

## NARRATIVE 12.

# MULTIPLE ATYPICAL IDENTITIES

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The multiple atypical identities I inhabit as a TA—40+, mom, first-gen, multilingual, and transnational—merge to carve out the path I tread as a teacher and scholar. In my pre-Ph.D. student professional life as a high school teacher and college instructor in English and ESL, my own practice subscribed to a monolingual ideology that I had internalized as a language learner in my home country and that I encountered in many of the English and ESL departments I adjuncted in. I was faithful to this practice even as it felt unsettling.

Coming into awareness of critical scholarship on language difference made me pause for a few seconds, connect to that unsettling feeling, and then take a sharp turn. I began to understand the harm I felt when my own translanguaging practices were delegitimized and considered *language interference, error, and non-standard*. I understood the harm I had done to my students by reproducing this deficit-approach to linguistic heterogeneity as I had by insisting on code-switching and *appropriate* academic discourse.

I think back to just a few years ago when I had a student from my home country in a FYC course. Outside of the classroom and even during conferences when he and I communicated, we would translanguange, mix, and mesh; we would draw on all our linguistic resources to make meaning. “*Du kunne bruge den der source from the journal vi talte om igår? Den kunne måske hjælpe dig med at articulate the argument on cyber security? Hvad tænker du?*” In the classroom space when I graded his papers, however, I would mark up all the *errors* and *awkward language use* he used, wielding all this institutional power to reinforce *standardized American English*. This student came from the same relatively privileged background of whiteness and European language difference, so the harm he experienced might have been minimal. Now, however, I struggle with the harm I have inflicted on students whose experiences intersect across multiple forms of marginalization.

My turn towards a translanguaging and transnational orientation has shaped how I teach, what I teach, and how I assess. It has shaped the routes I see for my future career, and the scholarship I engage in now. My accountability entails leveraging my current privilege and power to enact linguistic justice in all these (and other) spaces. For now, the precarity of my position as TA limits my

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maneuverability to the classroom and my writing, but with a doctoral degree and (hopefully) entering the world of WPA and the power that affords, I hope to be able to challenge the entrenched monolingualism.