

An Exploratory Factor Analysis Approach to Explore Barriers to Oracy Proficiency Among Thai EFL Learners

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Abstract : Oracy proficiency, encompassing both speaking and listening skills, is vital for EFL learners, yet Thai university students often face significant challenges in developing these abilities. This study aims to identify and analyze the barriers that hinder oracy proficiency in EFL learners. To achieve this, a questionnaire was developed based on a comprehensive review of the literature and administered to a large cohort of Thai EFL students. The data were subjected to exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to validate the questionnaire and uncover the underlying factors influencing learners' performance. The results revealed that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.912, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at 2345.423 ($p < 0.05$), confirming the suitability for factor analysis. There are five main barriers in oracy proficiency, namely Listening and Comprehension Obstacles (LCO), Accent and Speech Understanding (ASU), Speaking Anxiety and Confidence Issues (SACI), Fluency and Expression Issues (FEI), and Grammar and Conversational Understanding (GCU), with eigenvalues ranging from 1.066 to 12.990, explaining 60.305 % of the variance of the 32 variables. These findings highlight the complexity of the challenges faced by Thai EFL learners and emphasize the need for diverse and authentic listening experiences, a supportive classroom environment, or balanced grammar instruction. The findings of the study suggest that educators, curriculum developers, and policy makers should implement evidence-based strategies to address these barriers in order to improve Thai EFL learners' oral proficiency and enhance their overall academic and professional success. Also, this study will discuss these findings in depth, offering evidence-based strategies for addressing these barriers. Recommendations include integrating diverse and authentic listening experiences, fostering a supportive classroom environment, and providing targeted instruction in both speaking fluency and grammar. The study's implications extend to educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers, offering practical solutions to enhance learners' oracy proficiency and support their academic and professional development.

Keywords : exploratory factor analysis, barriers, oracy proficiency, EFL learners

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