medical terminology. In order to enhance understanding and communication between them, he began to use specific terms commonly used by the hospital staff. Occasionally, both parties resorted to Google Translate for assistance, although its effectiveness was limited and some translations didn't make sense.

Excerpt from interview

“At that time... for 8 days, I stayed only at the hospital and no one spoke English there, and it was very difficult... When they asked me something, they would write in google translate, which the translation didn’t make sense... when I ordered food, I could only write ข้าวมันไก่. So, during that 8-day quarantine, I ate only that ...Then I told them I want to go to pee, but they didn’t understand, they didn’t understand the word ‘pee,’ and then when they wrote the word for me, it was written as ‘urinate. So, from then on, if I wanted to use the bathroom, I would use that word... as well as body language.” [“ពេលនឹង... 8 ថ្ងៃនឹងនៅតែក្នុងពេទ្យហើយពេទ្យនឹងអត់និយាយអង់គ្លេសទៀត... ពេលគេសួរអីចឹង គេសរសេរក្នុង google translate ហើយ google translate ពេលដែល translate មកវាអត់ make sense... ពេលនឹងម្ហូបអត់ដឹងថា កម្លាំងម៉េច ចេះសរសេរតែ ข้าวมันไก่ មួយគត់។ ចឹង quarantine 8 ថ្ងៃនឹងខ្ញុំញ៉ាំតែអាសិនសុទ្ធ... ហើយយើងប្រាប់គេថា I want to go to pee នៅគេស្តាប់អត់យល់ គេអត់ដឹង pee នឹងអីគេទេហើយដល់ពេលគេសរសេរមក urinate ។ ...ដល់ចឹងទៅក្រោយពីនឹងទៅបើខ្ញុំចង់ចូលបន្ទប់ទឹកចឹង ទាល់តែប្រើពាក្យនឹង... ជាមួយនឹង body language ផង”]

Don's experiences underscore the significance of linguistic and cultural adaptation when it comes to overcoming intercultural challenges. In his second year, Don realized the importance of learning Thai and started actively immersing himself in the language. He used Thai movies, music, and conversations with friends to improve his language skills, and this, in turn, enabled him to interact more smoothly with both Thai and international communities.

Excerpt from interview

“Then as I got into my second year... I tried learning Thai through Thai movies or listened to Thai songs. I like to listen. So, like my Thai friends, when we’re eating together, they spoke Thai with me a bit, and I responded to them back too... and also like the dorm security... she tends to ask me where I came from, what I did, where I went to study in order for me practice speaking Thai with her... as I got into my second year, I tried to help myself as much as possible... like I can search google and try saying it... unless it’s important like going to the hospital... then I may need my senior’s help to translate. But if it’s just communicating with each other

normally, for words that I don't know, I try to translate and practice saying them first.”[“ហើយដល់ឆ្នាំទីពីរ... ខ្ញុំរៀនថែតាមលក្ខណៈមើលរឿងថែអីចឹងទៅ ឬក៏ស្តាប់បទចម្រៀងអីចឹងទៅ។ ខ្ញុំចូលចិត្តស្តាប់។ ចឹងទៅជាទូទៅមិត្តភក្តិខ្ញុំរាល់ថ្ងៃនឹងក៏ចឹងដែរ... គេនិយាយថែជាមួយយើងមួយម៉ាកៗពេលអង្គុយបាយជាមួយយើង ឆ្លើយឆ្លងគ្នាធម្មតាអីចឹងទៅ... ដូចសន្តិសុខដែល dorm ក៏អញ្ចឹងដែរ... គាត់តែងតែសួរថាមកពីណា ធ្វើអី ទៅអានសៀវភៅនៅណា អីចឹងទៅ ដើម្បីអោយយើងនិយាយថែជាមួយគាត់... ចាប់ពីឆ្នាំទីពីរទៅខ្ញុំចាប់ផ្តើមព្យាយាមជួយខ្លួនឯង... ចឹងយើងអាច search google យើងអាចអានវា... លុះត្រាតែយើងត្រូវការប្រើលក្ខណៈថា important ដូចទៅពេទ្យអីចឹង... ចឹងទៅបានត្រូវពឹងសិស្សច្បងអោយទៅជួយប្រែ ព្រោះអានវាសំខាន់។ តែបើត្រឹមប្រាស្រ័យទាក់ទងគ្នាធម្មតា អានវាពាក្យខ្លះដែលយើងអត់ចេះយើងព្យាយាម translate វាហើយអានវាសិន។”]

Don's intercultural journey in Thailand showcases his proactive efforts to overcome language and cultural barriers. The process of adaptation and learning emphasizes the significance of language proficiency, cultural understanding, and the ability to navigate unfamiliar social settings. Ultimately, these experiences enhance Don's intercultural competence.

Excerpt from interview

“Like sometimes, the lecturer demanded us to argue back and forth with them, like during class, and not wanting us to just sit still. And that I was used to studying in Cambodia and not saying a word, and not dare to argue back with the lecturer. Just talking to the teacher already made me anxious and my hands became shaky and when I came here, the lecturer demanded like so. I responded to them too, but due to the previous experience made it challenging for me to connect with my lecturer here.” [“លក្ខណៈថាពេលខ្លះ គ្រូខ្លះគាត់ទាមទារអោយយើងនឹង argue ទៅវិញទៅមក ប្រកែកគ្នាជាមួយគាត់ទៅវិញទៅមកក្នុងការរៀន កុំអោយយើងអង្គុយស្ងាត់ស្ងៀម។ ហើយទាំងដែលខ្ញុំទំលាប់មករៀននៅខ្មែរអង្គុយស្ងាត់អត់ដែលហ៊ានប្រកែកជាមួយគ្រូទេ។ គ្រាន់តែនិយាយជាមួយគ្រូព្រំដែនបាត់ហើយ ដល់មកនេះគ្រូទាមទារអញ្ចឹងៗ យើងឆ្លើយដែរតែយើងនៅអាបទពិសោធន៍ចាស់ដែលយើងអត់ហ៊ានឆ្លើយឆ្លងជាមួយគ្រូចឹងទៅវាធ្វើអោយការទំនាក់ទំនងរវាងខ្ញុំនឹងគ្រូនឹងរៀងពិបាកដែរ”]

As an introvert, he claimed to have always been one. This made him feel uncomfortable when interacting with people from different countries, leading him

to avoid such interactions, especially with those who spoke a different language. Prior to arriving in Thailand, he had limited exposure to foreign individuals, which intensified his introverted nature. Consequently, he initially shied away from engaging with other communities. However, with time, he gradually adapted to his new surroundings and started adjusting himself.

Excerpt from autobiography

“Arriving in Thailand on July 1, 2021, was an anxiety-inducing experience. It was my first encounter with a multitude of differences such as a new setting, a foreign language, unfamiliar faces, and a completely different way of life. As an introverted individual who typically shied away from social interactions, the prospect of adapting to this new environment seemed daunting at first. However, as time progressed, I began to acclimate to my new surroundings.”

When Don tried to engage with other communities in Thailand, he experienced anxiety and faced challenges. He questioned the appropriateness of reaching out, taking into consideration cultural norms and potential reactions. Due to his limited exposure to foreigners during his high school years in Cambodia and his introverted nature, he worried about unintentionally causing offense.

Excerpt from interview

“That’s like if I go to talk to them is that normal... thinking whether this is normal or not that I go and talk to them first. I was afraid that when I approach them first, they would respond back to me in an unfriendly way ... How I could adapt was thanks to my classmates more than myself. Like they are not judgmental and they are flexible, and they are understanding. They knew that I didn’t speak English well, so they didn’t judge... they tried to understand me, like when I spoke incorrectly, they tried to understand me.” [“*អាទីងលក្ខណៈថាបើយើងទៅនិយាយជាមួយគេ យើងប្លែកអត់... គិតថានៅនេះគេ normal អត់ ដែលយើងទៅ និយាយជាមួយគេមុន... ខ្លាចនៅពេលដែលយើង approach គេមុន ហើយគេមកឆ្លើយមកយើងវិញគម្រោះគម្រើយអីអត់ចឹងទៅ... ដែល ខ្ញុំ adapt បាននឹងភាគច្រើនមកពីពួកគាត់ជាងខ្ញុំខ្លួនឯង លក្ខណៈថាពួកគាត់អត់សូវប្រកាន់ច្រើន flexible ហើយគាត់យល់ពីយើង គាត់ដឹងថាយើងនឹងអត់សូវចេះអង់គ្លេសអីប៉ុន្មានចឹងទៅគាត់អត់*”]

*សូរប្រកាន់ដៃ... គាត់ស្វែងយល់ពីយើង នៅពេលដែលយើងនិយាយ
ខុសគាត់ព្យាយាមកាត់ន័យអោយយល់ ព្យាយាមយល់ពីយើងដែរ។”]*

Gradually, he managed to navigate the environment with the help of a supportive atmosphere where judgment was absent. Although he was initially hesitant to approach others first, his classmates and friends took the initiative, making him feel comfortable and helping him adjust to his surroundings little by little. This feeling of ease motivated him to continue developing himself and slowly reach out to others, leading to mutual learning through interactions.

In summary, Don's intercultural journey in Thailand demonstrates his proactive approach to overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers. This ongoing process of adaptation and learning emphasizes the importance of language proficiency, cultural understanding, and the ability to navigate unfamiliar social environments. Ultimately, these experiences contribute to Don's overall intercultural competence.

The next section will explore Don's pre-existing intercultural experiences and understanding of 'Others' before arriving in Thailand, as well as the challenges he faced and strategies he employed to cope after arriving in Thailand. This analysis aims to identify the factors that shape Don's intercultural citizenship within the Thai context.

4.2.5.4 Don's Intercultural Citizenship

This section investigates the elements that contribute to Don's development as an intercultural citizen, drawing from empirical data, including autobiographies, interviews, and shadowing observations.

Central to Don's narrative is the influence of language on intercultural competence. His initial struggles with language barriers and his achievement in mastering both Thai and English underscore Linguistic Relativity Theory (Whorf, 2012). This theory posits that language structure can shape an individual's worldview and behavior. As Don enhanced his language skills, he improved his communicative abilities and gained insight into the cultural nuances of each language, enabling richer interactions across cultural lines.

Don's cultural understanding is framed by Cognitive Cultural Intelligence, a component of the Cultural Intelligence model by (Earley & Ang, 2003). This dimension emphasizes the cognitive processing of cultural norms and practices. Don's engagement in both academic settings and social activities, particularly within the Filipino community and the broader international context at his university, has broadened his cultural perspective, equipping him to manage diverse social dynamics.

Furthermore, Don's attitudes toward cultural diversity and intercultural interaction are analyzed through Social Penetration Theory (Altman, 1973). This theory explores how interpersonal connections develop through gradual, reciprocal self-disclosure. Don's participation in his university community and his willingness to forge new relationships reflect a shift toward social integration and cultural immersion.

Don's journey exemplifies how language proficiency, cultural knowledge, and adaptable attitudes are crucial to intercultural competence. Starting from a place of isolation, Don has become an active participant in a multicultural academic environment, demonstrating the transformative impact of linguistic and cultural fluency. His ongoing growth and engagement underscore the importance of adaptability and openness in cultivating successful intercultural relationships, making him a dynamic participant in the global intercultural dialogue.

This concludes our examination of the first and second research questions, which articulated the narratives and provided an analysis of each individual's intercultural citizenship. These analyses explored their prior intercultural experiences and knowledge before arriving in Thailand, as well as the challenges they faced and the strategies they employed. Moving forward, I will address the third research question by examining the common factors that have influenced their development as intercultural citizens. This next section will involve a cross-case analysis, allowing us to compare and contrast the distinct yet interconnected pathways each participant has taken toward their intercultural citizenships.

4.2 Research Question 3: Factors Influencing Intercultural Citizenship

In this section, I will explore the findings related to the last research question:

3. What are the factors that influence the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students?

In this section, we explore the determinants of intercultural citizenship among five Cambodian university students. Through a cross-case analysis, we identify common themes and patterns that highlight how intercultural experiences contribute to their development of intercultural competencies. This analysis is supported by theoretical frameworks and empirical studies, offering a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that facilitate intercultural adaptation and citizenship.

4.2.1 Intercultural Skills

All participants demonstrated a commitment to enhancing their language skills, which are crucial for effective communication in a multicultural setting. The

importance of language proficiency in facilitating intercultural interaction is well-documented, with studies showing its impact on social integration and academic success (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006). Moreover, practical communication strategies employed by participants like Ben, who mediated in a Frisbee club, and Hiro, who engaged in various intercultural activities, underscore the necessity of communicative competence, as highlighted by Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) in their model of intercultural communication competence.

4.2.2 Knowledge of 'Others'

Participants gained a deep understanding of cultural differences through direct interactions and experiential learning, aligning with Piaget's theory of cognitive development through active learning (Piaget, 1952). Such engagements enhance individuals' cultural knowledge, crucial for navigating intercultural environments effectively (Bennett, 1993). The experiences of Lita and Hiro, who had extensive exposure to diverse cultures, and Don's gradual cultural acclimatization, reflect the transformative impact of cultural knowledge on intercultural competence.

4.2.3 Attitudes

The positive attitudes toward cultural diversity and adaptation shown by participants are critical for successful intercultural citizenship. According to the face-negotiation theory by Ting-Toomey (1988), managing relational and identity issues across cultures is vital for intercultural adaptability. Participants like Lita and Hiro displayed openness to cultural differences, facilitating effective interaction in multicultural settings. Furthermore, resilience, a trait shared by all participants, aligns with the concept of psychological adjustment in the acculturation model of Berry (1997), which emphasizes the role of coping strategies in overcoming cultural and communicative challenges.

4.2.4 Cross-Case Analysis and Theoretical Integration

The cross-case analysis reveals that language proficiency, cultural awareness, adaptability and resilience, intercultural skills, a positive attitude toward diversity and inclusivity, interpersonal relationships, and the engagement in extracurricular activities are integral to intercultural citizenship. These factors are interrelated and collectively enhance the participants' ability to function effectively in multicultural environments. By integrating concepts from established theories and previous studies, this analysis not only validates the empirical findings but also situates them within a broader scholarly discourse on intercultural competence and citizenship.

Table 4.16 Factors Shaping Intercultural Citizenship of Cambodian University

Students in Thailand

Factors Shaping Intercultural Citizenship	Lita	Don	Hiro	Ron	Ben	Description of the Common Themes
Language Proficiency	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	All participants recognized the importance of language proficiency in academic and social contexts. They were aware that this skill was crucial for their success and integration in the host country.
Cultural Awareness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Each participant demonstrated an increasing cultural awareness, which enabled them to navigate and appreciate the cultural differences they encountered.
Adaptability and Resilience	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	All participants shared the common trait of being able to adapt and demonstrate resilience when faced with challenges. This ability enabled them to overcome obstacles, such as language barriers and cultural differences.
Intercultural Skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	All participants have developed practical communication skills that enable them to effectively use language in various contexts and engage with others.
Positive Attitudes Towards Inclusivity and Diversity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	The participants demonstrated a positive attitude towards inclusivity and diversity, emphasizing their openness and acceptance. These qualities are crucial for promoting intercultural growth.
Interpersonal Relationships	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Forming meaningful relationships with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds was crucial for all participants as it greatly enhanced their intercultural experiences.
Engagement in Extracurricular Activities	✓	✓	✓		✓	Active participation in extracurricular activities benefits the majority of participants by enabling them to build networks and deepen their intercultural understanding.

This exploration of intercultural citizenship among Cambodian university students underscores the multifaceted nature of intercultural adaptation. It highlights the importance of a synergy between individual skills, knowledge, and attitudes in fostering effective intercultural engagement. The findings from this study contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence of how specific intercultural competencies are developed and manifested in real-world settings.

4.3 Summary

In this chapter, each case is discussed and analyzed. The chapter concludes by highlighting the common themes found in all cases, which contribute to understanding intercultural citizenship. The next chapter will be a discussion divided into three sub-sections. Each sub-section will explore the findings related to the three research questions. These questions consider the intercultural experiences and knowledge of

'Others' before arriving in Thailand, the intercultural challenges faced after arrival, coping strategies, and the contributing factors towards the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students living in Thailand and studying in EME curriculums.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study on factors influencing the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students in Thailand. By analyzing individual cases and synthesizing cross-case patterns, we uncover the complexities of intercultural adaptation and competency development. Through integrating theoretical frameworks, empirical data, and relevant literature, this discussion aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms that facilitate successful navigation and participation in English-Medium Education (EME) settings.

The discussion is organized into thematic sections that align with the research objectives. First, we explore students' knowledge of 'Others' and their intercultural experiences prior to arriving in Thailand, emphasizing how these factors shaped their initial expectations and preparedness. Next, we examine the intercultural challenges they encountered upon arrival and the coping strategies they employed. This is followed by an analysis of the factors contributing to their development of intercultural citizenship, highlighting both shared and unique experiences among the students. Finally, the chapter synthesizes these insights to discuss theoretical contributions, practical implications, and areas for future research.

This chapter extends the scope of the findings and situates them within broader academic discourses on intercultural competence, citizenship, and international education. The analysis serves as a foundation for developing strategies and policies that can enhance the experiences of Cambodian and other international students in similar contexts.

5.2 Overview of Intercultural Experiences Before Arrival in Thailand

The intercultural experiences of Cambodian university students prior to their arrival in Thailand laid the groundwork for understanding how earlier exposure affected their readiness to adapt to the English as a Medium of Education (EME) environment. These experiences, shaped by various environmental factors, significantly influenced students' expectations and initial engagement with intercultural interactions in Thailand. Utilizing the Ecological Systems Theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979), the model

of intercultural communicative competence by Byram (1997), and other relevant studies, this section explores the complex interplay of environmental influences, motivations, and prior knowledge that shaped students' readiness for intercultural engagement.

Environmental Influences on Pre-Arrival Experiences

The Ecological Systems Theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979) provides a robust framework for understanding the layered environmental influences that shaped the participants' intercultural readiness. The microsystem, which includes family, school, and community, played a critical role in exposing students to cultural diversity. For example, Lita benefited from having English-speaking teachers during her high school years and actively engaging with international communities through exchange programs. These early interactions not only expanded her worldview but also instilled confidence in navigating culturally diverse settings. This aligns with the assertion by Deardorff (2006) in which early exposure to diverse environments enhances cultural sensitivity and adaptability, traits evident in Lita's case.

In contrast, Ron's microsystem was far more insular, restricted to his local community. His limited exposure to cultural diversity was primarily mediated through media portrayals and brief encounters with foreign tourists. These superficial interactions lacked the depth necessary to cultivate meaningful intercultural readiness. Jackson (2019) similarly observes that students with limited direct intercultural engagement are often unprepared for the complexities of multicultural environments, relying instead on oversimplified or stereotypical cultural understandings.

Beyond the microsystem, the exosystem and macrosystem introduced broader environmental influences. Ben, for instance, lived near the Cambodian-Thai border, which shaped his perceptions of Thai culture. However, his understanding of Thai norms and values was informed more by assumptions of cultural similarity than by direct engagement. This highlights the limitations of geographic proximity as a substitute for genuine intercultural interaction, a point supported by Schneider and Jin (2022), who emphasize that second-hand cultural knowledge often leads to incomplete or inaccurate understandings. Similarly, Ron's reliance on online platforms for learning about Thai culture underscores the role of digital media in shaping perceptions. While these platforms provided some level of awareness, their often oversimplified representations of cultural norms did little to prepare him for the realities of living and studying in a Thai academic and social environment, as argued by (Baker & Fang, 2021).

These findings illustrate that without meaningful engagement, indirect exposure through media or assumptions of cultural similarity can hinder the development of true intercultural readiness. The varying influences of these environmental layers highlight the importance of direct, substantive intercultural interactions in fostering the skills and attitudes necessary for successful adaptation to EME contexts.

Variations in Intercultural Exposure Among Participants

The participants' pre-arrival intercultural exposure varied widely, revealing distinct patterns of engagement with diverse cultural communities. Lita and Hiro exemplify individuals who actively sought out opportunities to participate in intercultural activities, thereby building a solid foundation for adapting to Thailand's EME environment. Lita's involvement in exchange programs and collaboration with international peers enabled her to develop a nuanced understanding of cultural diversity. Hiro's experiences in South Korea further enriched his intercultural competence, allowing him to better navigate the complexities of his academic and social life in Thailand. These findings align with the assertion by Baker et al. (2022), in which meaningful engagement in intercultural activities fosters cultural sensitivity, adaptability, and a deeper understanding of cultural differences.

In contrast, participants like Don, Ron, and Ben demonstrated more limited intercultural exposure prior to their arrival in Thailand. Don's understanding of Thai culture was informed largely by anecdotes from relatives who had visited Thailand. While these anecdotes offered some insights, they lacked the depth and authenticity required for meaningful intercultural engagement. Ben's perceptions, shaped by his borderland environment, were similarly superficial, focusing more on economic exchanges than on social or cultural dynamics. This reliance on indirect sources of knowledge underscores the challenges faced by students without substantial intercultural experience, as noted by Fang and Baker (2018), who emphasize that direct interaction is crucial for cultivating the skills needed to navigate diverse environments.

Motivations and Educational Aspirations

The participants' motivations to study in Thailand also played a pivotal role in shaping their intercultural readiness. Lita and Hiro were primarily driven by intrinsic motivations, including a desire to broaden their global perspectives and pursue advanced educational opportunities. Their self-driven goals reflect the L2 Motivational Self System by Dörnyei (2014), which highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation in fostering linguistic and cultural competence. Lita's proactive engagement with international communities further demonstrates the role of intrinsic motivation in

building intercultural sensitivity and adaptability, aligning with findings by Watkins and Noble (2013).

Conversely, Ben and Ron were primarily influenced by extrinsic factors, such as familial expectations and the convenience of studying in a neighboring country. These external motivations often correlated with a lack of proactive engagement in intercultural activities prior to arrival, leaving them less prepared to navigate the challenges of an EME context. Jackson (2012a) emphasizes that students driven by extrinsic factors may require additional support to develop the curiosity and agency necessary for successful adaptation in multicultural academic environments.

Implications for Pre-Arrival Preparation

The findings underscore the necessity of structured pre-arrival preparation programs to address gaps in cultural knowledge and intercultural readiness. Drawing on the framework of intercultural communicative competence by Byram (1997), universities could develop targeted initiatives to equip students with the skills and knowledge required for successful adaptation. Cultural orientation programs that introduce students to host-country norms and practices could serve as an essential starting point. Emphasizing the acquisition of local language skills and social etiquette would further enhance students' readiness for intercultural engagement, as highlighted by Deardorff (2020) and Jackson (2019).

Interactive virtual exchanges with peers and faculty from the host country could provide students with simulated experiences of academic and social environments, fostering familiarity with the cultural dynamics they will encounter (Schneider & Jin, 2022). Additionally, language workshops tailored to both academic and everyday communication needs would help bridge linguistic gaps and build confidence, a recommendation supported by Barany (2016).

Comparison with Regional Contexts

The pre-arrival experiences of Cambodian students share similarities with those of international students in other ASEAN countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore, where linguistic diversity and geographic proximity also play a role in shaping intercultural readiness. However, Cambodian students often rely more heavily on indirect sources of cultural knowledge, such as social media or family anecdotes, compared to their counterparts in Singapore and Malaysia, who typically benefit from structured pre-arrival programs and greater multicultural exposure (Gill, 2007; Jackson, 2019). These comparisons highlight the need for regionally tailored support initiatives that address the specific challenges faced by Cambodian students, ensuring equitable access to intercultural learning opportunities.

The intercultural experiences of Cambodian university students before arriving in Thailand significantly influenced their ability to adapt to the EME context. Participants like Lita and Hiro, who actively engaged with diverse communities, displayed a strong foundation for adaptation. Conversely, students with limited exposure, such as Don, Ron, and Ben, encountered greater challenges in developing intercultural competencies. These findings highlight the importance of fostering meaningful intercultural interactions before arrival and offer practical insights for improving pre-arrival preparation programs. By addressing gaps in readiness through structured interventions, universities can better equip students with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to thrive in diverse academic and social environments.

5.3 Analysis of Intercultural Competencies Developed in Thailand

This section examines the intercultural competencies that Cambodian university students developed during their time in Thailand. The findings highlight how participants navigated the academic and social dimensions of an English as a Medium of Education (EME) environment, revealing their growth in intercultural skills, cultural knowledge, and attitudes. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) by Bennett (1993), the Model of Intercultural Competence by Deardorff (2006), and the acculturation model by Berry (1997), and other relevant studies, this section explores the progression and transformation participants experienced while adapting to a multicultural academic setting.

Development of Intercultural Skills

Language proficiency emerged as a cornerstone in the participants' development of intercultural skills, enabling them to navigate academic and social interactions in the EME context. For instance, Hiro demonstrated significant linguistic flexibility by actively learning and incorporating Thai into his daily interactions. This proactive approach allowed him to engage in discussions with Thai peers, contribute effectively to group projects, and assist other Cambodian students who struggled with the language. Hiro's experience underscores the role of language as both a practical tool and a medium for building trust and fostering collaboration in diverse settings. This aligns with the conceptualization of intercultural communication competence by Spitzberg and Changnon (2009), which emphasizes functional communication as a critical component of intercultural adaptability.

Similarly, Ron's transition from relying on translation tools to confidently using basic Thai phrases in everyday interactions demonstrates the iterative nature of

language acquisition. Initially dependent on external aids like Google Translate, Ron gradually developed the confidence to navigate routine tasks, such as ordering food and engaging with locals, without assistance. The mode by Deardorff (2006) highlights this process as an essential dimension of intercultural competence, particularly in environments where multilingual communication is vital for social integration.

Beyond language acquisition, participants developed practical communication strategies to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps. Ben exemplified this through his leadership role in his Frisbee club, where he acted as a mediator between Thai and Japanese students. By leveraging his multilingual abilities, Ben facilitated smooth communication among team members, fostering a sense of inclusivity and mutual understanding. His experience aligns with the theory of cross-cultural adaptation by Kim (2001), which underscores the importance of interpersonal adaptability and the ability to mediate between cultures in promoting effective intercultural engagement.

Intercultural skills were further enhanced through academic collaborations, where participants frequently worked with peers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Lita's ability to lead group projects and navigate complex interpersonal dynamics underscores the importance of intercultural teamwork in developing practical competencies. Her leadership role, which involved negotiating differing perspectives and managing cultural differences, illustrates the transformative potential of collaborative learning in fostering intercultural skills.

Enhancement of Cultural Knowledge

The participants' cultural knowledge expanded significantly during their time in Thailand, largely through experiential learning and direct engagement with local and international communities. The experiential learning theory (Kolb, 2014) emphasizes the role of active participation in unfamiliar environments as a catalyst for acquiring new knowledge, a principle evident in the participants' experiences.

For example, Lita's involvement in community events and academic collaborations allowed her to deepen her understanding of Thai cultural norms, such as the importance of respectful communication and hierarchical social structures. Through these interactions, Lita gained insights into the nuances of Thai etiquette, including the significance of non-verbal communication cues, such as the wai (Thai greeting). Her ability to internalize these cultural practices reflects the progression from surface-level awareness to deeper cultural understanding, as outlined in the DMIS by Bennett (1993). This shift from ethnocentric stages, such as minimization, to ethno-relative orientations, such as acceptance and adaptation, underscores the transformative impact of direct cultural engagement.

Similarly, Hiro's interactions with both Thai and international peers enabled him to identify subtle differences between Thai and Cambodian customs. For instance, he became attuned to the importance of indirect communication and the avoidance of conflict in Thai culture, which contrasted with the more direct communication style he was accustomed to in Cambodia. These insights enhanced Hiro's ability to navigate interpersonal relationships and contributed to his overall intercultural competence. According to the study by Jackson (2019), it emphasizes that such direct engagement fosters deeper cultural understanding and sensitivity, findings that are consistent with Hiro's experience.

The role of multicultural exposure in expanding cultural knowledge was particularly evident in extracurricular activities. Ben's participation in sports and cultural events provided him with opportunities to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds, deepening his appreciation for cultural diversity. These experiences not only enhanced his understanding of Thai culture but also allowed him to develop a broader perspective on global cultural norms. This aligns with the emphasis on the importance of intercultural communicative competence by Byram (1997) in fostering the ability to navigate and appreciate cultural diversity.

Transformation of Attitudes

A notable transformation in attitudes was observed among the participants as they adapted to the EME environment. Resilience, openness, and a willingness to engage with unfamiliar cultural norms emerged as defining traits, reflecting the dynamic nature of intercultural competency development. The face-negotiation theory by Ting-Toomey (1988) provides a useful framework for understanding these shifts, emphasizing the importance of flexibility and respect for cultural identity in managing intercultural interactions.

Don's experience exemplifies this transformation. Initially, Don struggled with language anxiety and a sense of isolation due to his limited prior intercultural exposure. However, through perseverance and active engagement, he gradually built his confidence and began to participate more actively in both academic and social settings. This shift reflects the psychological adjustment process outlined in the acculturation model by Berry (1997), which identifies resilience as a critical factor in successful cultural adaptation.

Hiro's proactive attitude further highlights the transformative potential of intercultural experiences. By participating in university events and forming connections with both Thai and international students, Hiro demonstrated a commitment to cultural learning and a willingness to embrace new experiences. His curiosity and

openness align with the model by Byram (1997), which identifies these attitudes as essential components of intercultural communicative competence. Such traits not only facilitated Hiro's integration into the university community but also enriched his overall intercultural experience.

The participants' ability to embrace cultural diversity and adapt to new environments emphasizes the importance of fostering positive attitudes in intercultural settings. These findings reveal the transformative power of resilience and openness in overcoming initial challenges and achieving successful adaptation.

Broader Implications for Intercultural Competency Development

The participants' experiences highlight the importance of fostering supportive environments that enhance the development of intercultural competencies. Academic settings, extracurricular activities, and interactions with peers served as crucial platforms for learning and adaptation. For instance, Lita's engagement in collaborative academic projects enabled her to practice interpersonal adaptability and gain a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity. Similarly, Ben's involvement in sports and cultural events offered him opportunities to build meaningful relationships and expand his cultural perspectives.

These findings resonate with the assertion by Deardorff (2006) that intercultural competence is best achieved through a holistic approach that integrates skills, knowledge, and attitudes across both formal and informal contexts. The iterative nature of intercultural learning, as reflected in the participants' ability to turn initial challenges into opportunities for growth, further supports the stress-adaptation-growth model by Kim (2001). This model emphasizes that the process of intercultural adaptation involves continuous learning and adjustment, driven by active engagement and reflection.

The participants' experiences also highlight the significance of proactive engagement in fostering intercultural competency. Hiro's commitment to learning the Thai language and participating in university events exemplifies the importance of self-directed learning in navigating multicultural environments. Likewise, Lita's leadership in academic and social settings underscores the value of initiative and agency in promoting intercultural adaptability. These findings echo the argument by Jackson (2012a) that proactive behaviors are essential for cultivating intercultural citizenship in EME contexts.

The development of intercultural competencies among Cambodian university students in Thailand is a complex and dynamic process influenced by individual resilience, proactive engagement, and supportive environments. Participants showed

significant growth in their ability to navigate the challenges of a multicultural academic setting through the acquisition of practical communication skills, the expansion of cultural knowledge, and the transformation of attitudes. These findings offer valuable insights for enhancing support systems for international students and highlight the importance of creating inclusive environments that foster active participation and cultural learning.

5.4 Cross-Case Synthesis: Common Themes and Divergences

This section synthesizes findings from individual cases to identify shared patterns and contrasting experiences among Cambodian university students as they pursued intercultural citizenship in Thailand. Through cross-case analysis, several key themes emerged, including language proficiency, cultural awareness, adaptability, and interpersonal relationships. At the same time, divergences in the participants' experiences highlight how personal backgrounds, motivations, and contexts shaped their adaptation to English as a Medium of Education (EME) settings. The analysis draws on theoretical frameworks such as the Model of Intercultural Competence by Deardorff (2006), the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) by Bennett (1993), the Acculturation Model by Berry (1997), and the Sociocultural Theory by Vygotsky (1978) to contextualize these findings.

Common Themes

The cross-case analysis revealed several themes that were consistently present in the participants' experiences. These common patterns provide valuable insights into the factors that contributed to their adaptation and growth in a multicultural academic environment.

Language Proficiency and Multilingualism

Language proficiency was a critical factor influencing participants' academic success and social integration. All participants acknowledged the necessity of mastering both English and Thai to navigate their new environment effectively. For students like Lita and Hiro, who entered the program with relatively strong English skills, the transition into the EME context was smoother. Their language abilities enabled them to actively participate in class discussions, collaborate on group projects, and engage in extracurricular activities. These experiences highlight the importance of linguistic readiness, as emphasized by Byram (1997) and Deardorff (2006), who argue that language proficiency is fundamental to intercultural communicative competence.

Conversely, Don and Ron initially faced significant challenges due to their limited proficiency in both English and Thai. In their early stages, they relied heavily on

translation tools and assistance from peers to manage academic tasks and daily interactions. Over time, however, both participants demonstrated remarkable progress. Don, for instance, gradually became confident enough to engage in conversations without external aids, while Ron developed a functional command of Thai phrases for everyday communication. This progression underscores the dynamic nature of language acquisition and its role in intercultural adaptation. As Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) assert, linguistic competence is not only a fundamental skill but also a gateway to building trust and fostering meaningful relationships in multicultural environments.

Moreover, multilingualism played a pivotal role in fostering intercultural engagement. Ben's ability to mediate between Thai and Japanese students during Frisbee club activities exemplifies the importance of linguistic adaptability. His use of multiple languages to facilitate communication highlights the integrative role of multilingualism in creating inclusive spaces for collaboration. This finding aligns with the theory of cross-cultural adaptation by Kim (2001), which emphasizes the importance of communication skills in bridging cultural divides and fostering mutual understanding.

Cultural Awareness and Experiential Learning

The participants significantly improved their cultural awareness through firsthand experiences with Thai culture and interactions with peers from diverse backgrounds. For instance, Lita deepened her understanding of Thai cultural norms by engaging in local community events and collaborating with classmates on academic projects. These experiences offered her valuable insights into hierarchical relationships, non-verbal communication cues, and the nuances of Thai social etiquette. In a similar vein, Hiro broadened his cultural knowledge by actively observing and participating in university events, where he learned to navigate the subtle differences between Thai and Cambodian customs.

These findings resonate with the experiential learning theory by Kolb (2014), which posits that active engagement in unfamiliar environments is essential for constructing new knowledge. The participants' ability to internalize and apply these cultural insights reflects their progression through the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) by Bennett (1993). By moving from initial stages of denial or minimization to advanced stages of acceptance and adaptation, the participants demonstrated a growing capacity to appreciate and navigate cultural differences.

Additionally, the role of experiential learning in fostering cultural awareness is well-documented in the study by Jackson (2012a), which emphasizes that direct engagement with diverse cultural environments enables students to develop deeper

cultural sensitivity. The participants' experiences underscore the transformative potential of such engagements, highlighting the value of structured opportunities for intercultural learning in academic and extracurricular settings.

Adaptability and Resilience

Adaptability and resilience were common traits among participants, allowing them to navigate unfamiliar environments and overcome challenges. For example, Lita demonstrated her adaptability by taking on leadership roles in group projects, despite facing cultural misunderstandings with her Thai peers. Her ability to mediate conflicts and foster collaboration highlights the significance of flexibility and problem-solving in multicultural settings.

Similarly, Ron demonstrated resilience by adjusting his behavior to align with Thai cultural norms, such as adhering to expectations of punctuality and respectful communication. These actions reflect the psychological adjustment process outlined in the acculturation model by Berry (1997), which identifies adaptability as a critical factor in managing intercultural stress and achieving successful integration. The participants' resilience also aligns with findings from Gill (2007), which suggest that international students' capacity to adapt is closely linked to their psychological well-being and academic performance.

Furthermore, the participants' adaptability extended beyond academics to encompass social and extracurricular activities. Hiro's willingness to participate in university events and connect with peers from diverse backgrounds illustrates the iterative process of intercultural adaptation. By embracing new experiences and maintaining a proactive attitude, Hiro not only overcame initial challenges but also enhanced his overall intercultural learning.

Interpersonal Relationships and Social Engagement

Building meaningful relationships with peers and faculty from diverse backgrounds was a crucial aspect of the participants' intercultural experiences. Lita's efforts to learn Thai improved her interactions with local students, allowing her to form connections that strengthened her sense of belonging. Similarly, Ben's involvement in sports and cultural activities helped him integrate into the university community and broaden his perspective on cultural diversity.

These findings are consistent with the Sociocultural Theory by Vygotsky (1978), which emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive and cultural development. Through collaborative activities, the participants not only improved their interpersonal skills but also gained a deeper understanding of their peers' cultural norms and values.

This highlights the importance of creating supportive and inclusive environments that promote intercultural engagement, as advocated by Deardorff (2006).

Divergences

Common themes offered a foundation for understanding the participants' experiences; however, significant differences also emerged, underscoring individual variations in their adaptation to the EME context.

Pre-Arrival Knowledge and Motivation

The participants' pre-arrival knowledge and motivation varied widely, shaping their initial adaptation to the EME context. Lita and Hiro, who had prior intercultural experiences through exchange programs and interactions with diverse communities, entered the program with a strong foundation for understanding cultural norms. Their proactive engagement before arrival aligns with findings from Baker et al. (2022), which emphasize the importance of pre-arrival exposure in fostering intercultural readiness.

In contrast, Don and Ron faced greater challenges due to their limited pre-arrival exposure. Their understanding of Thai culture was primarily informed by anecdotal sources or media representations, which often lacked depth and accuracy. This reliance on indirect knowledge highlights the need for structured pre-arrival preparation programs, as suggested by Fang and Baker (2018). Such programs could provide students with the tools and resources necessary to navigate cultural complexities more effectively.

Coping Strategies

The participants employed a variety of coping strategies to address the challenges of adapting to a new cultural environment. Ben and Hiro adopted proactive approaches, such as learning the Thai language and engaging with diverse communities, to overcome language barriers and social obstacles. These strategies align with the findings in the study conducted by Jackson (2012a), which underscore the importance of proactive behaviors in facilitating intercultural adaptation.

In contrast, Ron initially relied on external support, such as translation tools and assistance from peers. Over time, however, he developed more independent strategies, reflecting the iterative nature of intercultural learning. Schneider and Jin (2022) highlight the importance of tailored support systems that address the unique needs and coping styles of international students, a recommendation that resonates with the participants' experiences.

The cross-case analysis reveals both similarities and differences in how participants cultivated intercultural competencies. Common themes, including language proficiency, cultural awareness, adaptability, and interpersonal relationships, highlight

the essential components of intercultural citizenship. Conversely, differences in pre-arrival knowledge and coping strategies point to the individualized nature of intercultural adaptation. These findings offer valuable insights into the dynamics that shape intercultural citizenship in EME contexts and emphasize the need for supportive environments and customized interventions to improve the experiences of international students.

5.5 Conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter offer a comprehensive understanding of the intercultural competencies developed by Cambodian university students in Thailand, along with the challenges they faced and the coping strategies they employed while adapting to the EME context. Through detailed within-case analyses and cross-case synthesis, several key themes have emerged, including the crucial roles of language proficiency, cultural awareness, adaptability, and interpersonal relationships in fostering intercultural citizenship. These findings are situated within established theoretical frameworks, such as Deardorff's Model of Intercultural Competence, Bennett's DMIS, and Berry's acculturation model, providing a solid foundation for understanding the mechanisms of intercultural adaptation.

While shared experiences among participants highlight the universal challenges and strategies present in intercultural environments, individual differences reveal the nuanced ways in which personal backgrounds, motivations, and prior experiences influence the adaptation process. These insights stress the necessity for tailored support systems that address the unique needs and coping styles of international students.

The discussions in this chapter make substantial contributions to the broader discourse on intercultural education and citizenship, illuminating the experiences of Cambodian students as they navigate the complexities of Thailand's EME environment. They also emphasize the importance of creating inclusive and supportive academic and social settings that promote intercultural engagement and personal growth.

In Chapter 6, we will explore the broader implications of these findings, focusing on actionable recommendations for policy and practice, as well as reflecting on the study's limitations and potential avenues for future research.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the study by summarizing key findings, offering broader reflections, and providing actionable recommendations to enhance intercultural readiness and competency in English-Medium Education (EME) contexts. Through the lens of theoretical frameworks such as the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) by Bennett (1993), the Model of Intercultural Competence by Deardorff (2006), and the Acculturation Model by Berry (1997), this research examined the intercultural experiences of Cambodian university students in Thailand. Through this analysis, the study illuminates the dynamics of intercultural adaptation and the development of intercultural citizenship.

This chapter is divided into four sections: a summary of the findings, implications of the study, limitations of the research, and recommendations for future studies. These sections collectively highlight the contributions of this research to the field of intercultural education and provide practical insights for future exploration.

6.1 Summary of the Findings

This study explores the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students living in Thailand and studying in English as a Medium of Education (EME) curriculums. The findings addressed the research questions by identifying the factors that influenced the students' adaptation, the challenges they faced, and the competencies they acquired. This section synthesizes these findings, connecting them to broader theoretical frameworks and underscoring their importance in understanding intercultural citizenship.

Intercultural Experiences Before Arrival

The participants' pre-arrival experiences highlighted significant differences in their readiness for intercultural engagement. Those with prior exposure to diverse cultural settings, like Lita and Hiro, exhibited greater intercultural sensitivity upon arrival. Their participation in exchange programs and interactions with multicultural communities equipped them with a foundation for navigating cultural differences, supporting the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) by Bennett (1993), which emphasizes the shift from ethnocentric to ethno-relative perspectives.

In contrast, participants such as Don and Ron, who had limited intercultural exposure, encountered more difficulties in the early stages of adaptation. Their reliance on indirect sources of cultural knowledge, such as media and anecdotal evidence, highlights the shortcomings of superficial intercultural preparation. These findings align with the model by Byram (1997), which identifies prior knowledge as a crucial element of intercultural communicative competence.

Challenges and Coping Strategies in Thailand

Upon arriving in Thailand, the participants faced various intercultural challenges, including language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and difficulties in building interpersonal relationships. Language proved to be a significant obstacle, especially for those with limited proficiency in English or Thai. According to Deardorff (2006), linguistic competence is essential for intercultural adaptation, and its absence often hindered the participants' ability to engage effectively in both academic and social contexts.

Despite these challenges, the participants employed a range of coping strategies. For example, Hiro's proactive approach to learning Thai and his involvement in university events showcased his adaptability and willingness to engage with unfamiliar cultural norms. Similarly, Ben utilized his multilingual abilities to facilitate communication among peers from different cultural backgrounds, illustrating the interpersonal adaptability highlighted in stress-adaptation-growth model by Kim (2001).

Development of Intercultural Competencies

The findings indicated substantial growth in the participants' intercultural skills, knowledge, and attitudes over time. By engaging directly with Thai culture and interacting with peers from diverse backgrounds, participants enhanced their cultural awareness and developed a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity. This progression is consistent with experiential learning theory (Kolb, 2014), which emphasizes the significance of active participation in new environments for knowledge construction.

Furthermore, the participants demonstrated notable transformations in their attitudes, showing increased openness, resilience, and a willingness to embrace new experiences. These changes illustrate the dynamic nature of intercultural competency development, as described in the acculturation model by Berry (1997) and the face-negotiation theory by Ting-Toomey (1988).

Broader Implications for Intercultural Citizenship

The participants' experiences illustrate the complex nature of intercultural citizenship, involving linguistic, cultural, and interpersonal aspects. By developing practical communication skills, enriching their cultural understanding, and cultivating positive attitudes, the participants showed their capacity to navigate intricate

multicultural settings. These findings add to the expanding literature on intercultural competence, highlighting the significance of comprehensive approaches that blend formal education, experiential learning, and peer interactions.

This summary emphasizes the interrelated factors influencing intercultural citizenship and lays the groundwork for the following discussion on the study's implications, limitations, and recommendations.

6.2 Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have important implications for intercultural education, especially in the context of English as a Medium of Education (EME) programs. These implications go beyond the immediate experiences of Cambodian university students in Thailand and offer broader insights into developing intercultural competencies in diverse educational settings. This section explores these implications, emphasizing curriculum design, institutional support, and the role of intercultural frameworks in fostering global citizenship.

Implications for Curriculum Design in EME Contexts

The experiences of the participants underscore the essential role of curriculum design in developing intercultural competencies. Courses that prioritize experiential learning and active engagement with diverse cultural contexts can significantly boost students' intercultural awareness and adaptability. For example, incorporating collaborative projects that bring together students from different cultural backgrounds fosters cross-cultural communication and enhances interpersonal skills. These strategies align with the experiential learning theory by Kolb (2014), which highlights the significance of reflective and active learning processes.

Moreover, integrating elements of intercultural education into EME curricula can equip students to navigate the linguistic and cultural complexities of their host environments. For instance, language modules that focus on both English and the local language, paired with cultural orientation workshops, can help bridge gaps in students' preparedness for intercultural engagement. This aligns with the model by Deardorff (2006), which identifies linguistic and cultural competence as essential components of successful intercultural adaptation.

Institutional Support for International Students

The study highlights the importance of institutional support systems that cater to the diverse needs of international students. Participants like Ron and Don, who encountered significant challenges due to insufficient pre-arrival preparation, would have greatly benefited from structured pre-departure programs designed to enhance

their cultural, linguistic, and academic readiness. These programs could offer virtual exchanges, language workshops, and mentorship opportunities with current students from the host country. Fang and Baker (2018) stress the significance of such interventions in equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate multicultural environments.

Additionally, institutions can take a proactive approach to foster inclusive campus environments that encourage intercultural engagement. Extracurricular activities-such as cultural festivals, sports, and community service projects-can create meaningful opportunities for interaction between local and international students. The participants' engagement in these activities demonstrates their potential to build intercultural relationships and enhance social integration, aligning with the Sociocultural Theory by Vygotsky (1978).

Enhancing Global Citizenship Through Intercultural Frameworks

The findings contribute to the broader discourse on global citizenship by highlighting how intercultural frameworks can enhance students' abilities to become empathetic and adaptable global citizens. The participants' shift from ethnocentric to ethno-relative orientations, as outlined in the Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) by Bennett (1993), illustrates the transformative impact of intercultural experiences in promoting global awareness and inclusivity.

Educational institutions must take on the responsibility of fostering these qualities by incorporating intercultural frameworks into their teaching practices. By integrating elements of the model of intercultural communicative competence by Byram (1997)-such as critical cultural awareness and the ability to mediate between different perspectives-EME curriculums can effectively prepare students for the challenges of an increasingly interconnected world. This approach not only enhances students' academic performance but also equips them with essential skills for global problem-solving and cross-cultural collaboration.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The study's findings underscore the necessity for policy frameworks that emphasize intercultural education and support for international students. Policymakers should develop regionally tailored strategies that address the unique challenges faced by students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For instance, initiatives focused on enhancing linguistic accessibility and promoting cross-cultural dialogue can improve the inclusivity of EME programs. These recommendations align with the broader objectives of the ASEAN Internationalization Strategy, which aims to foster regional mobility and intercultural understanding.

Additionally, partnerships among educational institutions, governments, and non-governmental organizations can facilitate the sharing of best practices and resources for intercultural education. Collaborative efforts in designing pre-departure programs, intercultural workshops, and exchange initiatives can help create a more supportive ecosystem for international students.

Overall, this study highlights the significance of a holistic and context-sensitive approach to intercultural education. By addressing shortcomings in curriculum design, institutional support, and policy frameworks, stakeholders can cultivate environments that encourage meaningful intercultural engagement and equip students to navigate the complexities of a globalized world. These findings emphasize the transformative potential of intercultural education in fostering mutual understanding, resilience, and adaptability in diverse educational contexts.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

This study offers valuable insights into the intercultural experiences of Cambodian university students in Thailand; however, several limitations should be acknowledged. These limitations relate to the research design, data collection, and scope of the findings. Recognizing these constraints is crucial for accurately interpreting the results and identifying opportunities for future research.

Context-Specific Findings

This study centers on Cambodian university students enrolled in English as a Medium of Education (EME) curriculums in Thailand. As a result, the findings may not fully capture the experiences of international students from other countries or regions studying in different contexts. The unique socio-cultural connections between Cambodia and Thailand, which include shared linguistic elements and geographical proximity, likely shaped the participants' experiences and adaptation processes. Therefore, the findings may have limited applicability to students in culturally or geographically distinct settings, such as those in Western or non-ASEAN countries.

Limited Participant Pool

The research involved a relatively small sample of five participants, which may not fully represent the diverse intercultural experiences of Cambodian students in Thailand. Although the in-depth qualitative methods used provided detailed insights, the small sample size limits the study's capacity to identify broader trends or statistically significant patterns. Furthermore, the participants' varied pre-arrival backgrounds, motivations, and coping strategies introduced a level of variability that

may not accurately reflect the experiences of a larger population of Cambodian students.

Reliance on Self-Reported Data

This study's data was primarily sourced from autobiographies, interviews, and shadow observations, all of which are influenced by participants' perceptions and memories. While these methods offer valuable subjective insights into their experiences, they also carry the potential for bias. Participants may unintentionally highlight specific aspects of their intercultural journey while neglecting others, resulting in an incomplete representation of their adaptation process. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data restricts the ability to verify the accuracy of participants' accounts.

Lack of Longitudinal Perspective

This study explored participants' experiences at a specific moment, offering a snapshot of their intercultural journey in Thailand. While the findings illuminate their adaptation processes and the development of intercultural competencies, they do not reflect the long-term progression of these skills, knowledge, and attitudes. A longitudinal approach would have provided a more comprehensive understanding of how intercultural competencies evolve throughout the participants' academic programs and beyond.

Limited Exploration of Host Community Perspectives

While the study concentrated on the experiences of the participants, it overlooked the perspectives of the Thai host community, including local students, faculty, and administrative staff. A comprehensive understanding of intercultural interactions necessitates a two-sided analysis, as host communities significantly influence the experiences of international students. This lack of perspective restricts the study's capacity to examine the reciprocal nature of intercultural engagement.

Methodological Constraints

The qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of individual experiences; however, it inherently limits the study's ability to establish causality or identify broader trends. Furthermore, the lack of quantitative measures, such as surveys or statistical analyses, restricts the capacity to triangulate findings and validate patterns across a larger dataset. A mixed-methods approach would have offered a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena being investigated.

These limitations highlight the importance of carefully interpreting the findings and indicate areas for future research. Subsequent studies could mitigate these constraints by broadening the participant pool, utilizing longitudinal designs,

incorporating the perspectives of host communities, and employing mixed-methods approaches. Despite these challenges, the study makes significant contributions to the field of intercultural education by providing in-depth insights into the experiences of Cambodian students in Thailand.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Building on the findings and limitations of this study, several avenues for future research emerge. These recommendations aim to address the gaps identified in this study and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of intercultural adaptation and competency development in English as a Medium of Education (EME) contexts.

Expand Participant Diversity

Future research should involve a larger and more diverse participant pool to improve the generalizability of findings. Including students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, particularly those studying in different regions, would offer comparative insights into the development of intercultural competencies across diverse contexts. For instance, examining students from non-ASEAN countries or those studying at Western institutions could shed light on how varying cultural dynamics affect adaptation processes.

Incorporate Longitudinal Designs

A longitudinal approach would allow researchers to monitor the development of intercultural competencies over time, revealing how students' skills, knowledge, and attitudes change throughout their academic programs and beyond. Long-term studies could investigate the sustainability of these competencies after students return to their home countries or enter global workplaces, providing valuable insights into the lasting effects of EME experiences.

Explore Host Community Perspectives

Future studies should incorporate the perspectives of host communities, including local students, faculty, and administrative staff. By recognizing the reciprocal nature of intercultural interactions, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding of how both international and host community members influence the dynamics of intercultural engagement. For example, exploring the challenges that host communities encounter when integrating international students could lead to effective strategies for promoting mutual understanding and collaboration.

Examine the Role of Institutional Policies

Research should explore the impact of institutional policies and practices on the intercultural experiences of international students. Comparative studies across institutions with different levels of support for internationalization can help identify best practices for fostering inclusive and supportive environments. Furthermore, investigating the effectiveness of specific interventions-such as pre-departure orientations, language programs, and intercultural workshops-will yield actionable insights for enhancing institutional support systems.

Focus on Underexplored Populations

This study focused on Cambodian students, but future research could examine the experiences of other underrepresented or underserved international student populations. For example, exploring the intercultural journeys of students from less economically developed countries or those facing systemic barriers to mobility could reveal unique challenges and resilience strategies. Such studies would enhance our understanding of global education dynamics in a more equitable manner.

Investigate the Impact of Technology

Given the increasing importance of technology in intercultural engagement, future studies could investigate how digital tools and platforms impact the development of intercultural competencies. For instance, examining virtual exchanges, online learning environments, or language learning apps may uncover new opportunities and challenges in promoting intercultural readiness. Additionally, research could evaluate how social media influences perceptions of host cultures both before and during students' international experiences.

Analyze the Role of Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities emerged as important venues for intercultural learning in this study. Future research could explore the specific mechanisms by which these activities enhance intercultural competencies. Comparative analyses of various types of activities, such as sports, cultural clubs, and community service, could help identify which are most effective in promoting meaningful intercultural engagement.

Develop Mixed-Methods Approaches

To overcome the limitations of using qualitative or quantitative methods in isolation, future research should adopt mixed-methods approaches. By combining in-depth interviews with surveys, statistical analyses, and observational data, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence intercultural adaptation. This approach allows for the validation of qualitative findings with quantitative evidence and enables the exploration of patterns across larger populations.

Explore Intercultural Competence in Non-Academic Contexts

Intercultural adaptation extends beyond academic settings. Future research could examine how international students manage intercultural interactions in non-academic contexts, including part-time jobs, social events, and interactions with local communities. Gaining insights into these dynamics would offer a more comprehensive understanding of their intercultural experiences.

These recommendations emphasize the importance of future research adopting broader, more inclusive, and methodologically diverse approaches. By addressing the gaps identified in this study, upcoming research can enhance our understanding of intercultural adaptation and competency development in a more equitable manner. These efforts will ultimately aid in the formulation of more effective policies and practices that promote global citizenship within educational contexts.

This study explored the intercultural citizenship of Cambodian university students in Thailand, emphasizing their adaptation to an English as a Medium of Education (EME) environment and the development of intercultural competencies. Key findings highlighted factors such as language proficiency, cultural awareness, adaptability, and interpersonal relationships, demonstrating the transformative potential of intercultural education in preparing students for global engagement.

The study highlighted the dynamic and iterative nature of developing intercultural competency, while also revealing ongoing challenges such as language barriers and inadequate pre-arrival preparation. To effectively address these issues, collaborative efforts among educators, institutions, and policymakers are essential to create inclusive environments and enhance support systems.

This research contributes to the broader conversation on intercultural education by highlighting the significance of holistic approaches that encompass academic, social, and institutional dimensions. The findings offer valuable insights for initiatives designed to promote intercultural learning and global citizenship, equipping students to succeed in increasingly multicultural and interconnected environments.