

TIRF-British Council Research Mentoring Awards 2026

Researcher

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Title of Project

Integrating Forensic Linguistics in Criminal Justice Education:
Toward a Framework for Curriculum Development and
Interdisciplinary Competence

Research Supervisor

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TIRF Research Topic Investigated

English for Specific Purposes

Bio

Danica Hanna Pastor-Bagayas is a doctoral candidate in English Language Studies at the University of Santo Tomas, Philippines. Her dissertation examines the integration of forensic linguistics in criminal justice education, with a focus on curriculum development and interdisciplinary competence. Her research interests include forensic linguistics, sociolinguistics, language education, curriculum development, and English for specific purposes.

Project Summary

Higher education is increasingly shifting toward competency-based and industry-aligned curricula in response to the demands of Education 4.0, requiring criminal justice education to develop not only technical expertise but also discipline-specific language and communication competencies essential for professional practice (Amghar & Bencheikroun, 2025; Commission on Higher Education, 2025). Despite this direction, many criminal justice curricula continue to provide inadequately structured preparation in the language-based competencies required in the workplace (Baybado & Estacio, 2025). Although forensic linguistics is increasingly recognized internationally as a valuable perspective for developing competencies in legal communication, investigative interviewing, and courtroom discourse, its integration into criminal justice education in the Philippines remains limited and largely non-standardized (Coulthard et al., 2017; Rañosa-Madrurnio & Martin, 2023). Anchored in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), this sequential mixed-methods study examines the language-based competencies currently embedded within criminal justice curricula and investigates their alignment with the linguistic demands of professional practice. Specifically, it explores the language-based competencies articulated in existing curricula, identifies the workplace linguistic demands perceived by practitioners, educators, and employers, examines the extent to which curricular competencies align with these professional demands, and investigates how forensic linguistics can be integrated through pedagogical approaches that support language analysis, investigative

interviewing, and courtroom discourse interpretation. The study culminates in the development of a proposed forensic linguistics syllabus designed to strengthen language-based competencies among criminal justice students. The study addresses a significant gap in the Philippine context, where no standardized curricular framework currently exists for systematically developing the language competencies required in criminal justice practice despite the growing communicative demands of policing, investigation, and legal processes. Its findings may inform higher education institutions, educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers, including the Commission on Higher Education, in curriculum enhancement, syllabus design, and the formulation of standards that recognize language-based competencies as essential learning outcomes for criminal justice education. Ultimately, the proposed syllabus and accompanying pedagogical recommendations seek to promote a criminal justice curriculum that equips future professionals with the language competencies necessary for effective, ethical, and evidence-based practice while providing a foundation for future curriculum development and interdisciplinary research.