

Somatically-enhanced approach in the teaching of Thai language to foreigners

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The teaching methodology described in this presentation deals with training students' perceptual mechanisms to enable them to have better pronunciation in an L2 from the beginning. Teaching innovations include: the use of relaxation techniques to relax students; the use of humming, clapping; mouthing; physical gestures to emphasize the rhythm of the Thai language; the use of a Speech comparison tool (Sptool) for self-study; and the provision of all learning materials on CDs. This learning environment has been called the 'Somatically-Enhanced Approach' (SEA) to language learning (Zhang, 2006). An experimental study involving the teaching of Thai to Vietnamese students in Vietnam was carried out in 2007 using SEA. The results of this study are extremely encouraging. After 12 face-to-face contact hours, Vietnamese students who undertook a course in SEA are as fluent as their fellow students who studied Thai for 1 year using the traditional approach.