

# Exploring Translanguaging Through the Lens of Criminology Students

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## ABSTRACT

Translanguaging can foster effective communication among criminology students. This study examined how Bachelor of Science in Criminology students enrolled at a state university in the Philippines during the Academic Year 2024-2025 perceived translanguaging. Grounded in García's and Vogel's (2017) theory of translanguaging, which emphasizes the dynamic and flexible way of using multiple languages in social interaction and education, the study explores students' views on translanguaging as a general practice, for second language learning, in social settings, and within higher education, with analysis disaggregated by sex. Data were collected from 321 second and third-year criminology students using the survey instrument of Stephanie Moody, Mahjabin Chowdhury, and Zohreh Eslami (2019). Frequency counts and percentages were used as statistical tools. Results show that most students perceived translanguaging as a general practice with neutrality. These results imply that the majority of them neither strongly approved nor disapproved of translanguaging. Over half expressed positive perceptions regarding second language learning, indicating that they recognized the effectiveness of translanguaging as a pedagogical tool. As regards social settings, more than half of them perceived using translanguaging in everyday social interactions favorably. In terms of perceptions in higher education, most students had positive views about translanguaging, indicating openness to adopting translanguaging strategies academically despite limited familiarity. Overall, the Criminology students utilized translanguaging circumspectly, believing it could enhance their academic engagement.

**Keywords:** Criminology, Language Learning, Translanguaging

## INTRODUCTION

In Asian countries where English is the language of instruction, a growing awareness of the benefits of translanguaging exists (Smith, 2017). This acknowledgment of the usefulness of translanguaging challenges conventional viewpoints on language in today's diverse environment (García & Seltzer, 2016) and guides bilingual education towards a multilingual framework (García, 2020). García and Wei (2014) held that translanguaging allows writers to clearly express ideas by connecting their languages, making the development of both the first language (L1) and second language (L2) possible for bilinguals (Alzahrani, 2019). Fang and Liu (2020) stressed that investigating translanguaging provides a broader understanding of classroom discourse practices. Even though translanguaging is extensively studied, there is still a need to effectively bridge theory and practice in translanguaging (Savski, 2024).

Studying perceptions of translanguaging helps stakeholders evaluate its educational value and is crucial for understanding its impact on learning, encouraging further research with a broader range of participants (Calingasan et al., 2022). Previous studies have shown varying views on translanguaging among different groups, including graduate students, high school students, elementary students, and teachers. Graduate students tended to have positive perceptions, while teachers and students were more neutral (Fang & Liu, 2020). Students' beliefs varied, with some finding translanguaging helpful in stressful situations, while others felt it hindered retention (Rivera & Mazak, 2017).

The purpose of studying translanguaging perceptions among undergraduate students at a state university is multifaceted. This study looked into how translanguaging impacts learning experiences and outcomes.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Generally, this study aimed to ascertain how Bachelor of Science in Criminology students in a state university in the Philippines during the Academic Year 2024-2025 perceive translinguaging as a) practice, b) for second language learning, c) in social settings, and d) in higher education when grouped according to sex.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study is descriptive quantitative research, which intended to determine undergraduate students' perceptions about translinguaging as a practice, for second language learning, in social settings, and in higher education. As Nassaji (2015) stated, descriptive research aims to portray a phenomenon and its characteristics. In this study, data were gathered using the instrument developed by Stephanie Moody, Mahjabin Chowdhury, and Zohreh Eslami (2019). The survey instrument includes several sections to measure various perceptions of translinguaging. There are six items focused on perceptions of translinguaging as a practice. Another five items assess perceptions of translinguaging for second language learning. Three items cover perceptions of translinguaging in social settings, and perceptions of translinguaging in higher education are explored through nine items.

Three hundred twenty-one second- and third-year Criminology students from a state university participated in the study. Frequency counts were used to determine the number of students falling into each category (negative, neutral, positive) disaggregated by sex. Percentages were used to ascertain the proportion of students in each category out of the total respondents, given separately for females, males, and the overall total.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

Full consent of the respondents was obtained before conducting this study. They were assured that they would not be subjected to any form of harm, and their involvement, privacy, and anonymity would be protected. The authors confirm they have no connections or participation in any organization or entity with a financial stake.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the criminology students' perceptions toward translinguaging as a general practice. 60.44% of the students expressed a neutral attitude towards translinguaging, with nearly equal proportions among females (59.83%) and males (60.78%), suggesting a similar level of uncertainty about translinguaging across genders. Positive perceptions constituted 29.28% of the total responses, with males (30.88%) slightly more inclined to approve translinguaging favorably than females (26.50%). Negative perceptions were the least represented (10.28%), though more prevalent among females (13.68%) than males (8.33%). These results indicate that while many students have not yet formed a strong opinion about translinguaging, male students recognize its potential value. The relatively low percentage of negative perceptions shows that most students do not entirely reject translinguaging. This neutrality could mean they have limited experience with translinguaging in school or need further awareness of how it can help them in professional and academic contexts.

Most students appeared neutral about translinguaging, which may suggest limited exposure to it in their academic experiences or the absence of institutional policies supporting its use. Similar patterns were observed in a study conducted by Mbatha and Khohliso (2024) in correctional center mathematics classrooms, where students did not have clear positions on translinguaging until it was used in their lessons. After the exposure to translinguaging strategies, the adult offenders were able to build their language identities more confidently. By comparison, the criminology students' neutrality suggests that they could also recognize translinguaging's academic and professional value with proper guidance.

**Table 1.** Perceptions of Bachelor of Science in Criminology Students in the Area of Translinguaging as Practice

Translinguaging as practice		Female	Male	Total
Negative	n	16	17	33

	%	13.675	8.333	10.28
Neutral	n	70	124	194
	%	59.829	60.784	60.436
Positive	n	31	63	94
	%	26.496	30.882	29.283
Total	n	117	204	321
	%	100	100	100

Table 2 shows that criminology students view translanguaging favorably when applied to second language learning. More than half of the respondents (52.03%) conveyed positive perceptions about translanguaging. Female students displayed a stronger positive inclination (56.41%) than male students (49.51%). Neutral perceptions comprised 45.17% of the total sample, while negative perceptions were of a minimum degree (2.80%). The predominance of positive responses shows that the students see translanguaging as a helpful learning method. The slight difference between genders indicates that female students may be more open to new or integrative approaches to learning. The minimal negative responses suggest broad acceptance of translanguaging in this context. These results imply that, in all probability, students may respond positively to translanguaging practices in teaching language, especially if designed to improve second language learning frameworks.

In the same vein, Wang (2023) found that students had a positive perception of translanguaging. Translanguaging improved students' understanding of English and enhanced their ability to communicate ideas effectively by drawing on both English and Chinese. Furthermore, they viewed translanguaging as a valuable tool in second language acquisition. In addition, Moody, Chowdhury, and Eslami's (2019) study revealed that graduate students also regarded translanguaging as highly beneficial in L2 learning contexts. Their participants recognized translanguaging as a valuable resource for facilitating comprehension, supporting expression, and strengthening language development.

**Table 2.** Perceptions of Bachelor of Science in Criminology Students in the Area of Translanguaging for Second Language Learning

Translanguaging for Second Language Learning		Female	Male	Total
Negative	n	3	6	9
	%	2.564	2.941	2.804
Neutral	n	48	97	145
	%	41.026	47.549	45.171
Positive	n	66	101	167
	%	56.41	49.51	52.025
Total	n	117	204	321
	%	100	100	100

Table 3 reveals that just over half of the students (50.16%) view translanguaging positively in social settings. Female students show markedly higher positive perceptions (58.97%) than male students (45.10%). Neutral perceptions comprised 46.73% of the total, with males more likely to remain neutral (50.98%) than females

(39.32%). A slight difference in negative perceptions (3.12%) was apparent among male (3.92%) and female (1.71%) students. These results suggest that translanguaging is generally seen as a socially acceptable or advantageous practice, especially among female students who may value its role in fostering inclusivity, rapport, and cultural expression. The high proportion of neutral responses, particularly from male students, may indicate that their attitudes toward translanguaging in informal communication are context-dependent. While they might accept translanguaging, they may need more understanding of how it works in social settings to engage with it positively.

The Criminology students' perception of translanguaging positively aligns with the findings of Moody, Chowdhury, and Eslami's (2019), who observed that graduate students also strongly valued translanguaging in social settings. Their study highlighted how translanguaging fosters rapport, supports cultural expression, and encourages inclusive communication in informal interactions.

**Table 3.** Perceptions of Bachelor of Science in Criminology Students in the Area of Translanguaging in Social Settings

Translanguaging in Social Settings		Female	Male	Total
Negative	n	2	8	10
	%	1.709	3.922	3.115
Neutral	n	46	104	150
	%	39.316	50.98	46.729
Positive	n	69	92	161
	%	58.974	45.098	50.156
Total	n	117	204	321
	%	100	100	100

Table 4 indicates that over half of the respondents (51.40%) maintain a neutral perception of translanguaging in higher education contexts, with a nearly equal distribution between females (50.43%) and males (51.96%). Most students had positive views about translanguaging, making up 45.17% of the responses. Females felt slightly more positively (46.15%) than males (44.61%). Only a small number of students had negative feelings (3.43%), which did not differ between genders. Many students showed neutrality, which means they might not know much about how translanguaging is used in school or are not sure if it is suitable in higher education. Nonetheless, the substantial positive perception suggests they are open to using it as a helpful academic tool. Translanguaging could improve understanding, participation, and engagement, especially in classrooms with many languages.

Criminology students hold mostly neutral to positive perceptions of translanguaging in higher education, suggesting openness but also somewhat uncertain about its academic value. A similar study in South Africa by Ngcobo, Bryant, and Ndebele (2021) found that many university students, who primarily spoke a different language, struggled with academic writing in English. When given the opportunity, about half of the participants used translanguaging and could follow academic essay requirements successfully. This result strengthens the view that even when students initially express neutrality, as seen among criminology students, translanguaging can be helpful and effective in higher education when used intentionally, especially for tasks such as essay writing. Moreover, Criminology students' neutral to positive perceptions of translanguaging in higher education are supported by a study on Jordanian graduate students in Canada by Almashour (2024). The study demonstrated that translanguaging helped students feel more confident speaking in class and achieve academic despite institutional challenges. These results reinforce the idea that even when students may initially express uncertainty, as reflected in criminology students' neutrality, translanguaging can be a powerful tool in higher education.

**Table 4.** Perceptions of Bachelor of Science in Criminology Students in the Area of Translanguaging in Social Settings

Translanguaging in Higher Education		Female	Male	Total
Negative	N	4	7	11
	%	3.419	3.431	3.427
Neutral	N	59	106	165
	%	50.427	51.961	51.402
Positive	N	54	91	145
	%	46.154	44.608	45.171
Total	N	117	204	321
	%	100	100	100

## CONCLUSIONS

1. Most criminology students held neutral perceptions of translanguaging as a general practice, which suggests that they may be uncertain about it or have had limited exposure to it or the absence of institutional policies supporting it. Positive perceptions outweighed negative ones, suggesting that while students were not strongly opposed, they may need more awareness of its benefits. Male students tended to view translanguaging slightly more positively than females.
2. Students viewed translanguaging favorably when linked to second language learning, with over half expressing positive attitudes. This indicates strong recognition of its importance in enhancing language acquisition. Female students were more receptive than males.
3. Translanguaging was generally viewed positively in social situations, especially by female students. However, male students were inclined to feel neutral about it, suggesting that acceptance varies depending on the context and whether people are familiar with it.
4. More than half of the students, with positive perceptions, remained neutral toward translanguaging in higher education. This indicates cautious openness, suggesting that students were not fully aware of the role of translanguaging as a pedagogical tool in higher learning but were willing to consider it.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Seminar-workshops may be conducted among students to make them aware of translanguaging as an academic and social tool.
2. Educators may design lessons systematically incorporating translanguaging, using a local language alongside English to explain complex terms in Criminology.
3. Activities where translanguaging is naturally practiced may be developed to allow students to experience its effectiveness in real-life communication.
4. Follow-up studies may be conducted to track changes in student perceptions after exposure to translanguaging strategies.
5. Future research may compare perceptions of translanguaging across different academic programs to determine whether findings are discipline-specific or generalizable across fields and may explore the

policy implications of translanguaging practices is advised, as this could provide more practical contributions for educational institutions and inform language-in-education planning.

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