

3.2. Case Study 2. Accelerative Integrated Method of foreign language teaching in Canada and the Netherlands

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Description of the teaching method and its context

The accelerated integrated method (AIM), devised by Maxwell (2001), is intended to teach a foreign language³⁸ (also referred in this case study as 'L2' or 'target language') authentically and playfully through scaffolding techniques, which use story-telling, gestures, active collaboration and repetition. So far it has been used to teach French, English, Spanish and Mandarin to young beginners from around 7 to 15 years old. The method has been used all over the world, but empirical evidence on its implementation only comes from Canada and the Netherlands, and concerns only French as the foreign or second language. In Canada, the method is used in primary schools for learners aged between 7 and 12 years old. In the Netherlands, the method is used in high schools for learners aged between 12 and 15 years old. It is used in regular or in immersion (English/Dutch) schools. In this case study, we use French as the target language taught to young learners (aged 7-10) in Canada and teenagers (11-15) in the Netherlands, during their first three years of high school.

BOX 7 Description of the stories used as source of input in AIM

The programme begins with fairy tales such as 'The three little pigs' and later uses short narratives about the life of children or teenagers (depending on the age group) with topics concerning the family, travelling, school, the school dance, and friends. Even though some stories are based on fantasy such as *Comment y aller?* ('How to get there?'), in which the main character meets an alien, the topics mostly relate to the real world. In the case of *Comment y aller?*, learners talk about different countries and nationalities, about travelling and about family.

This scripted method allows teachers, who should be trained to use AIM effectively, to use the target language almost exclusively with absolute beginners from the very beginning. AIM's theoretical premises are in line with methods for early communication such as The

³⁸ We define the term foreign language (FL) as a language that is not spoken or heard frequently in the direct environment of the learner, so that exposure to this language is limited to the classroom.