

Why the Accelerative Integrated Methodology (AIM) works



Supporting research studies

Strategy # 1

The use of a specially selected vocabulary to accelerate language acquisition: simplified, high-frequency vocabulary (PDL - Pared-down language)

Studies / publications / research in support of the use of high-frequency vocabulary and that take into account the importance of scaffolding in the design of the approach:

- Le français fondamental (Gougenheim et al., 1959)
- Threshold Level (Van Ek, 1975)
- The Natural Approach (i + 1) (Krashen, 1983)
- Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001)
- Vygotsky - Zone of Proximal Development (1978)
- Simplification of the language at the beginning of acquisition (Clark, 1985)

Strategy # 2

The use of an innovative gestural technique

Studies / publications / research in support of a method that incorporates gesture:

Susan Goldin-Meadow and her colleagues found that using gestures while speaking aids memory. Other studies have highlighted another reason why many people often use their hands while talking.

“Talking with our hands may actually make thinking easier”:
Susan Goldin-Meadow, Irving B. Harris Professor in Psychology.

In this study, Goldin-Meadow and her three colleagues asked participants to remember a list of letters or words while explaining how to solve a math problem. Goldin-Meadow found that participants who gestured while explaining could recall significantly more items than those who did not gesture. Her research appeared in the article “Gesturing Lightens the Load” in the November 2001 issue of Psychological Science.

The use of gesture in language development dates back to early human communication.
(Corballis, 2002)

More and more studies show that the use of gesture accelerates language acquisition (e.g. Jolly Phonics - Dale Willows, (2002); Daniels, (1994), Goodwyn, SW, Acredolo, LP & Brown, C. (2000), Viveiros De and McLaughlin (1982)

Researchers have found that students in classes where the teacher uses gestures:

- Expressed a great pleasure to communicate;
 - Showed less resistance and more enthusiasm to participate in communication activities;
 - Displayed a greater ability to concentrate, to listen and a greater ability to follow instructions of the teacher.
- It is very likely that the improvement of communication skills will transfer to other subjects of the curriculum.

It may be concluded that learning a language in several modalities does not interfere with the development of semantics
- on the contrary - it seems that it improves it.

Hoemann and Koenig (1990) explain that languages are encoded in separate memory stores. This is true even during the early stages of acquisition of a second language. It is therefore possible to assume that the actions are placed in a different memory store than native language, giving students two independent sources of language in which to search for recall.

The gestural signs provide a basis for richer language in which the message is now represented visually, kinesthetically and orally. (Daniels, 1994)

Students who follow this approach find that learning a language is easier. This is supported by a study of Newport and Meier (1985) which reveals that the use of signs allows the child to 'feel' the language. This teaches them visualize and kinesthetically embed the location and position in space of vocabulary (syntax).

Strategy # 3

- (a) Contextualisation and varied use of the language through stories, plays, drama, music, dance and
- (b) Transfer of knowledge / strategies learned in the foreign language class to other subjects

Studies supporting the use of a method that takes into account Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences and learning styles:

Stiles and Thal (in Elman et al., 1997) found a possible link between the understanding of a word and the right hemisphere. They found that in order to understand the meaning of a new word, children must integrate information coming from different sources. These sources include auditory input, but also visual information, memories of the context in which the word has appeared previously and associated emotions. This methodology provides the necessary variety through the use of gesture, drama, music and focus on meaning rather than on the analysis, at least in the beginning of language acquisition.

Barton, Booth (1990) find that the best ways to teach literacy is through drama.

Some studies (Fred Genessee, 2000) indicate that the right hemisphere of the brain plays an important role in early language learning, and less important later in the language acquisition process. Therefore it is essential that second language programs move from right hemisphere-oriented teaching / learning (in Stories in Action!, which corresponds to the use of gestures, and activities based on stories, drama and dance) to left hemisphere-oriented activities for teaching / learning (analysis of grammar, which is important later in the program).

Strategy # 4

Promote productive and cooperative learning and transfer of the language skills acquired during structured whole-class activities in order to promote spontaneity and authentic conversations through creative collaborative work

Studies supporting a teaching method that encourages productive language use, based on cooperative learning and active participation:

Many researchers (Pierre Calvé (1993), Jenson (1996), Bloom (1956)) have shown that to accelerate the process of language acquisition, it is essential that students are actively involved in the practical application of their skills during work in cooperation with their peers.

Researchers (Bennett, Rolheiser B., C. Stevahn, L. (1991) have found that cooperative learning has several benefits:

- Promotes acquisition of the language,
- Helps students to retain information,
- Increases the student enjoyment of the language learning experience,
- Helps develop oral communication skills, social skills, self-confidence.

Strategy # 5

Exclusive use of the target language

Studies supporting a method that encourages the use of the target language only:

Pierre Calvé (1993) stresses the importance of the 'target language only' rule which is a cornerstone of the success of the AIM method.

Every day, through activities with a partner and in groups, students benefit ongoing important opportunities necessary to apply the language skills taught and reviewed by the teacher.

Strategy # 6

Scaffolding of activities maximize the chances of student success.

Studies that support scaffolding as essential to successful language acquisition:

Activities in the AIM are easy at first, then become increasingly difficult, always falling within the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

The degree of success in each depends on the degree of assimilation of the previous unit (ZPD).

There is a gradual release of responsibility.

Strategy # 7

Using an inductive approach to teaching grammar

Brain research studies that support the AIM:

Studies have shown that different brain regions, although specialized, interact together. The flow of neural activity is not only simple to complex, but also from complex to simple. Stern realized this when he describes the way form-focussed language teaching took place by focusing on the parts of speech and grammar concepts before fluency was developed in the Humpty Dumpty Effect (Stern, 1983). In fact, focus on grammar is only meaningful once a certain fluency level is developed already.

Strategy # 8

Incorporate an emotional language / rhythm in education

Studies that support a method that explicitly incorporates an emotional component to promote learning:

Researchers such as Buchanan, T. (2007), Sprenger (1999) have shown that emotion has an important influence on memory. This has important implications regarding effective teaching.

Strategy # 9

Incorporate pleasant repetition to ensure that students acquire the language effectively

Studies that demonstrate the importance of repetition in effective language teaching:

Some studies suggest that repetition is very important and helps in the understanding and development of accent (Trofimovich, Gatbonton, 1996).

Other researchers also found that repetition affects the cognitive and metacognitive as well as social and emotional functions, as it has been shown to increase student participation and enjoyment of learning (Yoshida, 2008)

Strategy # 10

Use techniques of non-verbal communication and positive reinforcement

Studies supporting the use of a methodology that explicitly uses non-verbal techniques and positive reinforcement:

Researchers have discovered that there is a significant improvement in student performance due simply to the positive reinforcement provided by the teacher to the key moment where the student has made an effort and remarkable progress. (Mariano, Pickering and Pollock, 2001; Bancroft, 1997)

Strategy # 11

Teach with gesture associations as this develops an awareness of the patterns and the language system.

Studies supporting the use of a methodology that incorporates the notion of word associations.

Researchers have found that ensuring awareness of sentence stems helps promote effective language acquisition. (Wiggins and McTighe, 1999)

Strategy # 12

Limit activities to ten minutes - whole-class activities are designed for periods of ten minutes and should not exceed this duration.

Studies supporting a program where whole-class activities are divided into periods of ten minutes.

Some studies have shown that this is a critical component of a program that helps to optimize student learning. (Marzano, Pickering and Pollock, 2001)

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