

23 - 25 October 2026

Geneva , Switzerland

Replicating the Home in the Foreign Language Classroom: A Collaborative Approach

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Abstract

Learning begins naturally within the home, where foundational human values guide personal development. This preliminary empirical qualitative study uses an action research approach to replicate this safe space within the university-level foreign language classroom. The study examines two elementary Spanish cohorts of thirty-seven (first-semester) and fifty-one (second-semester) students with the aim of improving instructional delivery and assessing content assimilation. By establishing a collaborative framework, the paper argues that instructors and students dynamically co-exist as facilitators and co-learners and that they support one another's growth. Data were gathered through institutional mid-semester and end-of-semester feedback loops and selective facilitator observations in a teaching journal. The intervention focused on creating an enabling, home-like environment characterized by patience, active listening, and the positive reframing of linguistic errors to reduce student anxiety and accommodate diverse learning styles. Students admitted that they appreciated the encouragement to participate more in class, and they even requested more oral sessions. The feedback regarding the instructor revealed values like patience and readiness to respond to questions; the negative feedback was interpreted as potential for growth. The findings demonstrate that shifting from a rigid instructional model to a collaborative community-centered space significantly boosts learner confidence and engagement. Furthermore, student insights revealed the need to review the course syllabus and reduce the content for better assimilation. The paper concludes that optimal foreign language acquisition is achieved when the classroom transforms into a supportive partnership, proving that systematic student collaboration is vital for both pedagogical growth and institutional adaptation.

Keywords: Confidence; Mediation; Positivity; Support; Values