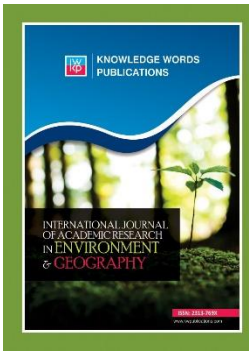

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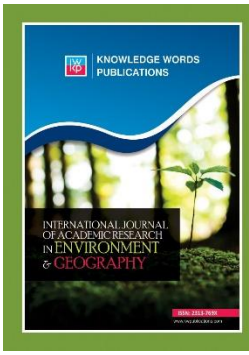

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Abstract

The use of AI tools in language learning has gained significant interest in enhancing students' motivation in the ESL classroom. This study aimed to investigate students' perceptions and motivation levels when using Canva AI in secondary school ESL reading lessons. The study was primarily based on five constructs adapted from Intrinsic Motivation Theory (IMT), a component of Self-Determination Theory. It employed a survey-based design administered to 20 lower secondary school students in Perak. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the mean and standard deviation, while qualitative data were examined via thematic analysis. The study's findings revealed an overall mean score of 4.54 (SD = 0.35) of positive student perceptions of Canva AI, accompanied by increased motivation and engagement in reading lessons. The results suggest that Canva AI can serve as an effective instructional and motivational tool in reading lessons and provide valuable insights for educators on integrating AI-assisted technology into language learning.

Keywords: Canva AI, Students' Motivation, Lower Secondary ESL students

Introduction

Background of Study

Recent years have shown a surge in the integration of Artificial Intelligence technologies in education. AI tools are applications that use artificial intelligence to perform specific tasks and solve problems (Gururaj & Dsouza, 2024). Artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT, Duolingo and Gemini AI has been used rapidly in English as a Second Language (ESL) education and has shown promising potential and results in teaching of 4 skills that includes writing, speaking, reading and listening, these use of AI tools align with digital inclusion and the cultivation of 21st century learning as well the development of self-pace learning and emerges of critical thinking.

Artificial Intelligence offers numerous advantages in education such as personalized learning, which helps students to learn at their own pace, as each student has a different level of grasping the learning (Harry,2023). Artificial Intelligence, be it tools or mediated platforms, has proven that students' engagement and motivation can be boosted (Wei, 2023). AI applications are gradually being used in ESL teaching in Malaysian secondary schools. ChatGPT, Duolingo, and Canva AI offers numerous benefits including multimodal features that are able to support students' learning and motivation. Despite that, empirical studies on students' perceptions and motivation of integration of AI tools are often overlooked and underexplored and many studies focus on tertiary education in terms of motivations as well as teachers' perceptions rather than students' perceptions. Without comprehending students' perceptions and motivations on the integration of AI tools, educators lack evidence of showing the effectiveness of integration of AI tools, thus, the students might not fully grasp the learning and the technology in language learning. Therefore, this study aims to research on the motivation and perceptions of secondary school students on the use of Canva AI (AI tools).

The rationale behind this study rests on several factors. One key aspect is the important role of motivation in language acquisition, particularly in technology-enhanced teaching and learning in ESL. Motivation is the central construct in language learning because motivation is necessary in learners' engagement and achievement. A variety of AI tools are being integrated into ESL education, yet empirical research on how these AI tools influence students' motivation—particularly among secondary school students—remains limited. There is a need to understand students' perceptions and motivation levels regarding the integration of AI tools to create meaningful, in-depth learning experiences rather than superficial ones. This study centers on reading lessons as the main skill that students need to understand before moving on to other skills. Therefore, this research aims to provide insights into students' perception and motivation when using Canva AI in reading lessons, contributing to the literature on AI language learning in Malaysian secondary schools.

Despite the increasing integration of Artificial Intelligence in English Language Teaching, empirical research, especially on secondary school students' perception and motivation towards AI tools, remains limited, particularly in the Malaysian context. Most existing studies concentrate on teachers' perspectives or on tertiary education, leaving a gap in understanding students' motivational responses to AI tools. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on students' motivational factors with a specific AI tool in a secondary school reading context. The findings are expected to enhance understanding of learner motivation and technology integration in education, as well as provide empirical insights to inform pedagogical practices and policy decisions related to AI integration in language education.

The purpose of this study is to explore secondary school students' perceptions and motivation when using Canva AI in ESL reading lessons. Thus, the objectives of this study are

1. To investigate students' perceptions of using Canva AI in reading lessons.
2. To determine students' motivation level in using Canva AI in reading lessons.

Aligned with the study's objectives, this research seeks to answer the following questions:
1. What are students' perceptions of using Canva AI in reading lessons?
2. What are students' motivation levels using Canva AI in reading lessons?

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature related to students' motivation in English as a Second Language (ESL) reading comprehension with the implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in particular Canva AI for teaching and learning process. The research is grounded in Self Determination Theory (SDT) and the intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) that explains how students' psychological needs influence intrinsic motivation and engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan, 1982). In addition, this chapter also further explains motivation in ESL reading, the role of AI and technology-enhanced learning, and the use of Canva AI as an instructional tool. Finally, a conceptual framework is presented to illustrate the relationship between Canva AI and students' motivation in ESL reading.

Self Determination Theory (SDT)

In 1985 Deci and Ryan developed Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which was considered a comprehensive psychological framework to explore individuals' motivation in their work, study and life. SDT comprises three core concepts of basic psychological needs (BPNs): autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). These three core elements are met in second language acquisition, students will feel more autonomous, competent, and connected in their community; in a word, they will become more self-determined in what they are doing, leading to their well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2012). The BPNs in SDT play a critical role in fostering learner motivation and enhancing their learning outcomes. First of all, SDT asserts that when learner autonomy is supported, it promotes engagement and persistence in students' learning process (Reeve, 2009). Autonomy implies that in their studying, students' autonomous actions happen because they are willing but not being forced to do so (Noels et al., 2019). Second, competence, defined as achievement and performance, brings students a sense of capability, leading to improved learning outcomes (Malmberg et al., 2015); e.g., if teacher feedback makes students feel that they are competent, they will sustain a high level of learner motivation (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Finally, relatedness emphasizes the importance of social connections, where positive relationships with classmates and teachers may strengthen students' motivation. In other words, when students feel autonomous, competent, and socially connected in their learning environment, they will be satisfied with their academic life, leading to better learning outcomes (Jang et al., 2010). These psychological needs have been shown to enhance intrinsic motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes in language learning environments (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Technology-enhanced learning environments can support these needs by allowing self-paced learning, providing immediate feedback, and offering structured instructional support, making them suitable for ESL learners with varying proficiency levels.

Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI)

The Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) is a multidimensional measurement device intended to assess participants' subjective experience related to language learning research. The instruments

assess participants interest/enjoyment, perceived competence, effort, value/usefulness, felt pressure and tension, and perceived choice while performing a given activity, thus yielding six subscale scores. The IMI consists of several constructs, including perceived autonomy, perceived competence, relatedness, interest/enjoyment, and perceived usefulness. According to *Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) Scale Description*, these constructs are aligned with the principles of Self-Determination Theory and are commonly used in educational research to measure learners' motivation towards specific learning activities. In the context of secondary school ESL learners, the original IMI constructs require adaptation to ensure age-appropriate language and conceptual clarity. Accordingly, this study modifies the IMI constructs into five dimensions: learning independence, confidence in English, learning support, enjoyment and interest, and perceived usefulness of Canva AI. This adaptation maintains theoretical reliability to the original IMI while ensuring accessibility and relevance for adolescent learners. The use of adapted IMI constructs enables a nuanced examination of learners' motivational experiences in AI-assisted ESL reading instruction.

Motivation in ESL reading comprehension

Reading skill is a much-needed skill to be mastered by English as a second language (ESL) learners in order to excel in the language. However, secondary school ESL learners often encounter difficulties in reading due to limited vocabulary knowledge, insufficient background knowledge, low confidence, and negative attitudes towards reading tasks (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). These challenges are frequently exacerbated by low levels of motivation, which can hinder learners' willingness to engage with texts and apply effective reading strategies. Motivation plays a powerful role in children's literacy growth and development (Bates et al. 2016). According to Cambria and Guthrie (2010) "motivation is often linked to interest and when it comes to literacy, motivation is enjoying a book, being excited about an author, or being delighted by new information" (p. 16). Plus, reading motivation is also defined in terms of the incentives the reader attaches to reading (Scheifele, Stutz, & Schaffner 2016). Despite its importance, motivation in ESL reading is often undermined by traditional teacher-centred instructional approaches that prioritise test preparation and passive learning. Such approaches may limit opportunities for learner autonomy and reduce enjoyment, particularly among lower-proficiency learners. Consequently, there is growing interest in leveraging digital and AI-based tools to create more engaging, learner-centred reading environments that foster intrinsic motivation.

AI and Technology-Enhanced Learning in ESL

The rapid growth of AI tools incorporated in education offers interactive support, adaptive scaffolding, and learner-centred experiences. Recent scholarship highlights that AI tool language learning environments can enhance engagement by providing immediate support, structured guidance, and opportunities for repeated practice without the social pressure mainly with the presence of their teacher in front of the classrooms (Nguyen et al., 2025; Torres, 2025). With the help of AI tools, students often need sustained exposure, strategic guidance, and confidence-building feedback.

More recent work has also emphasized that AI tools may positively influence motivational variables by supporting learners' autonomy and competence, especially when AI use is

embedded within purposeful pedagogy rather than treated as a stand-alone novelty (Ma et al., 2025; Sumakul, 2025). From an SDT lens, AI can potentially foster autonomy through self-paced learning and personalized pathways, while competence may increase when learners receive timely feedback and can monitor progress through repeated attempts (Zhen, 2025). Moreover, research focusing on adolescent learners suggests that SDT-informed AI interventions can contribute to improved motivation when learning experiences are designed to support psychological needs rather than simply delivering content (Galindo-Domínguez et al., 2025).

In addition, the acceptance and sustained use of AI-based learning applications are increasingly understood through "usefulness" perceptions. Studies applying contemporary technology acceptance models show that perceived usefulness remains a central predictor of learners' positive attitudes and intention to continue using AI tools for learning (Fel et al., 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2024). Thus, motivation in AI-supported ESL learning is shaped not only by tool features but also by learners' perceptions of relevance, benefit, and meaningful learning outcomes.

Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by a conceptual framework derived from SDT and IMI principles, supported by recent evidence on AI-enhanced motivation and technology acceptance. The framework proposes that the integration of Canva AI in ESL reading instruction influences students' motivation in reading comprehension through five motivational dimensions: learning independence (autonomy), confidence in English (competence), learning support (relatedness), enjoyment and interest, and perceived usefulness of Canva AI.

In this model, Canva AI functions as the instructional intervention shaping learners' motivational experiences by providing structured learning scaffolds and self-paced task completion opportunities, consistent with SDT-informed AI learning environments (Galindo-Domínguez et al., 2025; Zhen, 2025). Furthermore, sustained engagement is expected to depend partly on learners' perceived usefulness and acceptance of Canva AI, which are consistently shown to predict continued use of AI tools in educational settings (Fel et al., 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2024/2025). Collectively, these dimensions explain how Canva AI may contribute to stronger intrinsic motivation in ESL reading comprehension.

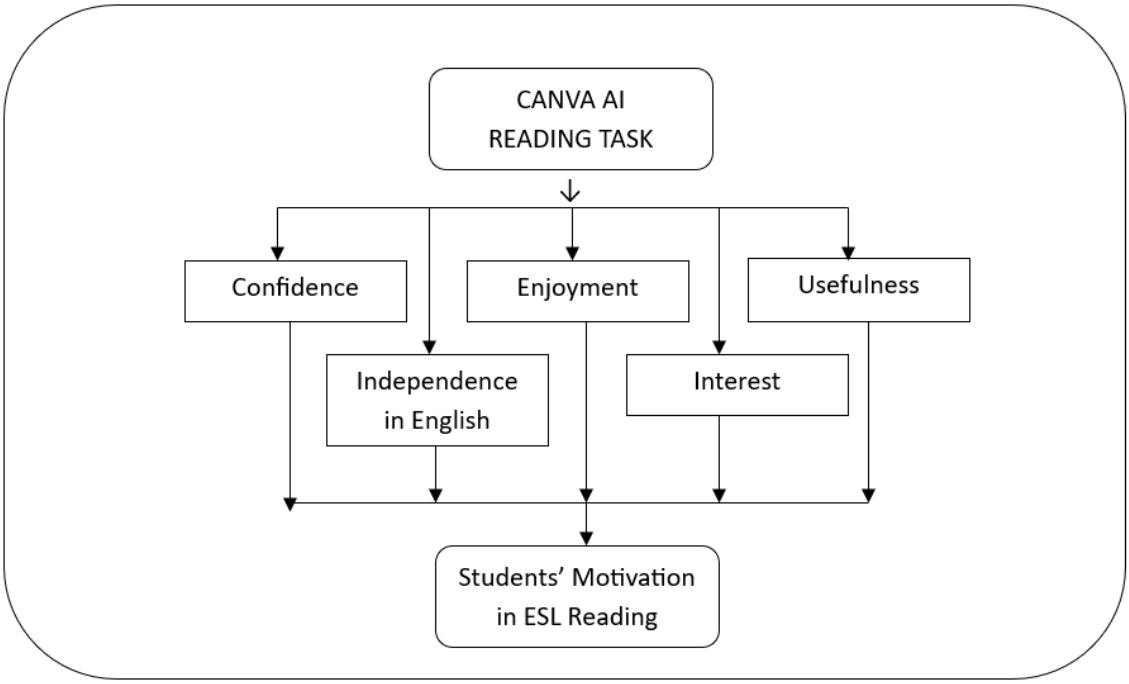

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Research Gaps

Despite the growing body of research on AI in language learning, empirical evidence remains limited in several key areas relevant to this study. First, many AI-in-ELT studies focus on general language learning, writing support, or university-level contexts, while fewer studies directly investigate secondary school ESL learners' motivational experiences in AI-supported reading comprehension (Nguyen et al., 2025; Torres, 2025). Second, while recent studies highlight the potential of AI to shape motivation through SDT-related mechanisms, there is still insufficient attention to how specific classroom tools support autonomy, competence, and relatedness among adolescent learners in authentic school settings (Galindo-Domínguez et al., 2025; Ma et al., 2025). Third, research specifically focusing on Canva AI in ESL reading is still emerging and tends to concentrate on perceptions of Canva as a learning medium rather than examining motivational constructs systematically (Sagala & Harahap, 2025). Therefore, this study addresses an important gap by investigating secondary students' motivation using adapted IMI constructs and triangulating findings through both questionnaire and interview data.

Methodology

Research Design

This study aims to investigate students' perceptions and motivation levels when using Canva AI in reading lessons. Thus, the study employed a quantitative survey research design followed by semi-structured interviews. Survey designs provide descriptions of trends, attitudes and opinions of the population (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The research methodology primarily used a questionnaire to gather on perceptions and motivations of students when using Canva AI followed by semi-structured interviews for in-depth insights and to support the quantitative findings.

Samples

A total of 20 students participated in the study. The participants were selected using convenience sampling, as they are from one of the researcher's own classes. All participants were studying English as a Second Language and were within the age range of 13-14 years.

Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to measure students' perceptions and motivation toward learning with Canva AI.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections: Section A was on the demographics of participants, focusing on age and gender of the participants. Section B measured students' perceptions and motivation levels of using Canva AI IN reading lessons. Items in Section B are divided into five constructs. The questionnaire items, especially the constructs were adapted from the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) under Self-Determination Theory (*Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) – selfdeterminationtheory.org*, n.d.). The constructs included perceived autonomy, perceived competence, perceived choice/relatedness, interest/enjoyment (Intrinsic Motivation), and perceived usefulness. These IMI original constructs were modified to suit secondary school students' levels. Modified constructs are as follows: Learning Independence (Autonomy), Confidence in English, Learning Support, Enjoyment & Interest and Usefulness of Canva AI. Questionnaire items were measured using a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Complementing the survey data, five semi-structured interview questions were developed based on the adapted Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) constructs. The interviews aimed to triangulate questionnaire findings by exploring students' perceptions of autonomy, competence, relatedness, enjoyment, and perceived usefulness when using Canva AI for reading comprehension.

Data Collection & Analysis

Data collection was conducted in two phases. The first phase was the structured questionnaire administered after participants had experienced a reading lesson with Canva AI. The questionnaire was distributed online and completed within a time frame. The second phase followed by the semi structure interview with selected participants to obtain in-depth insights into their perceptions and motivation. Selected students were based on purposive sampling of their survey responses. The interview was audio-recorded with consent and transcribed for analysis. Survey data were analyzed using SPSS Version 27 which includes descriptive statistics. Gender and Age (demographic information) are analyzed using frequencies and percentages, along with means and standard deviations for the 5 constructs. The reliability of the constructs was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to ensure internal consistency. The findings were presented in pie charts (demographic information) and the constructs in table form. As for interview data, it was analyzed using thematic analysis, following the steps including data familiarization, coding, thematic summarization and interpretation. These findings were used to support and enhance the survey results. Both quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated during the explanation of the constructs.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical Considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. Prior to data collection, participants were informed and their consent was taken into consideration. Participants were informed that their participation is voluntary and they were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were ensured as the responses were collected by codes. The data collected from both instruments are stored specifically for academic purposes and kept with access limited to research. Approval to conduct the research was obtained from the school administration before the data collection.

Findings

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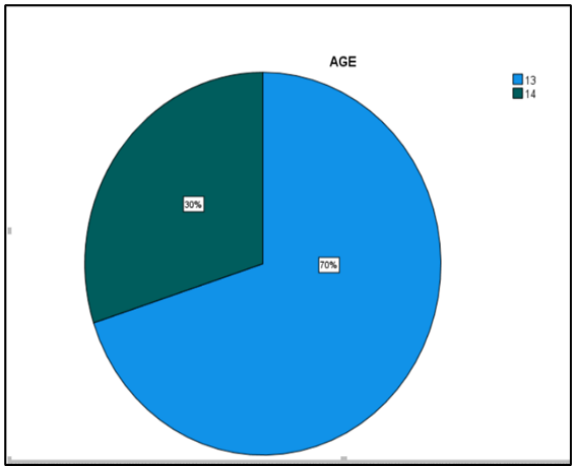

FIGURE 2: Percentage for Age

Figure 2 shows the distribution of respondents' ages. Total of 20 students were selected of 13-14 years which comprised 70% (n=14) of 13-year-olds and 30% (n=6) were 14 years old.

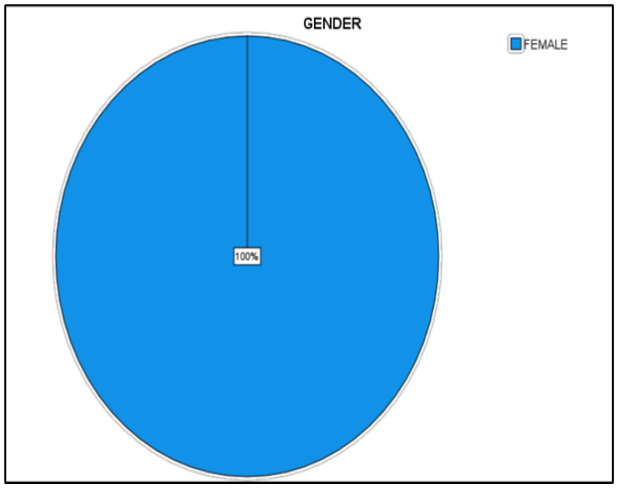

FIGURE 3: Percentage for Gender

Figure 3 shows the distribution of gender among the participants. All 20 students who were selected for the study were female as the school is an all-girls school.

Questionaire

Reliability Analysis

Table 1

Reliability Analysis

Construct	Cronbach's α
LEARNING INDEPENDENCE	0.714
CONFIDENCE IN ENGLISH	0.714
LEARNING SUPPORT	0.809
ENJOYMENT AND INTEREST	0.735
USEFULNESS OF CANVA AI	0.694

A reliability analysis was conducted on the perceptions questionnaire of the five constructs. The Learning Support construct (5 items) showed good internal consistency (α = 0.809), while the Enjoyment and Interest construct (6 items) showed acceptable reliability, indicating reasonable consistency in measuring students' interest and enjoyment in using Canva AI. The Learning Independence and Confidence in English constructs (5 items each) also showed acceptable reliability, demonstrating consistency in measuring learning independence and confidence in English when using Canva AI.

Construct 1: Learning Independence

Table 2

Mean & Standard Deviation

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel in control of my learning in reading when I use Canva AI.	20	4	5	4.35	.489
I can complete English reading questions by myself using Canva AI.	20	3	5	4.60	.598
I can work at my own pace when using Canva AI in reading comprehension.	20	3	5	4.40	.681
Canva AI allows me to complete the reading questions without being rushed.	20	4	5	4.65	.489
I feel comfortable using Canva AI to answer the questions.	20	3	5	4.70	.571
Valid N (listwise)	20				

Based on Table 2, Item 5 shows the highest mean of 4.70 (SD = 0.571), indicating that students feel comfortable using Canva AI to answer reading comprehension questions, even though they have just become familiar with it. This has been further supported by interviews with all three interviewees who stated that Canva AI supported their ability to learn reading comprehension independently. In particular, interviewee C mentioned "*Canva AI helps me learn reading comprehension by myself because I can explore the text without pressure."* This indicates that Canva AI fosters a sense of autonomy, allowing students to take control of their own learning progress. In contrast, item 1 shows the lowest mean of 4.35 (SD: 0.489) which indicates that students do not feel in control of their own learning when they use Canva AI. This is due to not so much familiarity with Canva AI as it is used for a minimum time. Overall, these results showed that the students' learning is not fully independent when it comes to the use of Canva AI in reading lessons. On the contrary, interviewee B mentioned that "*I can complete reading tasks independently without always asking the teacher.". This could be related to the students' familiarity with Canva AI tool that produces learning at their own pace that differs in results.*

Construct 2: Confidence In English
Table 3
Mean & Standard Deviation

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Canva AI helps me to understand reading comprehension better.	20	4	5	4.65	.489
I feel more confident doing reading comprehension with Canva AI.	20	3	5	4.45	.686
I feel proud of my reading comprehension skill using Canva AI skill.	20	2	5	4.25	.851
Canva AI makes me know my mistakes and correct them.	20	4	5	4.75	.444
I believe I can do well in reading lessons using Canva AI.	20	3	5	4.55	.605
Valid N (listwise)	20				

Based on Table 3, Item 4 shows the highest mean of 4.75 (SD: 0.444,) indicating that students strongly agree that Canva AI helps them to know their mistakes and correct errors which reflects their ability to understand the errors and rectify them. This further supports the statement from Interviewee C,*"My confidence has improved because Canva AI helps me identify my mistakes and understand the correct answers.". This reflects an improvement in perceived competence.* On the other hand, item 3 shows the lowest mean of 4.25 (SD: 0.851) which indicates that students have

lower self-pride in their reading skill. As interviewee A mentioned in her interview, *"Canva AI increases confidence when answering knowledge questions in English but I wish I can read more reading text to score even better". This reflects on how the reading comprehension using Canva AI though is focused on CEFR level, they wish to access more reading materials in order to improve their scores. Hence, this proves why students are not feeling confident answering item number 3.* Overall, these results showed that students are motivated as they are confident in English.

Construct 3: Learning Support
Table 4
Mean & Standard Deviation

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel comfortable learning English with Canva AI.	20	2	5	4.55	.759
Canva AI helps me understand my teacher's instructions.	20	3	5	4.55	.686
Canva AI makes learning English fun.	20	4	5	4.75	.444
I feel encouraged to use Canva AI for my reading skills.	20	2	5	4.35	.875
Canva AI helps me to stay focused in answering questions based on reading lessons.	20	4	5	4.75	.444
Valid N (listwise)	20				

Based on Table 4, Items 3 & 5 show the highest mean of 4.75 (SD: 0.444,) indicating that students find learning English fun with Canva AI and they can focus on learning, especially answering comprehension questions. This supports the statement from interviewee C, *"It explains the content in a simple way and helps me focus during reading activities." This can be concluded that Canva AI fosters engagement in reading activity.* In contrast, item 4 shows the lowest mean of 4.35 (SD: 0.875) and looking at the minimum and maximum (2:5), students feel less encouraged to use Canva AI for their reading lesson. This further explains with interviewee B, "*Initially I find it difficult to use the app because it is very new to me, but then when I explore in my own time I feel Canva AI guides me step by step and makes the instructions clearer."* This is due to Canva AI as a new tool for them to explore for reading lessons. Overall, these results showed that Canva AI can act as a learning support for students in reading skill.

Construct 4: Enjoyment & Interest

Table 5

Mean & Standard Deviation

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I enjoy learning to answer questions using Canva AI.	20	3	5	4.55	.686
I feel motivated for reading skills using Canva AI	20	4	5	4.50	.513
Canva AI makes reading lessons more interesting.	20	3	5	4.45	.759
I feel excited to complete reading activities using Canva AI.	20	3	5	4.60	.598
Canva AI increases my interest in reading English materials.	20	3	5	4.70	.571
I enjoy making mistakes while answering questions as Canva AI helps me to retrieve the mistakes.	20	3	5	4.20	.834
Valid N (listwise)	20				

Based on Table 5, Item 5 shows the highest mean of 4.70 (SD: 0.571,) indicating that Canva AI increased their interest in reading English materials. This shows that Canva AI makes the students interested in their learning. As interviewee B mentioned, *"Reading becomes more enjoyable because Canva AI uses visuals and summaries to cope up with my reading engagement."*. On the other hand, item 6 shows the lowest mean of 4.20 (SD: 0.834) which indicates that students are not in favour of making mistakes while answering questions in Canva AI even though the tools help them to retrieve them. This could be due to students feeling the need to get good marks instead of making mistakes. As a whole, it can be said that students enjoyed and were interested in using Canva AI despite their reluctance to make mistakes.

Construct 5: Usefulness Of Canva Ai
Table 6
Mean & Standard Deviation

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Canva AI helps me to understand the reading texts more easily.	20	3	5	4.50	.607
Canva AI helps me to answer the questions easily.	20	4	5	4.75	.444
Canva AI helps me prepare better for reading tests.	20	2	5	4.45	.826
Canva AI is an interesting thing to learn reading skills.	20	4	5	4.55	.510
Valid N (listwise)	20				

Based on Table 6, Item 2 has the highest mean of 4.75 (SD: 0.444), indicating that Canva AI helps students answer questions. Interviewee A has mentioned that, *"It can summarize long or difficult passages, making it easy to understand the main ideas." This* demonstrates the tool's usefulness. In contrast, item 3 has the lowest mean of 4.45 (SD: 0.826), and with a minimum and maximum of 2 and 5, respectively, students feel that Canva AI is less helpful in better preparing for reading comprehension tests. This resulted from a statement that mentioned *"Canva AI helps me understand the text faster and prepare better for reading tests if given more time.".* Overall, this reflects a strong belief in the academic usefulness of Canva AI.

Discussion

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What are students' perceptions of using Canva AI in reading lessons?

Looking at the research objectives towards the use of Canva AI in reading lessons, the findings indicate that students hold a positive perception towards the use of Canva AI in reading lessons. Evidently, all five constructs from the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) were measured in the questionnaire with high mean scores and interview responses reinforce the validity of the results. The reliability analysis confirms that the questionnaire constructs showed acceptable to good internal consistency. This shows that the students' perceptions were measured reliably. These perceptions are consistent with recent studies reporting positive learner attitudes toward AI-assisted language learning tools that offer structured guidance and visual support (Nguyen et al., 2025; Sagala & Harahap, 2025).

Students perceive Canva AI as a tool to learn at their own pace. Despite having no prior experience, students felt comfortable using Canva AI as resulted with the highest mean from the item which related to comfort in using the tool. This impression is further supported by interview

data where it shows that students felt free to study on their own timeline and explore the texts without little or zero pressure. However, students felt less control over their learning process due to the possibility that students' sense of autonomy is still developing due to limited familiarity with the tool and their age factor could possibly reason their unfamiliar use of the tool. This finding indicates that while Canva AI is perceived positively, sustained exposure and consistent use may be required for students to fully experience learning autonomy. This finding aligns with recent research suggesting that learners' perceptions of autonomy in AI-supported learning environments strengthen over time as familiarity and confidence increase (Galindo-Domínguez et al., 2025; Zhen, 2025).

Students perceived Canva AI as helpful in identifying and correcting mistakes. The highest mean scores on error recognition suggests that students valued feedback and clarification from Canva AI, Interview data further revealed that students felt more confident answering comprehension questions when explanations were simplified. However, the lower mean score related to pride in reading skills suggests that students associated confidence not only with tool support but also with access to a wider range of reading materials. These finding echoes recent studies indicating that AI tools enhance perceived competence but should be complemented with sufficient practice opportunities to maximize confidence (Ma et al., 2025; Torres, 2025).

In terms of learning support, students perceived Canva AI as a tool that enhances their focus and made learning English more enjoyable. High mean scores for enjoyment and focus suggest that Canva AI contributed positively to students' engagement during reading tasks. Interview responses highlighted those visual explanations and step-by-step guidance reduced the confusion and anxiety level individually. However, the lower mean score on encouragement to use Canva AI reflects an initial adjustment phase, which is common when learners are introduced to new AI-based learning tools (Ibrahim et al., 2024; Sumakul, 2025). This suggests that students' perceptions of support improve with increased exposure and guided implementation.

Students' enjoyment and interest in reading tasks were also notably positive. High mean scores indicated that Canva AI increased students' interest in reading activity which was supported by interview comments highlighting the use of visuals and summaries in the AI tool. However, the lower mean score related to enjoying making mistakes suggests that students remain influenced by exam-oriented learning cultures, where accuracy and grades are prioritized. Similar findings have been reported in recent studies, where learners valued AI support but remained cautious about error-based learning due to assessment pressures (Jeon, 2022).

Finally, students perceived Canva AI as academically useful especially in helping them to understand texts and answer comprehension questions. Interview data strongly support this perception, with students emphasizing summarization features and simplification of complex passages. The slightly lower mean score related to test preparation suggests that students viewed Canva AI as more effective for learning support rather than direct examination practice. This aligns with recent technology acceptance research, which suggests that perceived usefulness increases when AI tools are integrated consistently and over longer durations (Fel, 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2024).

Overall, the results indicate that students view Canva AI favorably as a helpful and entertaining tool for ESL reading, but they also emphasize the significance of consistent use and pedagogical scaffolding to reinforce these views.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: What are students' motivation levels using Canva AI in reading lessons?
The findings for the learning independence construct showed that students reported that Canva AI encourages them to work independently in reading tasks and can manage their learning process effectively as it is further proven that AI tools are perceived positively and enhance students' sense of autonomy which increases the motivation (Liang & Reiss, 2025). In contrast, some students did not perceive them in full control of their own learning when using Canva AI due as the AI tool itself provides structured guidance but this guidance may limit students' control over making learning decisions. Motivation level can be reflected through the students' confidence in English by the findings that indicate Canva AI helped students to feel more confident in comprehending the main features of reading skill which is further supported by cognitive evaluation theory, a sub theory of self-determination theory stated that the feeling of competence (confidence) can enhance intrinsic motivation that it satisfies the basic psychological need (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This showed that students' confidence level increased when they used Canva AI. Enjoyment and interest construct emerged as strong motivational factors in students' use of Canva AI as the main measure of intrinsic motivation (*Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) – selfdeterminationtheory.org*, n.d.). Enjoyment serves as students' emotional enjoyment and as a driver for motivation (Liang & Reiss, 2025). This aligned to the findings that students found the reading lessons more enjoyable with the integration of Canva AI and students are motivated to explore the reading text in which portrays higher learning motivation when they are provided with AI tools (Azamatova et al., 2023; Shafiee and Roohani, 2024). This cultivates intrinsic motivation of doing something due to interest and enjoyment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The usefulness of Canva AI construct reported the students to AI useful for them to comprehend the reading texts easily. In contrast, students reported that they find it difficult to understand certain texts due to a lack of time. Students found that Canva AI has high instructional value in supporting reading comprehension. Overall, the findings revealed that students' motivational levels increased with the use of Canva AI in reading lessons.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate students' perceptions and motivation levels when using Canva AI in secondary school ESL reading lessons. The finding revealed that generally students give positive perceptions for the use of Canva AI in reading lessons, highlighting its ability to support learning confidence, increase confidence in English, increase the enjoyment and interest, give the best learning support and promote the practicality of Canva AI in reading lessons. In terms of motivation, the findings indicate that Canva AI engages students and promotes higher motivation levels. These results aligned with self-determination theory in which is connected to autonomy, completeness and relatedness as perceived usefulness of the tool.

Limitations for this study is the sample size was limited to female students from a single secondary school which might affect the generalizability of the findings. This study focused on reading lessons/skills particularly reading text in which the findings can't be generalized to English

Language skills overall. The terms of data collection as it is a self-reported questionnaire which may limit the depth of understanding of the perceptions and motivation of the students as well it could report bias. Additionally, the time constraints to conduct the research affect the depth of the data as the students had short exposure to Canva AI which limited the long-term effect of the tool and some students who might have prior experience with Canva AI might have affected the data. For future research, the sample should include multiple schools, both genders and age groups for generalizability of the findings. The future research should employ a longitudinal as to observe the perceptions and motivation over a long period of time and employ more diverse instruments like classroom observation as to provide richer insights into students' experience with Canva AI. The Canva AI should be examined in other language skills to evaluate the effectiveness of the tools.

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