



ZENAÍDA AGUIRRE-MUÑOZ, PH.D.

Professor of Cognitive Science

Dr. Zenaída Aguirre-Muñoz was born in Guadalajara, Mexico, and raised in San Diego, California, in a large family. Her mother was a very proud Latina, maintained their heritage language by only allowing Spanish in the house. Dr. Aguirre-Muñoz took pride in her bilingualism and double majored at UC Santa Barbara in Psychology and Spanish. She used what she was learning in those areas as an instructional aide in a local bilingual elementary school.

As a former emergent bilingual, Dr. Aguirre-Muñoz's commitment and joy in working with emergent bilinguals led her to UCLA where she studied alternative content assessment methods for emergent bilinguals and completed a doctorate in Psychological Studies in Education.

Dr. Aguirre-Muñoz completed two bachelor's degrees from UC Santa Barbara in Psychology and Spanish. She began her professional career as a research scientist at the UCLA Center for Research, Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST). She was a faculty member at Texas Tech University where she raised her three sons, Joaquin, Cruz, and Juan Amado. In 2017, she joined the faculty at the University of Houston in the Psychological, Health, and Learning Science department. Her research integrates cognitive science, language, learning sciences, and assessment applied to the following research interests: (a) STEM education; (b) model-based assessment and instruction of dual language learners; (c) the impact of opportunity to learn on learning and achievement; and (d) content-area literacy development for dual language learners.

Currently, Dr. Aguirre-Muñoz is a Professor of Cognitive Science at UC Merced.