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Dismantling the Mono-Mainstream Assumption

Radicalize: To examine the roots in order to adopt an extreme position (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2020). That is what we purpose to do with the dynamic constructs, literacies and languaging—to examine the roots by reviewing their operation in the literature to develop a more comprehensive view. We also aim to conduct research with a radicalized purpose, by adopting an extreme position in naming and examining the struggle for all to be treated more fully human. At the crossroads of literacy and language research, we imagine literacy research to be potentially powerful, as it allows us to perceive previously hidden or misunderstood ways of sending and receiving meaning, and language research to be conceivably dynamic, as it delves into the sophisticated and ingenious ways that represent the depth and breadth of who we are as individual and social beings. We further believe that literacy and language research has many untapped capacities to effect change in our worlds. In turn, we endeavor to highlight the best across fields in order to galvanize literacy and language research for transformative change. Through this process, we trace the roots of each field by historicizing key work and then take these collective projects to the extreme
of what’s considered “mainstream”. Together, we can create an extraordinary discourse that dismantles the inhumane and (re)creates more liberated people and systems. In fact, the collective work of literacy and language research can remodel our praxis with the three-fold mission of seeking complex truth(s)\(^1\) with armed love (Freire, 1998), leading to transformative justice.

First, we believe literacy and language research collectively reveal complex truth(s) of our social worlds, as they shine light on intricate social realities in the past and the present through multiple modalities and language varieties. From picket signs, to Twitter hashtags, community practices, and school-sanctioned (and banned) literatures, each act of sending and receiving meaning across modalities and places is indicative of people’s experiences and understanding of truth. In these spaces, literacy and language research can include the unique expression of these truth(s) as well as a humble response to a multiplicity of lived experiences of those facts—especially those historically marginalized. This research can then interrogate and bear witness to what society perceives as truth for various communities. “Black\(^2\) lives matter”, “blue lives matter”, and “all lives matter” are just a few contemporary examples that speak to this jarring and consequential complexity. Still, we believe it is woefully insufficient to merely acknowledge complex truth(s); instead, once we more perceptively view ourselves and others’ literacies and languaging, we must also work with and for marginalized communities (Villenas, 2019) with armed love.

Armed love is a Freirean (1998) term that denotes how our practice, in this case, literacy and language research, is an act of love toward others and ourselves as the oppressed and oppressor over multiple contexts (Lyiscott, 2019). We firmly assert that love is not merely a feeling, but an action of amplifying and arming, in order to work with individuals so

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\(^1\)We acknowledge that definitions of truth or even the existence of truth is a central contestation in educational research. We will explore this issue later in this chapter, including our own perspective in this work with how it may contribute to a more multifaceted and multilayered perspective.

\(^2\)We purposely capitalize “Black” and “People of Color” and lowercase “white” in our work as an act of solidarity in recentering Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) and their experiences. Furthermore, we alternate between using “People of Color” and “racialized” in order to hold in tension the process and effects of racialization on identities and positionalities.
they have the agency to act on their own behalf within society (Darder, 2017; hooks, 2018). It follows the sensibility “if I care for others, then I will act” and “if I care for others, I am more concerned about the impact of my actions than on my intent.” Thus, it builds on Freire’s (1970) earlier work of critical consciousness (naming tensions and acting), as love becomes the root motivator and sustainer: armed love is seeing, feeling, and acting with mind (Boveda & Bhattacharya, 2019), heart, and behaviors at all levels of our literacy and language research.

Transformative justice is a term we use to denote how literacy and language scholarship can work toward equity for the marginalized and potentially transform relationships, institutions, and systems to be more fully human. Our use of transformative justice is largely informed by critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) and connected to liberatory, emancipatory, and democratic education (McLaren, 2000; Shor & Freire, 1987) with humanizing pedagogies (Bartolomé, 1994; Salazar, 2013; Valenzuela, 1999), amidst systems of oppression based on the “conjoined twins” of racism and capitalism (Kendi, 2019, p. 156). In turn, justice must affect change in society—it must transform the status quo at all levels. It is multiscalar in scope (Duff, 2019) and materialist in praxis (Flores & Chaparro, 2018) in righting wrongs for those historically minoritized, but it is also potentially transformative for those who are historically majoritized, as they see themselves and others as more fully human and act in ways that reflect this view of humanity (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Thus, complex truth(s) and armed love allow us to acknowledge how we can be both the oppressed and the oppressor and choose to reflect on our actions, so that we can change our practice—no matter the combination of roles we carry and contexts we traverse (Bacon, 2015; Collins, 2002). This powerful act can lead to transformative justice in our worlds, requiring us to adopt particular stances in our research—that race, history, language, and justice all matter in order to be transformational (Winn, 2018).

Sociopolitical Context

Considering we consume and produce literacy and language research in the contexts in which we live, it is necessary for us to explore intersecting
societal norms and shifts, accompanied by their affordances and challenges. Furthermore, since literacy and language research, including how people use literacy and language, is deeply connected to power structures (hooks, 2014), cultural practices (Street, 1995), and even our physical world (Darder, 2017), it is incumbent upon researchers to practice critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) in our work. This involves awareness, complemented by action, of what is more easily left in the shadows. Such shadows include the growing acceptance of inequalities (Tienda, 2017) such as income disparities and performance gaps that strongly contribute to academic opportunity inequities (Autor, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2006). School segregation is another shadow (Orfield, Ee, Frankenberg, & Siegel-Hawley, 2016), often created through gerrymandering attendance zones (Richards, 2014). This disproportionately harms Students of Color at much higher rates than white students, by placing them in schools with fewer resources and opportunities for advanced coursework, and highly qualified staff (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016). Despite decades of educational research and activism to combat these issues, the aforementioned inequities remain the status quo and have even recently intensified.

Indeed, many students from (im)migrant families face a growing sense of disparity and trauma due to mounting xenophobia in the media, their communities, and schools (Crandall, Miller, & White, 2018; Hooghe & Dassonneville, 2018). In 2016, the Southern Poverty Law Center surveyed over 10,000 K-12 U.S. educators and found that 90% of them believed that the 2016 presidential election had a negative impact in schools, naming the “Trump Effect” as the measured impact the 45th president of the U.S. has created, resulting in the heightened antagonism many minoritized people encounter, even in schools. Additionally, approximately 20% of educators surveyed reported an increase in anxiety for their (im)migrant, Muslim, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), and African American students. A similar study conducted by the Human Rights Campaign (2017) surveyed

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3We use the term (im)migrant as an act of decolonizing migration; we honor the natural ways that people traverse nation-states, rejecting the narrative that the land belongs primarily to colonizers, namely non-Indigenous groups.
over 50,000 adolescents and found that more than 70% had witnessed bullying or hate acts since the 2016 election, with 79% reporting a belief that such harassment had increased since the election. In light of this particular historical moment, educational researchers may interrupt this negative discourse and its effects by fostering spaces (Jang & Kim, 2018) for students to engage in critical literacies across their languages (Heiman & Yanes, 2018; Kim, 2016), while adopting a stance that aims to see people for who they are and who they can become.

However, spurring a view of diverse individuals as fully agentive changemakers is complicated by a national neoliberal logic that espouses principles of individual hard work and meritocracy in a free-market (Apple, 2006; De Lissovoy, 2015). At the macro-level, this thinking follows that if individuals have school choice, then competition will create better schools and more well-prepared students (Klein, 2007). At the micro-level this plays out in individuals’ subjectivities in their reasoning for school and student “failure”, with such thinking as “she didn’t try hard enough” and a need to develop more grit (Golden, 2017). This call for personal freedom to choose both schools and success in life fails to acknowledge the nefarious social histories that account for current inequalities (Flores, 2013; Weis & Fine, 2012). Thus, a neoliberal view might work to only further the inequities it appears to address on the surface level, as it wholly reduces multilayered systemic issues as a matter of individual determination. Then, as we become indifferent to these injustices, those norms surreptitiously creep into our current investigations and understanding of research, beckoning the questions: Who do we pathologize—our students and/or the systems? What is our role in the educational milieu and society at large? Then, in light of these answers, how do we make our way forward?

Looking at just some of the contributing factors to our current sociopolitical context provides a preliminary understanding to begin our work in understanding people’s engagement with literacies and languaging in order to employ this knowledge to disrupt the status quo. We further believe that literacy and language researchers need a shared terminology to highlight the best in our intertwining and highly related fields to thrust us forward as we work toward the bend of the moral arc. Our act of radicalizing begins by first making the inequalities visible
and then bringing what might have previously been the invisible or unacknowledged into our scholarly discussions. A shared terminology across fields will help us be more productive in our efforts and engage in complementary work that has a lasting positive effect in society. As our collaborative work becomes more comprehensive, it allows us to ask more pointed questions and advance issues more holistically and efficiently, so that we can make more precise and extensive changes in educational spaces and communities. Grounded in the belief that literacy and language research should liberate and work toward justice (Albright & Luke, 2008), in this book we name and deconstruct what we term the *mono-mainstream assumption* by bringing together the constructs of literacies and languaging through a critical sociocultural lens. Through this work, we strive toward countering monolithic, hegemonic norms and provide researchers with a thorough framework to effectively engage in transformational, liberatory endeavors. Our review of the roots of each construct and our analysis of their manifestation in four distinct testimo-*nios* demonstrate just how we may (re)imagine, (re)center, and (re)enact literacy and language research in the years to come.

**Our Positionalities**

Because we are first doers/practicers of literacies who engage in languaging every day, we cannot separate our own practices from our review of these concepts. It is through our lived experiences with languages and literacies that we construct meaning through these practices. We are both literacy and language researchers who study how children, youth, and adults engage in literacy practices through, within, and across their named languages and language varieties. Thus, our study of the literacies and languaging of multilinguals, within both in- and out-of-school settings, situates our analysis in two main fields. We ground our work in the literacy domain (Reading, Writing, Oral Language, Visual Representations, and Critical Thinking) and the language domain (Bi/multilingualism, English as a Second Language, and Linguistics), which sometimes appear as disparate categories of our own making for particular purposes. Whereas we recognize the often pragmatic reasons
contributing to these unnatural partitions, we primarily draw from the interconnectedness of literacies and languaging while parceling out singular features to serve certain objectives.

Importantly, we consider our research paradigm as critically pragmatic. As critical pragmatists, our work always strives to center the voices and lives of others, as we seek to teach and research in ways that engender more agency for (im)migrant, transnational, and multilingual people. We do this, understanding the long history of white settler colonialism and its ensuing effects on systems, institutions, relationships, and ourselves; it has become a habit (Patel, 2014), so we must consciously and continuously reflect on our complicity both individually (Kendi, 2019) and collectively (Alfaro, 2017; Freire, 1970). As such, it is also an incessant process of not so much of becoming, but of doing. Like others (Dixson, Rousseau Anderson, & Donnor, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), we focus less on the intentions and more on the impact of stakeholders’ discourses and policies, including our own, and use this as the litmus test for reflection and continued change at all levels.

Furthermore, as critical pragmatists, we’re especially interested in employing the theories, methods, and research that work to answer particular questions, reveal multiple dimensions of a problem, and increase understanding for specific audiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Feilzer, 2010). As we employ a variety of research tools, each methodology is purposely implemented with a mind toward uncovering a certain facet or nexus of someone’s experiences in their world/s. Our critically pragmatic approach extends to our personal convictions in managing the tensions and consequences between idealized best practices (Brooks, 2009) that place inherent value on largely minoritized people and their literacies and languaging (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2000) with the insidious realities of English hegemony (Macedo, Dendrinos, & Gounari, 2015), white supremacy (Gillborn, 2005), and testing-centric school systems (Kohn, 2000). Our work further seeks to enact critical, culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2014) at the same time we are cognizant that our students must still navigate the tangible effects of oppressive systems (Babino & Dixon, 2019; Babino & González-Carriedo, 2017; Babino & Stewart, 2018). So, it is from this combined research paradigm that we consider the issue of truth in literacy and language research.
Ale’s Journey

Ale identifies as a white Mexican-American, who grew up with a Mexican mom and estadounidense dad in a southeast Texas suburb. The terms I’ve used to describe my ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identities have changed over the course of my life, most of the time laced with anxiety as a textbook simultaneous heritage speaker of Spanish. Until the age of four, I grew up with Spanish and English as my first languages, until one fateful day in pre-school when a little boy made fun of me for speaking Spanish. My mom tells me that I stopped speaking Spanish that day, except for when visiting family which only occurred over the weekends. For a decade and a half, I lived a mostly English monolingual life.

Subsequently, I have spent the majority of my adult life reclaiming Spanish as a heritage language and navigating the realities of being a white, second generation Mexican-American teaching in transitional bilingual and dual language bilingual education programs (DLBE).  

4Most of my life, I’ve said I have an “American” dad. However, this term is problematic since there are many Americas, with the United States being just one. At the same time, I realize that “American” is often an emic term that some Mexicans use to denote someone from the U.S. I prefer to use the Spanish word “estadounidense” that is more specific to who my dad is (a person from the United States) and thus distances itself—however so slightly—from colonial whiteness as property (Harris, 1993) that this term reinforces in the U.S.

5There are many terms used to classify types of bilinguals in relation to how, when, and to what degree they’ve developed their languages. Two of the most popular are simultaneous bilinguals, who grow up (some say birth to the age of 3) learning two or more languages and sequential bilinguals, who learn one language before learning another. I’ve felt that both and neither of these terms are true of myself, which is why I prefer the term heritage speaker for myself, even as others find the word discursively troubling in its deficit positioning of racialized bilinguals (Flores & Rosa, 2015). For me, it foregrounds my ethnic and family connections with Spanish, including the specific complexities of managing language loss and reclamation (Carreira, 2004).

6A bilingual education model where the minoritized language is used only for a short period of time in order to transfer learning into English as quickly as possible. In this case, the students’ home language (Spanish) was a medium of instruction in third grade as the final year when students would be officially able to learn in Spanish and express their learning in Spanish.

7Dual language bilingual education programs have the goals of developing bilingualism, biliteracy, and cross-cultural competence with high degrees of academic achievement. One-way dual language programs include one language population, oftentimes in the U.S., Spanish-speaking Latinx students. Two-way dual language programs, on the other hand, include two language populations in roughly equal proportions including native/dominant English speakers and speakers of a minoritized language (often Spanish).
While there are many cultural and linguistic markers I’ve shared with my students and their families, I realize the strident privilege I’ve experienced by never having been positioned to “struggle” to learn English in school settings. Furthermore, as a white Mexican-American I haven’t experienced the discrimination or racism that others in my community do; in short, I don’t have Indigenous or African features like many Latinxs, so I experience marginal whiteness (Rich, 2010), “simultaneously minoritized and benefiting from white identity […which] reinforce[s] and expand[s] my positive identities and general agency” (Babino & Stewart, 2019, p. 164). Most importantly to me, over the entirety of my life I’ve deeply identified with a mestiza consciousness, a “knowing” that comes from life as part of, not a part of, and between two cultures and languages (Anzaldúa, 1987; Delgado Bernal, 2001); I often operate out of this spiritual intuition in teaching and life with other bi/multilinguals, as well as those with more dominant racial/ethnic identities. I attribute a large part of my experience in the negotiation of nuance in my literacy and language use to this mestiza consciousness, which is reflected at all levels of this work.

Equally as impactful on my research is my work of 11 years as a high school Spanish and elementary bilingual teacher: I viscerally experienced how the status quo of education would continue to disproportionately invalidate and dehumanize bilingual, Latinx students and to a degree their teachers. I learned to disrupt this pattern was not just an issue of pedagogy; it was and continues to be an issue of systems. I wondered how school programs could mitigate or ameliorate the educational inequalities that continued to oppress my students and those like them. This wrestling led me to seek a doctorate in language and literacy studies. Like Mandy, I noticed how bilingual and literacy education had potentially overlapping but largely siloed research histories. At the classroom and school district level, I saw this bifurcation as well. Thus, my personal and professional teaching life have co-naturalized with my research, exploring how and why bilinguals become biliterate and bicultural. I consider how individual and family factors co-construct and interact with language programs, schools, districts, and other sociopolitical factors to create varying levels of investment and practices in bilinguals’ codified languages.
Mandy’s Journey

Born and raised in rural East Texas in a family with deep Texas roots, Mandy identifies as a white female. I grew up as a monolingual English-speaker with privileges resulting from my socioeconomic status and race that I was unaware of at the time. Now, I speak Spanish as a second language, a textbook sequential bilingual who studied Spanish as a young adult. This acquisition is a result of formal classes and immersion experiences that have afforded me a fair amount of Spanish proficiency. I also speak English with a southern accent that I can use to my advantage when needed and purposefully lessen (though I can never make it completely disappear) when I choose to. Thus, I know how people perceive me (through my appearance, accent, language choice, and education) provides me agency I can use in society for my benefit and sometimes others’ benefit as well.

My Spanish skills allowed me access to a paid internship/scholarship program throughout college, working as a teacher assistant in both a transitional bilingual education and newcomer program at the upper elementary level. After that transformational experience, I taught ESL (English as a Second Language) to adolescent and adult students who were new to the country as well as Spanish for medical professionals. As I continued through graduate school, I realized the second language teaching I was providing would be considered literacy instruction by most professionals. I pushed the traditional boundaries in language-teaching, receiving special permission to change some of my college-level adult ESL classes to include book clubs and novel studies to replace the traditional textbooks. We engaged in reader response activities, using our reading as mentor texts to produce our own personal narratives and biographical poetry (Stewart, 2010). Yet, I knew that the common adage “ESL teaching is just good teaching” was not quite true. I recognized that language instruction had elements of literacy instruction, yet the two were not one and the same. As an emerging researcher, I began parceling out different aspects of literacy and language teaching, later becoming literacies and languaging to me, to adopt a more nuanced understanding of their similar yet unique attributes.
Having university academic positions in both distinctly Bilingual/ESL and Literacy programs/departments, I have taught courses across the fields. Through my research, I work with high school students who are acquiring English as an additional language and support their teachers in delivering literacy, language, and content instruction that adopts a multilingual stance. At a local library, I also teach adults who are acquiring English through a book club approach, one of whom is the focus of Chapter 8. Through these contexts, I am continually drawn to the strong connections between literacies and languaging, teaching/studying language through a literacy framework or the converse, teaching/studying literacy through a language framework. Notably, it is through Ale’s influence that I have developed a more critical lens of my personal literacies and languaging practices, which has in turn, affected the analytical approach I have come to increasingly adopt in my research.

**Our Joint Work**

We often refer to each other as *comadres*, the plural for a term in Spanish that the Urban Dictionary defines as a person who has taken on a significant shared responsibility with you. The great responsibility we collectively shoulder is to leverage our privileges, employ our abilities, and share our knowledge to work toward complex truth(s), armed love, and transformative justice. It is also a stance in our work towards others as we’re committed to long-term, nurturing relationships that persevere through hardship and seek increased voice and agency for those in our care—like *compadrazcos* who in some Latin American cultures, commit to care for a child along with the parents.\(^8\) This primarily manifests itself in our desire to serve the children of (im)migrants and their families through personal and professional activities. In particular, this has included children in DLBE, recent arrivals in a high school, heritage

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\(^8\)The term “comadres” connotes cariño/care to us, tempering the motivation and tone from which we work. At the same time, we want to be sensitive as white-presenting and white educators and researchers that we do not reproduce patronizing relationships with our students and the communities we serve. So we’re reminded to hold this tension in our hearts and actions.
language speakers in college, or mothers raising their children in a new country. As we do, we’re also learning how to lay down our privilege: to listen and bear witness instead of speak, as well as to encourage and center those (more or multiply) minoritized and their experiences over ourselves. We further aim to lay down our privilege as we hold to complex truth(s) that don’t primarily position ourselves as unilateral helpers and developers and thus reproduce the status quo of white settler colonial relational patterns (Bacon, 2015; Célèste Kee & Carr-Chellman 2019). Taken together, our lived experiences both professionally and personally compel us to focus on the committed relationship of our separate literacy and language research with each other’s research as well as other studies in the field.

**Constructs of the Book**

We have spent much time debating the most accurate way to represent the key terms of this book: literacy practices, literacies, language practices, languaging practices, and languaging are all terms used in academic writing. Whereas all of them provide diverse perspectives of related concepts, we have chosen to use the terms *literacies* and *languaging* in our framework, which we believe captures the complex phenomena we want to investigate. To underscore this complexity, we review the terms literacies and languaging, looking at their roots, their contemporary interpretations, and their subtle variations of meaning in different fields. Furthermore, we have chosen to focus on the terms literacies and languaging, because they both represent a contemporary and dynamic view of the more traditional and static terms, literacy and language. We use the term literacies to represent all of the ways one makes meaning with others, highlighting the hidden, overlooked, or devalued forms of literacies in which people engage within social and cultural contexts (hooks, 2014; Street, 1995). We think of literacies as practices, acts one does, but also one’s ways of being. Literacies represents the amalgamation of practices that constitute a certain way of doing or being in one’s world. Regarding languaging, we approach this term as both a gerund and a verb. As a gerund, languaging is like talking, reading,
or writing, an act in which one engages that represents all of the many parts that work in tandem to create the action. As a verb, languaging is an activity in which one participates, a conscious or unconscious action. Thus, we might think of our terms as literacies and languaging practices, or practices of literacies and languaging, qualifiers that explain what kinds of practices or actions one is taking, which we radicalize through investigating their roots in Chapters 2 and 3. We also take a critical socio-cultural stance in viewing these terms in our attempt to unpack what they mean for different people in various contexts. We engage in radicalization by taking these constructs to an extreme place in our work in Chapter 4 through critical sociocultural views, specifically through the lens of raciolinguistics (Flores & Rosa, 2015) on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977). That is, we aim to demonstrate four multilingual women’s sophisticated, robust, and multilayered literacies and languaging and how they differ from what is normatively considered mainstream.

Truth

Before we trace the roots of our pillar constructs separately and radicalize them through a critical sociocultural lens, it is imperative to stress the reason for this variegated work in relation to the notion of truth. As literacy and language researchers, we study human beings’ engagement in acts such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing (International Reading Association & National Council of Teachers of English, 2006) in and across their languages, not only for the acts themselves, but also for the agency these practices afford individuals. Although within our fields, we often disagree, we search for the most effective ways to best nurture a practice (e.g. reading comprehension) for a particular person’s gain (e.g. a bilingual child). We also explore what already exists—people’s literacies and languaging situated within particular communities—in order to better understand otherwise hidden, misunderstood, or devalued practices. We do this to have a more accurate, might we say truthful, view of people who send and receive meaning through their literacies and languaging.
Yet truth is a complicated term. All of us are operating from various paradigms, which necessarily account for our theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical differences: our epistemologies define and color the lenses from which we see and operate in the scholarly world (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Research paradigms certainly delimit what counts as truth, but truth’s complexity grows when considering the precarious place of evidence and expertise in what some are calling a “post-truth” age (Peters, 2017; Wells, Holme, & Scott, 2018). Listed as Oxford Dictionary’s word of the year in 2016, post-truth is defined as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief” (BBC News, 2016, n.p.). It is also related to other terms like fake news and alternative facts (Bacon, 2018) that center disinformation. Here we see that it is selective realities, regardless of facts, that those with power wield to make their appeals, upon which arguments are won and policy is made. The result then is not only the subjugation of evidence as second class to preferred disinformation, but also the growing cynicism of expertise. In turn, “educational researchers are experiencing the double bind of a disrespected craft in a disrespected field” (Wells et al., 2018, p. 2). However, some argue that in the midst of the 2020 pandemic of COVID-19 there may be a resurgence in the honoring of expertise and objective truth (Politico, 2020). Amidst these complexities, it also behooves us as researchers to soberly reflect upon how research has historically been perniciously positioned as “objective facts” of racialized people’s inferior abilities, experiences, and worth.

With this in mind, we may respond by employing more compelling theoretical frames that address the issue of truth in research and society. The Human Systems Dynamics Institute (2016) describes three categories of truth (objective, normative, and subjective) to explain complex truth that we find especially productive for our purposes. They define objective truth as what is observable to people or the perceived reality of any context. For instance, one can observe how many words a child reads in a minute. Then, normative truth is what a group agrees to be true, such as whether that fluency rate is considered on-level according to agreed-upon norms. Next, subjective truth is how an individual person experiences the world. In our extended example, this could include how
that student feels about this assessment practice and what she believes about her reading abilities as a result of the objective and normative truths. Finally, complex truth brings together objective, normative, and subjective truths, recognizing their validity and their limitations in order to focus on what is most appropriate for a given situation.

We believe it is crucial to continually assess all research through the lens of complex truth (Human Systems Dynamics Institute, 2016), because there are multiple truth(s) regarding people’s literacies and languaging that affect all facets of education and society in which we must name and evaluate. Indeed, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) emphasize that “early notions of language, truth, and authority have...been shown, quite decisively to have been ideological constructs, serving the interests of certain groups and not others” (p. 39). Thus, it is integral to deeply explore the claims made when we purport that any research has arrived at a particular truth whether it be an acceptance of a fact, agreed upon norm, or a perceived understanding of people’s experiences with literacy and language. Consequently, we first explain the need for a paradigm shift—moving away from the prevailing assumption of the mono-mainstream that stealthily slides into research and paints an inaccurate reality—a damaging subjective truth that has become normative.

Subsequently, in this book, we use the term truth to denote the ongoing attempt to arrive at complex truth(s), knowing that within literacy and language research there are facts (or at least facts that represent a perceived reality), agreed upon norms in the field, and various ways diverse people experience their world. We believe that each of these are true and consequential, yet at the same time, we uphold that these three truth(s) exist in a complicated and many times harmful relationship. Through our framework, we aim to uncover objective truth(s) that might not be extensively recognized in order to critically evaluate prevailing normative truth(s) in our field and better understand diverse people’s subjective truth(s). Our goal, in the historical and critical examination (or radicalizing) of the literature is to make visible and dismantle what we term the *mono-mainstream assumption*. 
The Mono-Mainstream Assumption

To pursue complex truth(s), we must first consider, then uncover, and then even dismantle major assumptions influencing our work in literacy and language research, which is often an uncomfortable task. Since our assumptions create the lens through which we view research and practice, it is essential to evaluate, analyze, and continually refine our lenses, naming who these perspectives privilege and who they marginalize, while remaining ever cynical of the “neutral path”. As we ask research questions, extrapolate findings, or develop our understandings of phenomena, do we assume the possessor of literacies and the doer of languaging has the ability to make meaning in solely one language system, within one cultural group, and has ties or loyalties to only one nation-state? We examine this question through the following section as we explain what we refer to as the mono-mainstream assumption, describing its inaccuracy in representing many people’s realities, with especially damaging consequences for marginalized people.

To preface our explanation of the mono-mainstream assumption, we highlight a particular notion that monolingualism is the norm, or the mainstream, evident in much research and policy (particularly in countries where English is the most dominant language) (Enright, 2011; Taylor, 1997). This belief might affect objective truth and form the basis for normative truth related to literacy work while negating the subjective truth of multilingual people. Therefore, a pertinent question to ask is: Who decides what ideas, activities, attitudes, literacies, or languaging practices are conventional? The answer is the one/s with the most power. Those with power determine what is considered conventional and thereby, what is marginalized and othered.

Mono-, Bi-, Multi-, and Trans-Views of Literacies and Languaging

To illustrate, we draw from Mandy’s research with adolescent newcomers, high school students who have lived in the U.S. for less than three years (Stewart, 2014, 2017). These students are often viewed as monolingual,
monoliterate, monocultural, mononational people who may evidence their knowledge only in school-sanctioned monomodal ways. However, these same young people are remarkably robust in their literacies and languaging when viewed through an alternative lens; they are multilingual, multiliterate, multicultural, multinational people who make meaning and can best express their knowledge in multimodal ways. Their literacies and languaging practices mirror their complex identities. Though a monolithic view stemming from policy that adopts the mono-mainstream assumption positions them as lacking, when studied for who they really are (becoming) and the skills they possess, the multi-nature of their literacies and languaging is evident.

Yet we take our argument even further to bring the prefix *trans-* into the discussion. Recently, terms such as translingual (Pacheco, Daniel, Pray, & Jiménez, 2019), transcultural (Guerra, 2007; Orellana, 2016), transliteracies (Smith, Stornaiuolo, & Phillips, 2018), and transnational (de los Ríos, 2018) appear more frequently in the literature. *Trans-* notes the movement of traversing different entities or ideas. This movement is often fluid, and perhaps even undetectable at times, particularly if the doer of literacies and languaging from a trans-perspective possesses great skills in negotiating the “multi” in their lives.

As we continue to unpack this idea, we use the term mono-mainstream assumption to focus on the unwritten (and often undiscussed) yet pervasive acceptance that the mainstream, the majority, is using literacy in monolingual, monocultural, and even mononational practices, and that learning is best gained and expressed in a monomodal way. On one level, the mono-mainstream assumption is that most learners, users, or doers of literacy in certain contexts such as U.S. schools are monolingual, without the abilities to express or receive meaning in multiple named languages nor considering their additional dialects as assets. This assumption also postulates that most of the population is monocultural as well, adopting the values, beliefs, and attitudes of one singular cultural group. A further premise is that those affected by our research are mononational, pertaining to or having loyalties to only one nation-state. Multilinguals practicing literacies and engaging in various forms of languaging within multiple cultural groups while maintaining ties and loyalties, or acknowledging influences, from multiple countries do not constitute the prevailing perception of the norm, creating...
a skewed normative truth from which we often operate. Finally, the mono-mainstream assumption also takes a narrow view of the modes one uses to send or receive meaning, focusing on the written word while ignoring the multimodal ways of communication that involve the visual, aural, spatial, and physical modes of meaning-making that are further multiplied by transnationalism (Chun, 2012; Hornberger, 2007).

Still another level acknowledges the multi-, yet devalues it in the name of anglonormativity and eurocentrism (McKinney, 2017), a deeply entrenched, though often invisible and undiscussed, preference for the English language and Western European ways of speaking, knowing, and being. Both sides of this coin are harmful. Consequently, we argue, as do others (e.g. Hopewell, 2017; Morrell, 2017), that we must transfigure our research paradigms to accommodate a population that grows increasingly more diverse. In short, we urge literacy and language researchers to consider the progression from the mono- (lingual, literate, cultural, national, modal) stance to a trans- (lingual, literate, cultural, national, modal) stance. We illustrate this progression in Table 1.1 which notes the matrices of how one engages in literacies and languaging with the suffixes -lingual, -literate, -cultural, -national, and -modal and the prefixes mono-, bi-, multi-, and trans-. The suffixes generally describe one’s abilities to speak in certain languages (-lingual), read/write or accomplish academic tasks (-literate), make meaning in different socio-cultural settings (-cultural), and communicate using various methods, signs, and symbols (-modal). The suffix -national refers to one’s connections to different nation-states, represented by a physical presence in more than one country or the influences one feels from and the loyalties one has to different national entities through digital means/media, family, or other relationships. The prefixes move the discourse from the mono-mainstream assumption to the argument of two (bi-), more than one (multi-), and finally, to the idea that one moves between, among, and within various named languages, literacies, cultures, nation-states, and modes of communication with a trans-perspective.

We recognize that some of the terms in the table, such as monomodal, are not widely used in the literature; yet, we include them for the sake of the argument. Clearly, in the 21st Century, monomodal seems counterintuitive, as we all regularly engage in representing meaning by using
Table 1.1  The mono-to-trans progression

|        | Mono | Bi   | Multi | Trans          |
|--------|------|------|-------|----------------|
| Language | Monolingual | Bilingual | ***Multilingual | Translingual    |
|         |       |       |        | **Translanguaging |
| Literacy | Monoliterate | Biliterate | Multiliterate | Transliterate |
|         |       | **Biliteracy | **Multiliteracies | |
| Culture  | Monocultural | Bicultural | Multicultural | Transcultural |
| Nationality | Mononational | Binational | Multinational | Transnational |
| Modality | Monomodal | Bimodal | Multimodal | Transmodal |

*The shaded mono- column notes the components of the mono-mainstream assumption. We claim that adopting even one of these lenses (e.g. monolingual) is perpetuating this assumption

**These terms are more commonly used varieties of the same idea

***We acknowledge the term polylingual, but do not include it in our analyses. Cummins (2017) explains that polylingual is fairly synonymous with multilingual but is more commonly used in francophone contexts.

text, symbols, gestures, and the spoken word among other modes, some just emerging and others yet to be discovered. Nevertheless, the term monolingual is much more readily accepted in some literacy research and often unstated in research assumptions. Regarding language, generally the term bilingual focuses on one’s ability to use two named languages, such as Chinese and English, whereas multilingual denotes more than
one language, including various language varieties or dialects. Acknowledging the distinctive, complex, or even arbitrary definitions of the terms in the progression, the table simply serves to guide our thinking about the assumptions we consciously or unconsciously make in our consumption and production of research. In further chapters, many of the specific terms in the table, such as biliteracy, multiliteracies, and translanguage, will be thoroughly discussed. Overall, we aim to show how any approach to literacy and language research that does not purposefully adopt a bi-, multi-, or trans-view, is by default, taking up the mono-mainstream assumption to various degrees about the doers of literacies and languaging.

The Need for a Paradigmatic Shift

In part, the need to uncover and dismantle the mono-mainstream assumption is that it is simply inaccurate, not fully representing the objective truth(s) of the communities we serve, many of which are characterized by super-diversity, the demographic shift of dynamic interplays of culturally, linguistically, ethnically, socially, and nationally diverse people (Vertovec, 2007). This misrepresentation is particularly harmful when applied to learning environments (Lippi-Green, 2012; Spring, 2016), leading to outright trauma (Milner & Lomotey, 2014; Ruiz-Sealey, 2016). Enright (2011) states that the assumed English Language Arts classroom is white and middle class, adopting the cultural norms associated with that group. Accordingly, she calls for us to consider curriculum and instruction for “New Mainstream” classrooms (p. 87) in order to begin to successfully challenge perpetual inequities within educational environments. Similarly, Paris and Alim (2014) note that the U.S. is in the midst of a “continuing demographic change toward a majority multilingual society of color” (p. 87), calling for the adoption of culturally sustaining pedagogies.

The need to envision a new mainstream for educational policy and practice is largely due to increased globalization and glocalization. De Jong (2011) explains that globalization occurs as distinct parts of the world become more connected through commerce, technology, and the sharing of ideas. Then, she continues that glocalization takes place as
multinational companies customize their goods or services for the local customer. We also experience glocalization as the global enters our local communities due to migration, the global economy, and new technologies, resulting in glocal literacies (Enright, 2011). The children of (im)migrants are also the fastest growing population in U.S. schools (Zong & Batalova, 2018), making migration for economic, familial, or political reasons a strong factor in growing diversity.

However, we are ignoring another segment of growing linguistic and cultural diversity if we only view it terms of migration. Many families without a foreign-born household member defy the idea of the mono-mainstream as well. For example, more families are choosing dual language (Steele et al., 2017) and/or International Baccalaureate (Aldana & Mayer, 2014) options for their children in order to further develop a heritage language or to begin learning a world language, providing these young people a multilingual and global education and becoming part of what Jaumont (2017) refers to as the bilingual revolution. While these students are becoming multilingual, they may potentially be developing multicultural and transnational skills, further dismantling the mono-mainstream assumption. This, too, brings attention to the need for critical, multilingual literacies, as these new program formations give way to new issues, primarily that bilingual, Latinx students become commodities in meeting academic, linguistic, and cultural needs of many times white, middle-class students (Flores & García, 2017; Valdés, 1997).

Due to these inevitable power issues, it is not enough to acknowledge the multifaceted dynamics of the school age population and their families. We must evaluate each literacy practice, each language, each form of languaging through a critical lens, knowing inequality is always present, even in spaces designed to be (at least cosmetically) equitable (Palmer, Cervantes-Soon, Dorner, & Heiman, 2019). These inequalities of various practices of diverse people must be made visible and acknowledged before we can effectively take action in any educational policy or practice.
Goal of the Book

Therefore, our goal in this book is to keep the mono-mainstream assumption in focus as we work to dismantle it and illustrate a critical sociocultural framework to literacy and language research that moves us along the mono-to-trans progression. In Chapters 2 and 3, we deeply explore the constructs of literacies and languaging in order to make relevant connections for researchers. Next, we focus on issues of power pivotal to our work by taking up raciolinguistic ideologies on Bourdieu’s (1977) reflexive sociology in Chapter 4. Our primary argument is that by keeping these constructs at the forefront of our research, we will counter monolithic, hegemonic norms and provide a more comprehensive framework to effectively disseminate our work—our best and unfinished attempts at truth, equity, and justice.

In Chapters 5–8, we provide individual testimonios of multilingual/transnational individuals to illustrate varying dimensions of truth regarding the participants’ literacies and languaging that researchers might highlight depending on their lens. Bringing the four cases together in Chapter 9, we illustrate how one’s lens of literacy and language narrows or widens the potential of how one makes meaning in the world. Then, in Chapter 10, we merge the review of the constructs and the four detailed examples together in order to discuss how radicalizing literacies and languaging can lead to powerful research and practice that has the ability to affect societal shifts.

Coming back to who we are and why we engage in this work, we sincerely believe that historicizing of the fields of literacy and language may be radicalized by critical sociocultural perspectives and thus provide a comprehensive contribution to critically conscious language and literacy research, motivated by complex truth(s), armed love, and transformational justice.
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