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Exploring AI-Powered Tools for English Learning: Perceptions and Practices of Criminology Students

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Abstract. Prior research indicates that criminology students have low English proficiency, underscoring the pressing need for effective interventions. Despite the growing use of AI-powered English-language learning aids in education, little is known about how BS Criminology students use, perceive, and manage these technologies. This study fills that knowledge gap. Thus, the paper investigates how 133 second-year BS Criminology students use AI-powered English-learning applications and evaluates the perceived advantages and disadvantages of these tools. A validated survey and semi-structured interviews with purposefully selected participants were used, using a quantitative-descriptive design with simple triangulation. Findings show that the most popular and frequently used tools for improving grammar, writing confidence, and sentence structure were ChatGPT and QuillBot. However, issues with data privacy, over-reliance, and the shallowness of AI interactions in terms of emotion and context were brought out. Although AI technologies offer substantial language support, the study concludes that It should be used in conjunction with human education rather than in place of it. To optimize English language acquisition, educational institutions should implement a blended learning strategy that combines AI tools with supervised human facilitation.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), has significantly transformed various aspects of human life, including second language acquisition (SLA). SLA, often referred to as second language (L2) learning, involves acquiring a language beyond one's native or first language (L1), typically through formal instruction. (Betal, 2023). In the Philippine context, where English is widely recognized as the second language, the implications of AI integration in education are particularly substantial. English is dominant across domains such as government, law, business, education, and media, underscoring its sociolinguistic value and the need for communicative competence (Santos et al., 2022). Thus, incorporating AI into English language learning aligns with national language policy and enhances inclusive and effective language acquisition among Filipino learners.

AI has been broadly defined as the science and engineering of creating systems that provide real-time feedback, support interactive learning, and facilitate human-like communication (Betal, 2023; Viktorivna et al., 2022). Once a product of science fiction, AI now plays a transformative role in multiple sectors, including education (Panda et al., 2024). In language learning, AI-based

tools provide customized, immersive, and interactive methods that enhance learner motivation and engagement (Tiwari et al., 2024).

Integrating AI into English as a Second Language (ESL) education has significantly changed traditional approaches. Language learning platforms, such as Duolingo and Babbel, now leverage innovative AI technologies to enhance learning outcomes (Creely, 2024; Tiwari et al., 2024). Tools such as chatbots, virtual tutors, and voice assistants enhance learners' ability to develop writing and speaking skills through interactive experiences (Lai & Lee, 2024). These tools also enable personalized feedback and adaptive learning pathways that cater to learners' individual needs.

Kumar (2023) emphasized that AI-driven platforms offer a more engaging and learner-centred experience than conventional methods, providing immediate feedback and opportunities for self-regulated learning. Similarly, Wei (2023) and Zhang and Huang (2024) noted that AI-enhanced instruction significantly improves learners' English proficiency, motivation, and autonomy. Supporting this, Jegede (2024) found that students appreciated the instant feedback, personalized support, and high level of interactivity offered by AI tools, leading to increased satisfaction and overall engagement.

However, while these technologies offer promising outcomes, challenges persist. (Diaz et al., 2024) Assessed the English proficiency of criminology students and found that most were performing at the A2 or elementary level. Likewise, Ciasha and Cerna (2019) reported that first-year BS Criminology students scored poorly on English proficiency assessments. Emperador (2019) highlighted five key deficiencies in students' discourse writing, specifically in content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Furthermore, Payot et al. (2022) found numerous grammatical errors in the compositions of criminology students. These findings underscore the urgency of addressing English proficiency gaps and the potential of AI-powered solutions. Despite the increasing use of AI in language education, limited research exists on students' usage patterns, preferences, and perceptions of AI-based English learning tools, particularly among criminology students (Betal, 2023; Santos et al., 2022; Wei, 2023). Hence, this study aimed to explore the experiences and perceptions of criminology students regarding the use of AI-powered English language learning applications, especially examining how these tools shape learners' English learning experiences and identifying the challenges and limitations they encounter.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design with simple triangulation. The primary data collection tool was a structured questionnaire designed to assess students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges associated with AI-powered English language learning applications. While the research was primarily quantitative, a qualitative component, through semi-structured interviews, was included to triangulate the findings and provide deeper insight into the learners' experiences.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on students with prior exposure to communication or language-related courses. Purposeful sampling is defined as a technique for choosing information-rich samples to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Shaheen et al., 2019). In addition, Purposive sampling is particularly valued for its clarity in selecting respondents and its applicability in qualitative research, as it ensures participants are chosen for their ability to provide rich, relevant, and diverse data (Patton, 2015; Andrade, 2021; Memon et al., 2025). Using purposive sampling, only 133 of 167 students completed the survey questionnaire.

The survey questionnaire, adapted from Alminea & Hezam's (2024) study, was administered online, and participation was voluntary. Sixteen students were invited to participate

in semi-structured interviews, which allowed for a more detailed exploration of their experiences with AI tools. These interviews were audio-recorded with consent and later analyzed thematically. This study adapted a validated questionnaire developed by Almineeai and Hezam (2024), which had undergone content validation by nine experts in Language Education. Minor revisions were made to align the instrument with the specific objectives of this study.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentage distributions, and weighted means, were used to interpret survey results. Thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative responses to identify recurring patterns and support or contrast the quantitative findings. Lochmiller (2021) explained that a thematic analysis is a method focused primarily on identifying patterns, which are subsequently reported as researcher-generated themes. The researchers assigned codes to meaningful segments of respondents' responses; these codes helped them trace patterns that led to the development of themes. Additionally, all ethical protocols were strictly adhered to throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and their right to withdraw at any point. Following ethical review and approval, pseudonyms based on flower names (e.g., Dahlia, Jasmine, Santan) were assigned to protect participants' identities in the qualitative discussion. This approach ensured that no identifying information would be disclosed in the reporting of results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Preferred AI-Powered English Learning Apps

The distribution of 133 BS Criminology students' favourite AI-powered English-learning apps is shown in Figure 1. According to the data, ChatGPT is the most often used app, with 59.40% of respondents (n = 79) choosing it.

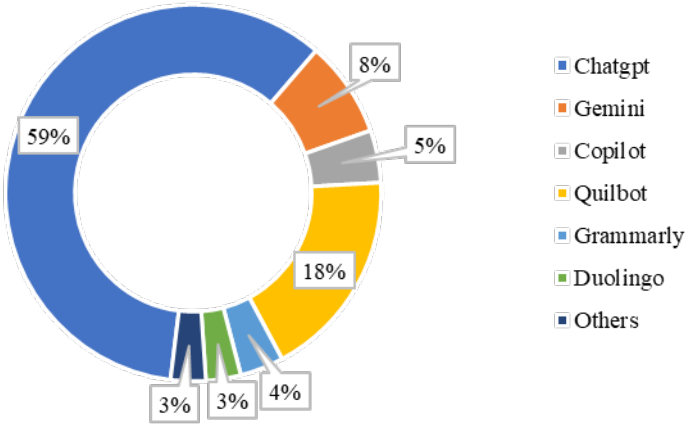

Figure 1. Preferred AI-Powered English Language Learning Applications

This suggests a high reliance on ChatGPT, most likely because of its numerous features that meet learners' needs for immediate feedback and linguistic assistance. These features include vocabulary suggestions, grammar correction, and conversational practice. The result aligns with Kumar's (2024) study, which suggests that AI-powered language models, such as ChatGPT, offer personalized learning experiences, immediate feedback, and enhanced engagement. With 18.05% (n = 24) of students selecting QuillBot as their preferred tool, it ranked second. This implies that many students place a high value on writing and paraphrasing as tools for language learning.

Smaller percentages of students used alternative language-learning applications, including Duolingo (3.11%), Grammarly (3.76%), Copilot (4.51%), and Gemini (8.27%). The comparatively low popularity of the language-learning software Duolingo may suggest that students prefer resources that offer more general writing or academic support over formal language instruction. Lastly, 3.01% of respondents reported using other unnamed AI-powered products, suggesting they may have used fewer specialised or less popular apps.

Regarding the frequency of use of AI-powered language learning applications, 79.70% (n = 106) of the students reported that they "always" use these tools. This high usage rate suggests that AI-powered applications have become an integral part of students' academic routines and language learning strategies. Their consistent use reflects the perceived accessibility and effectiveness of these tools in enhancing English language proficiency, particularly in writing, paraphrasing, grammar correction, and generating learning prompts. Meanwhile, 18.80% (n = 25) of the respondents stated that they "rarely" use these applications, which may be attributed to limited access, unfamiliarity, or a preference for traditional learning methods. Only 1.50% (n = 2) reported not using AI tools, suggesting minimal resistance or disengagement toward AI in language learning.

Of the 167 second-year Criminology students, 133 actively use AI-powered apps, such as ChatGPT and QuillBot. These platforms are popular and have become widely integrated into students' academic activities, especially in contexts where English-language proficiency is required but underdeveloped. Respondents stated that these resources are readily available and provide valuable learning support. They also identified improved engagement, motivation, and the ability to study "anytime, anywhere" as benefits of AI-powered systems (Tiwari et al., 2024; Khoso et al., 2025; Li et al., 2024). Furthermore, many students claim that AI-powered learning apps have enhanced their vocabulary, writing skills, and reading comprehension abilities (Hwang et al., 2025; Betal, 2023; Yasmin et al., 2025). The findings also support Krashen's Language Acquisition (1982), which posits that learners effectively acquire a language when they are exposed to comprehensible input language that is slightly above their current competency level but can be understood through context and support, such as the use of ChatGPT and QuillBot.

In addition, through these AI-powered learning tools, students reported increased motivation, confidence, and engagement in using English, which aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that language acquisition is hindered if learners have low self-esteem or anxiety. Since AI Tools are easy to use and do not put pressure on learners, students enjoy a stress-free learning environment. Finally, Krashen's Natural Order and Input Hypotheses supported the findings, as students demonstrated improvements in their vocabulary, writing skills, and reading comprehension. These competences were naturally developed through the use of meaningful language rather than through direct grammar instruction. Hence, the use of AI-powered learning tools supports Krashen's theoretical framework of language acquisition.

2. Perceived Benefits and Challenges of AI-Powered English Language Learning Applications

Table 1 illustrates how criminology students perceive the benefits of utilizing AI-powered tools for learning English, specifically in writing and grammar. All 18 items had mean ratings above 2.50 on a 4-point Likert scale, suggesting that students generally agreed that these tools had a favorable influence. The average score of 3.01, in the "Agree" category, indicates that students believe AI-powered language apps would improve their English language learning.

Table 1. Criminology students perceive the benefits of utilizing AI-powered tools for learning English

Statement	Mean	Qualitative Description
1. Using AI-powered applications in writing assignments or any language production, I can recognize parts of speech.	3.09	Agree
2. Using AI-powered applications in writing assignments or any language production, I can use the proper tense.	3.07	Agree
3. Using AI-powered applications in writing assignments or any language production, I can apply proper connectors.	3.08	Agree
4. Using AI-powered applications in writing assignments or any language production, I can write correct, simple sentences	3.07	Agree
5. I can write correct compound sentences using AI-powered applications in writing assignments or any language production.	3.01	Agree
6. Using AI-powered applications in writing assignments or any language production, I can write correct, complex sentences.	3.07	Agree
7. I can transfer active sentences into passive and vice versa	3.02	Agree
8. Using AI-powered applications in writing assignments or any language production.	3.02	Agree
9. I can write correct interrogative sentences using AI-powered applications in writing assignments or language production.	3.02	Agree
10. Using AI-powered applications in writing assignments or any language production, I can write correct imperative sentences	3.02	Agree
11. Using AI-powered applications in writing assignments or any language production, I can write correct negative sentences	2.91	Agree
12. I think using AI-powered applications improves my confidence in analyzing sentence structure.	3.10	Agree
13. I think using AI-powered applications offers insights into areas of weakness in sentence construction that need improvement.	3.18	Agree
14. I think using AI-powered applications offers an opportunity to experience interactive learning scenarios similar to real-life language use	3.02	Agree
15. I think using AI-powered applications helps me overcome challenges in learning the English Language.	3.09	Agree
16. I think using AI-powered applications negatively influences my English Language learning progress.	2.63	Agree
17. I think using AI-powered applications might lead to a risk of over-reliance on AI in learning the English Language.	2.97	Agree
18. I think using AI-powered applications threatens the privacy/security of my data.	2.83	Agree
Overall Mean	**3.01**	**Agree**

With a mean score of 3.18, the statement *'Using AI-powered applications offers insights into areas of weakness in sentence construction that need improvement'* emerged as the most highly rated perceived benefit. Students appreciated how these tools sharpened their awareness of grammar and sentence-level issues. For instance, Lily shared how AI helped her *"construct essays and case studies efficiently, improve the whole paragraph, and correct typos and grammatical errors."* This validates Seddik's (2025) findings that employing AI tools resulted in considerable gains in vocabulary acquisition and writing accuracy among participants, as well as increased motivation and self-directed learning. Similarly, the statements' *AI use improves my confidence in analyzing sentence structure'* (M = 3.10) and *'AI helps me recognize parts of speech'* (M = 3.09) also received high agreement, reinforcing that these tools promote metalinguistic awareness and grammar confidence. This aligns with Dahlia's expression: *"I become confident... if there are words or sentences I do not understand, I search on the app, and it enlightens me."* Here, Abusahyon et al.

(2023) suggested that chatbots and AI can provide rapid feedback and personalized learning methodologies, allowing students to improve based on their own competence levels.

Statements related to sentence construction, including forming simple, compound, complex, and imperative sentences, hovered slightly above 3.00, suggesting moderate agreement. For example, writing complex sentences scored 3.07, while compound sentence creation was 3.01. Students like Sampaguita found that AI tools were ongoing support, stating, *"I often struggle with forming correct sentences... I started using AI-powered tools to check and correct my grammar and noticed improvement over time."* On more advanced grammar tasks, such as writing negative or interrogative sentences, switching voice, or using correct connectors, students gave lower positive ratings (ranging from 2.91 to 3.08), signalling areas where they might still feel less confident, even with AI support.

These findings reinforce the existing literature on the affordances of AI-based applications while advancing the notion that such technologies can act as co-facilitators of constructivist learning, adapting dynamically to individual student trajectories. The first research question revealed qualitative themes that contextualized the quantitative trends. Students reported improved academic outcomes and increased confidence in English-based coursework (Sa'ad et al., 2023; Wei, 2023), suggesting that AI tools serve as scaffolding agents within sociocultural learning paradigms. Enhanced control over syntactic construction, vocabulary acquisition, and reading comprehension (Betal, 2023) all point to AI's potential to amplify linguistic competence in flexible, learner-centred environments (Benek, 2025) and to provide opportunities to support L2 writing processes and deliver significant types of feedback (Godwin-Jones et al., 2024).

Despite these affordances, findings also present several limitations that challenge uninhibited adoption. Some students encountered inaccurate or confusing AI-generated translations, particularly when transitioning from Filipino to English. Lily noted, *"It is difficult when the app answers something different from what I asked."* Similarly, Orchid described the meanings generated by AI as *"not as broad as expected,"* and Santan found AI responses to be *"boring or fake,"* using additional resources, such as grammar videos, to compensate. There were also complaints about sentence structure and distortion of meaning. Lavender found that AI sometimes generated overly complex words or responses lacking coherence. At the same time, Iris pointed out that attempts to paraphrase through AI could *"result in grammatical errors or alter the meaning."* To overcome this, she turned to tools like Grammarly for manual editing.

Another recurring theme was an over-reliance on AI and a reduction in personal effort. Although the convenience of AI made tasks easier, students like Daisy recognized a trade-off: *"I depend too much on it that I didn't even try engaging in some things in real-life situations."* Gumamela echoed this concern, explaining that, while using AI for support, she consciously double-checks information with other sources. Beyond accuracy and dependence, students raised concerns about a lack of emotional and contextual engagement. Sampaguita pointed out that AI may offer technical support but lacks the *"emotional motivation a human teacher could provide."* Similarly, Rose felt unsure about improving her pronunciation and accent using AI alone, stating, *"It somehow makes it difficult to learn on your own."*

These critical reflections were also present in the quantitative findings. While students did not strongly disagree, they expressed moderate concern about over-reliance on AI (M = 2.97), its potential to hinder genuine learning (M = 2.63), and privacy risks (M = 2.83). These ratings still fall within the 'Agree' range, but they show that students are not unquestioningly trusting these tools as they are critically aware of their value and limitations.

Students' concerns regarding AI's inability to interpret nuanced instructions and simulate human-like interaction (Betal, 2023; Wiboolyasarin et al., 2025) reflect ongoing limitations in

natural language processing and conversational modeling. Additionally, overreliance on AI platforms may diminish grammatical competence and reduce learners' spontaneity (Abdallah et al., 2025; Benek, 2025). The perceived lack of authentic interaction with native speakers and fear of learning in artificial environments (Viktorivna et al., 2022) further highlights the importance of maintaining socio-emotional dimensions in language pedagogy. These concerns align with Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which advocates for meaningful, naturalistic exposure to the target language.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, ChatGPT and QuillBot, in particular, are AI-powered English language learning programs that have become essential to the academic routines of BS Criminology students, enhancing their writing confidence, grammar, and sentence structure. With a mean total-agreement score of 3.01, students found these tools very helpful for identifying language problems and enhancing syntactic knowledge. Although students commended AI tools for improving metalinguistic awareness and providing scaffolded support, they also acknowledged their drawbacks, including accuracy issues, over-reliance, reduced personal effort, and a lack of human emotional engagement. These results confirm that, although AI is a valuable teaching tool, it should be used in conjunction with human education in a well-rounded, hybrid learning model, rather than in place of it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the school administrators may adapt this study as a basis for crafting guidelines or policies for implementing and using AI-powered tools in teaching and learning English. This will ensure that teachers and learners use these tools appropriately, ensuring that students' outputs remain high-quality and original. On the other hand, English Language Teachers may use these AI tools to teach their students, providing the academic integrity and originality of their students' outputs. Meanwhile, students may use these AI-learning tools to equip themselves and improve their own outputs, thereby ensuring academic integrity. Lastly, future researchers may explore the strengths and weaknesses of these AI-powered Learning Apps and conduct a comparative analysis between traditional language teaching and AI-assisted language teaching to determine which pedagogy better supports learners in English.

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