



Multiculturally Responsive Teaching in Reading Instruction: A Bibliometric Mapping of Research Trends and Themes

Scientific review article

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Abstract

This study analyzes the development of scientific publications on the Multiculturally Responsive Teaching (MRT) model in reading instruction using a bibliometric approach. Scopus-indexed documents were examined through descriptive analysis and science mapping. Data collected on December 13, 2025, yielded 210 documents, of which 131 articles were selected based on subject area and document type. The findings show steady growth in MRT research since 2009, with a peak in publications in 2020–2021. The United States dominates publication output at both national and institutional levels, while international collaboration remains limited. Research is mainly published in education, literacy, and teacher education journals. Citation and keyword analyses reveal four dominant themes: multicultural student contexts, teacher education and development, literacy and reading comprehension, and social justice-oriented school improvement. Overall, MRT has emerged as a relevant integrative approach to addressing diversity and educational equity, while indicating the need for further empirical and cross-contextual research.

Keywords: *Bibliometric analysis, literacy education, multiculturally responsive teaching, reading instruction, teacher education*

Awareness of cultural diversity has become a prominent feature of contemporary educational practice. This awareness is driven by increasing social mobility, globalization, and the intensification of cross-

cultural knowledge exchange (Herzog-Punzenberger et al., 2020). These developments highlight the need for pedagogical approaches that can respond equitably and meaningfully to students'

diverse cultural backgrounds (Markey et al., 2023). One such approach is Multiculturally Responsive Teaching (MRT), which emphasizes integrating cultural awareness, cross-cultural knowledge, and pedagogical skills to support inclusive learning environments (Kelly, L. B. et al., 2021; Pourdavood & Yan, 2020). Within this framework, multiculturalism is understood as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, enabling inclusive, contextually grounded learning interactions (Choompunuch et al., 2024; Lehman, 2024). In literacy and curriculum studies, MRT aligns closely with culturally responsive literacy instruction and intercultural pedagogies that prioritize learners' positionality, linguistic experiences, and community connections (Gillispie, 2021; Hilaski, 2018; Kelly, L. B. et al., 2021). Empirical evidence further suggests that MRT contributes to increased literacy engagement and achievement when instruction incorporates culturally relevant texts, family–community partnerships, and dialogical classroom practices (Hilaski, 2018; Stauss et al., 2020; Szech, 2022).

In the context of reading instruction, culture plays a central role in meaning-making processes. Reading is inherently interpretive and is shaped by readers' cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and prior knowledge (Mamba, 2024; Nash et al., 2024). Research indicates that cultural differences influence how learners construct meaning from texts, particularly those representing multicultural perspectives and experiences (Kiss & Weninger, 2017; Toti & Hamid, 2022). Other studies demonstrate that cultural familiarity positively affects reading comprehension, especially in second language learning and cross-cultural literacy contexts (García et al., 2024; Nash et al., 2024). These findings underscore the importance of integrating MRT principles into reading instruction to enhance comprehension, engagement, and critical thinking when students interact with culturally diverse texts.

Alongside the growth of research on multicultural education and reading instruction, scholarly publications addressing these areas have increased substantially. Recent studies illustrate innovative practices, such as the use of multiliteracy approaches

to integrate multicultural education into extensive reading programs (Mandarani et al., 2024) and the role of reading in fostering critical and tolerant multicultural perspectives (Saepurokhman et al., 2023). While this expansion reflects significant academic progress, it also presents challenges, including research fragmentation, overlapping thematic focuses, and potential bias arising from repetitive approaches. In this context, comprehensive mapping is needed to clarify research trends, identify well-explored areas, and reveal emerging topics. Bibliometric analysis offers a systematic means to examine the structure and dynamics of this research field, including publication patterns, thematic relationships, and directions for future scholarly development (Gao & Larjavaara, 2024; Salido et al., 2025).

Studies on multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy have expanded rapidly through diverse research approaches. At the level of literature mapping, bibliometric studies by Kilavuz (2023) and Sampaleng (2023) examine publication trends, key contributors, and dominant themes in multicultural education, such as responsive teaching and multicultural competence, but do not focus on specific learning domains. In contrast, research on reading instruction has relied mainly on empirical studies and systematic reviews. Kelly, L. B. et al. (2021) and Kelly J. et al. (2023) analyze how cultural dimensions are incorporated into reading instruction and comprehension interventions, emphasizing culturally responsive and context-specific literacy practices. Other empirical studies explore the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy in reading through bilingual instruction, culturally meaningful text selection, and learning strategies grounded in students' experiences (Ramírez, 2020). Although these studies demonstrate strong links between culture and reading instruction, they generally treat multicultural education and reading as separate areas of inquiry, both in their focus and in their methodologies.

Despite the existence of bibliometric analyses on multicultural education (Kilavuz, 2023; Sampaleng, 2023), these studies remain broad and do not address specific learning domains such as reading. Conversely, research on culturally

responsive reading instruction is often limited to particular contexts, populations, or instructional settings and is dominated by empirical or review-based approaches (Kelly, J. et al., 2023; Kelly, L. B. et al., 2021). As a result, the conceptual structure, publication dynamics, and thematic evolution at the intersection of the MRT model and reading instruction remain underexplored. This gap indicates the absence of bibliometric mapping that specifically examines publication trends, dominant themes, and research directions linking MRT and reading instruction. The novelty of the present study lies in addressing this gap through a Scopus-based bibliometric analysis that reveals publication patterns, authorship networks, influential institutions and countries, and thematic clusters shaping MRT research in reading instruction.

Accordingly, this study aims to map the development of scientific publications on the MRT model in reading instruction by identifying major research themes and potential areas for future inquiry. Specifically, it examines publication trends, authorship patterns, influential institutions and countries, and the conceptual structure of the literature indexed in the Scopus database. This approach is expected to offer a comprehensive perspective that previous studies have not provided. The resulting overview of the research landscape is intended to serve as a reference for researchers, educators, and policymakers concerned with culturally responsive reading instruction. To achieve these objectives, the study addresses three research questions: (1) What are the publication trends and general characteristics of MRT research in reading instruction? (2) What key research themes have emerged at the intersection of the MRT model and reading instruction? and (3) What future research directions can be identified based on the results of the bibliometric analysis?

Method

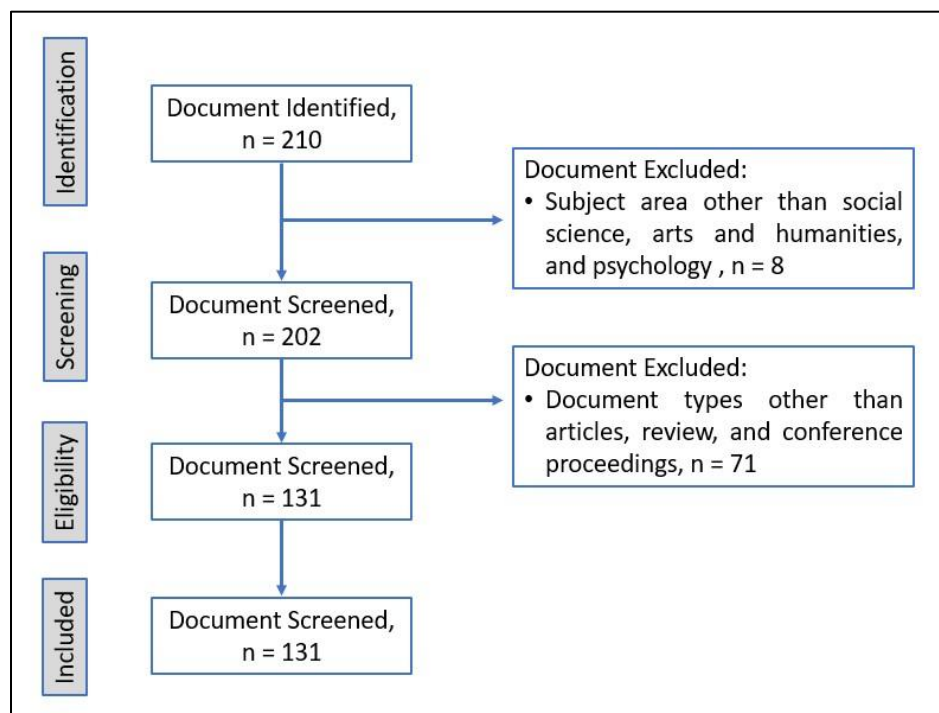
Research Design

This study employs a bibliometric analysis to map and evaluate the development of research on the MRT model in reading instruction. Bibliometric analysis enables the quantitative examination of scientific publications, including publication growth, authorship patterns, publication sources, and the contributions of institutions and countries (Suseno et al., 2025). In addition, this approach facilitates the identification of intellectual and conceptual structures within a research field through metadata-based network analysis, allowing a systematic overview of research trends and thematic relationships.

Data Collection

Research data were retrieved from the Scopus database on December 13, 2025. Scopus was selected due to its broad metadata coverage, standardized indexing system, and strong reputation as an international multidisciplinary database (Nasrum et al., 2025). Its flexible search features and data export options also support reliable bibliometric mapping and visualization. The metadata search was conducted using the following query: (“multicultural* responsive teaching” OR “cultural* responsive teaching” OR “cultural* responsive pedagogy” OR “multicultural* education”) AND (reading OR “academic reading”). This query was designed to capture publications addressing multicultural responsive pedagogy with a focus on reading instruction. The initial search yielded 210 documents (Figure 1). To reduce disciplinary bias, the dataset was refined to include only publications within the social sciences, arts and humanities, and psychology, resulting in 202 documents. Further screening limited the dataset to review articles and conference papers, yielding a final sample of 131 documents for analysis. All metadata were exported in Comma-Separated Values (CSV) format and manually verified using Microsoft Excel to ensure data completeness and consistency. The verification process confirmed that all records met the requirements for bibliometric analysis.

Figure 1.
PRISMA Flowchart



Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted after metadata collection and verification were complete. Two software tools were used: Biblioshiny, an R-based application, and VOS viewer. These tools were selected for their comprehensive analytical capabilities, user-friendly interfaces, and widespread use in bibliometric research. Descriptive bibliometric analysis was performed using Biblioshiny to identify annual publication trends, citation patterns, productive journals, influential institutions and countries, and highly cited documents.

Conceptual and thematic mapping was conducted using VOS viewer through keyword co-occurrence analysis and network visualization. A minimum threshold of three keyword occurrences was applied to generate representative thematic clusters. Thesaurus files were used to standardize terminology and remove duplication, while

non-contextual terms such as “article”, “review”, and “conference paper” were excluded to improve cluster accuracy. Visualization was integrated with analysis to present relationships among bibliometric variables clearly. Interpretation of the results was guided by the research questions and focused on identifying dominant patterns, emerging themes, and potential directions for future research. To enhance reliability and reduce interpretive bias, multiple researchers independently reviewed the analytical results, and conclusions were reached through consensus.

Results

Global Trends and overview of research on the MRT Model in Reading Instruction
The results of the bibliometric analysis of annual publication trends on the MRT model in reading instruction are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2.
Annual Scientific Production on MRT in Reading

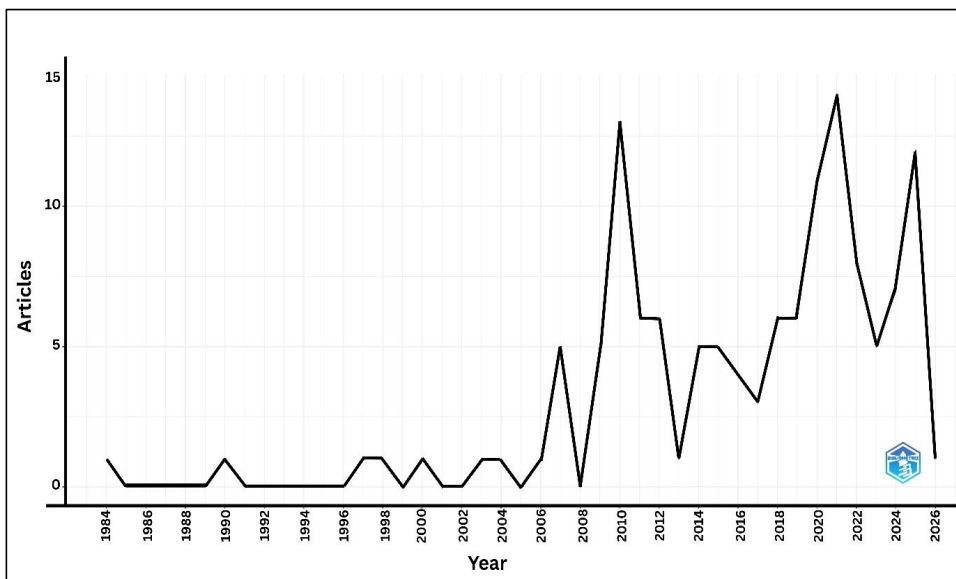


Figure 2 illustrates the development of scientific publications on the MRT model in reading instruction from the mid-1980s to 2025. During the initial phase, from approximately 1984 to the mid-2000s, publications were minimal and sporadic, with most years recording zero or only one publication. This pattern indicates that research on MRT in reading instruction has not yet become a significant focus in educational research. Beginning in 2006, the number of publications increased, although none were recorded in 2008. From 2009 onward, publication output grew more

consistently, reaching its peak around 2021. Several periods, particularly 2010, 2020, 2021, and 2025, recorded more than ten publications per year, reflecting a substantial rise in scholarly attention. Nevertheless, some years, such as 2013 and 2017, still showed relatively low publication output. Overall, the trend demonstrates sustained long-term growth in academic interest in the MRT model in reading instruction, especially between 2006 and 2025. Furthermore, the results of the average citations-per-year analysis are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3.
Average Citations per Year on MRT in Reading

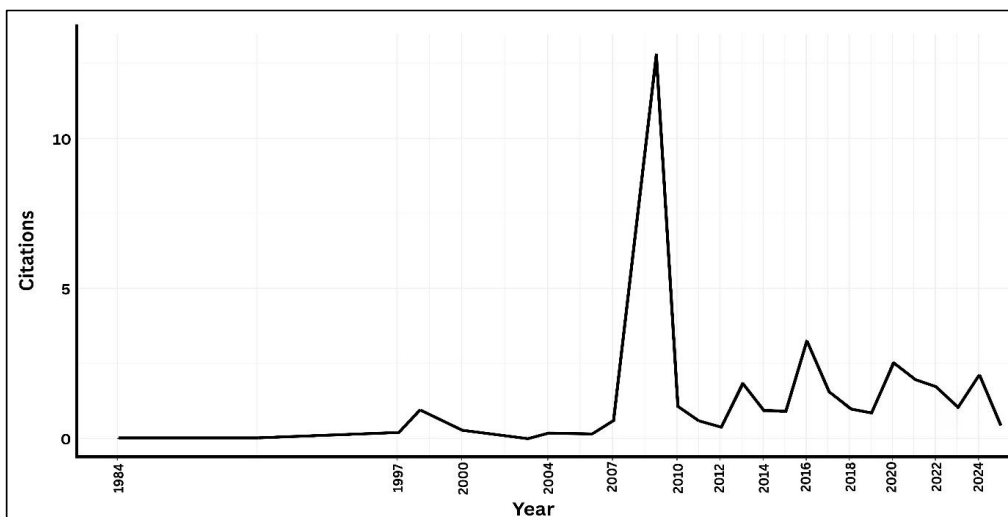


Figure 3 reveals considerable variation in average annual citations across the observation period. In the early years, from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s, citation averages remained very low and close to zero, reflecting both the small number of publications and their limited academic impact. A gradual increase in citation activity emerged in the mid-1990s to early 2000s, although the pattern remained unstable. The most prominent increase occurred around 2008 and 2009, when average citations per year exceeded fifteen, representing the

highest point during the entire period. This peak suggests the publication of one or more highly influential studies that were widely cited by subsequent research. After this surge, citation averages declined and fluctuated, with moderate peaks observed between 2012 and 2025. In recent years, the average citation rate has declined, likely due to the shorter time available for newer publications to accumulate citations. Furthermore, the distribution of publications by the country of the corresponding author is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4.

Top 10 Corresponding Author's Countries in Publications on MRT in Reading

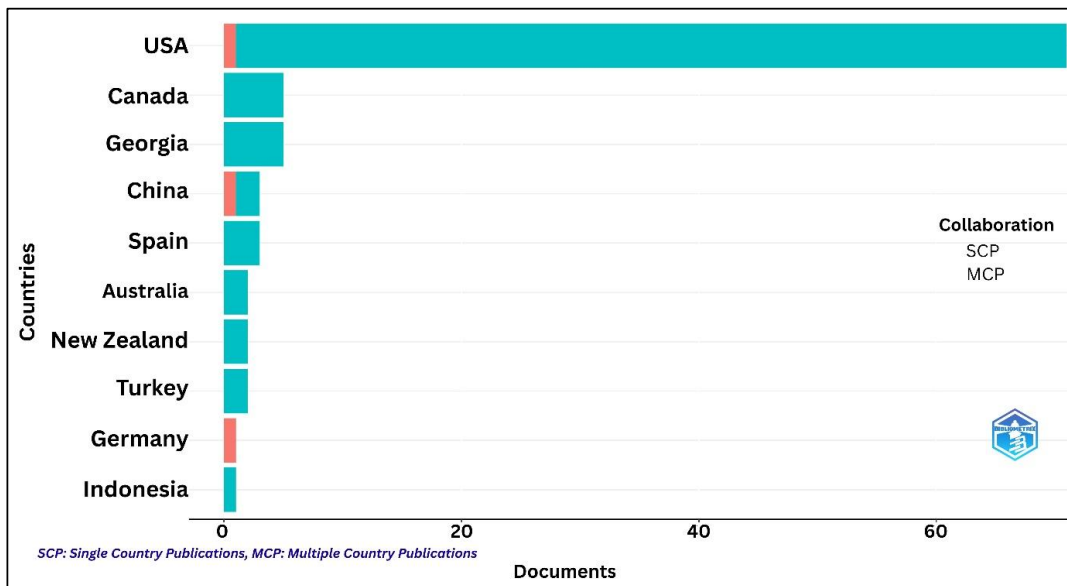


Figure 4 indicates that research on the MRT model in reading instruction is strongly dominated by the United States of America (USA), which accounts for the most publications by a substantial margin. Most publications from the USA are single-country publications (SCPs), while multiple-country publications (MCPs) represent only a small proportion. This pattern suggests high research productivity but limited international collaboration. Canada and Georgia follow as countries with a moderate number of publications, all of which are classified as SCPs, indicating research conducted primarily within national contexts. China also contributes to the field with both SCPs and MCPs, although SCPs remain dominant, reflecting limited cross-national

collaboration.

Other countries, including Spain, Australia, New Zealand, Turkey, Germany, and Indonesia, show relatively low publication output. In most of these countries, research is dominated by SCPs, with MCPs appearing only in Germany. Notably, all German publications involve international collaboration, highlighting a contrasting pattern of research engagement. Overall, these findings demonstrate that knowledge production on the MRT model in reading instruction remains concentrated in a small number of countries, particularly the USA, and is primarily characterized by nationally oriented research. The analysis of the most relevant institutional affiliations is presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5.
Top 10 Most Relevant Affiliations in Publications on MRT in Reading

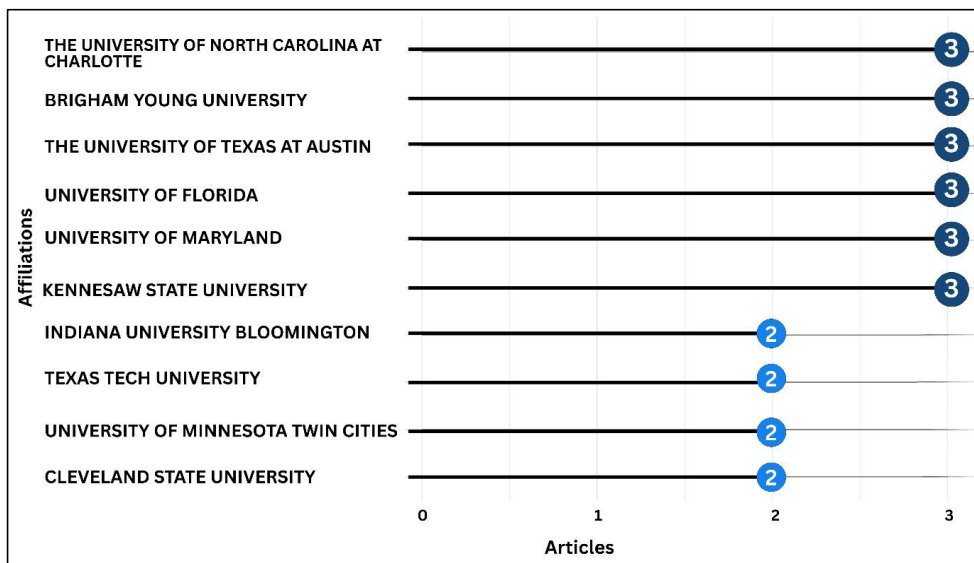
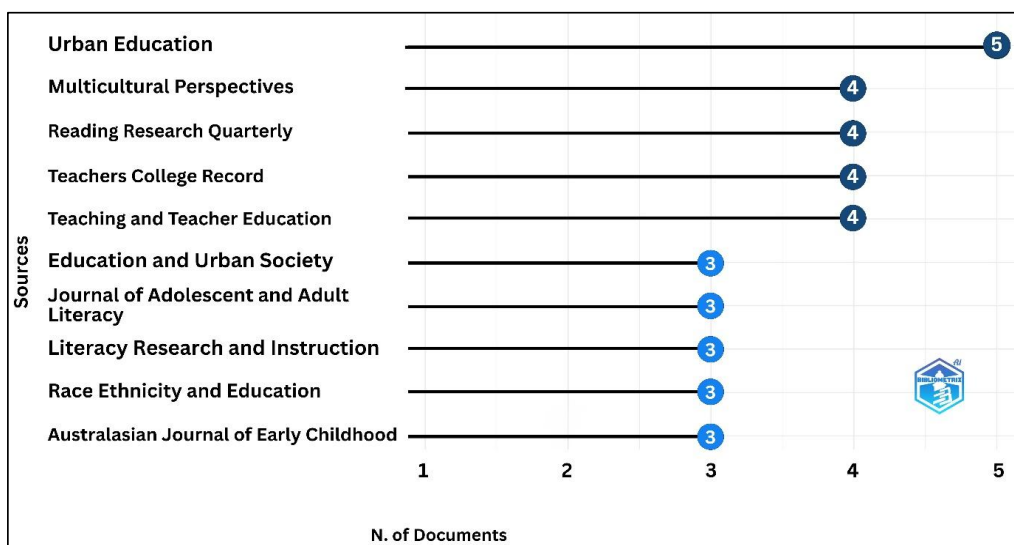


Figure 5 shows that research contributions on the MRT model in reading instruction originate from a range of institutions with relatively balanced productivity levels. No single affiliation dominates knowledge production in this field. Six institutions lead with three publications each: the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Brigham Young University, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Florida, the University of Maryland, and Kennesaw State University. These institutions are primarily based in the United States, indicating an intense

concentration of research leadership within major U.S. universities. At the next level, four institutions—Indiana University Bloomington, Texas Tech University, the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, and Cleveland State University—each contributed two publications. The slight differences in publication output across these institutions suggest a decentralized research landscape, with scholarly contributions distributed across multiple universities rather than concentrated in a single dominant institution.

Figure 6.
Top 10 Most Relevant Sources in Publications on MRT in Reading



The analysis of publication sources presented in Figure 6 indicates that Urban Education is the most productive journal, with five published articles. It is followed by Multicultural Perspectives, Reading Research Quarterly, Teachers College Record, and Teaching and Teacher Education, each contributing four documents. Journals such as Education and Urban Society, Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, Literacy Research and Instruction, Race Ethnicity and Education, and the

Australasian Journal of Early Childhood each published three articles. Overall, these findings show that MRT research in reading instruction is primarily disseminated through journals in education, literacy, and teacher education. This distribution highlights the multidimensional nature of the field, which integrates perspectives on literacy development, social justice, race and ethnicity, and educational practice across diverse learning contexts.

Table 1.

Top 10 Most Global Cited Documents in Publications on MRT in Reading

Paper	DOI	TC
Paluck and Green (2009), Annual Review of Psychology	10.1146/Annurev.Psych.60.110707.163607	927
Santamaría (2009), Teachers College Record	10.1177/016146810911100105	116
Milner (2020), Reading Research Quarterly	10.1002/Rrq.347	69
Kim (2016), Reading Research Quarterly	10.1002/Rrq.131	69
López (2016), Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education	10.1177/016146811611800503	60
Orosco and O'Connor (2014), Journal of Learning Disabilities	10.1177/0022219413476553	52
Mosley (2010), Race, Ethnicity and Education	10.1080/13613324.2010.488902	47
Yoon et al. (2010), Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy	10.1598/Jaal.54.2.3	43
Hoti et al. (2017), Journal of International Migration and Integration	10.1007/S12134-015-0461-X	34
Frederick et al. (2010), Teaching and Teacher Education	10.1016/J.Tate.2009.05.004	34

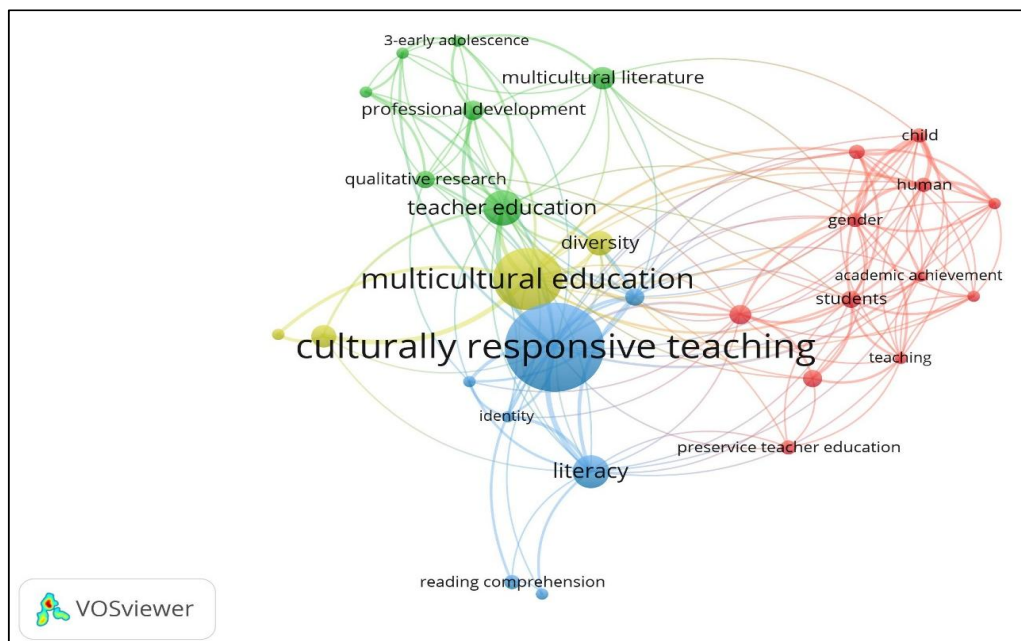
Table 1 presents the ten most influential documents based on global citation counts. The most highly cited work is Paluck and Green (2009), published in the Annual Review of Psychology, with 927 citations. This article stands as the most influential reference in the analyzed corpus. At the intermediate citation level, several influential studies originate from education and literacy journals. Santamaría (2009), published in Teachers College Record, received 116 citations, while Milner (2020) and Kim (2016), both published in Reading Research Quarterly, each garnered 69 citations. López (2016), also in Teachers College Record, accumulated 60 citations, followed by Orosco and O'Connor (2014) in the Journal of Learning Disabilities with 52 citations.

Other documents in the top ten show lower yet still substantial citation counts. Mosley (2010) in Race Ethnicity and Education received 47 citations, and Yoon et al. (2010) in the Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy received 43 citations. The remaining two studies, Hoti et al. (2017) in the Journal of International Migration and Integration and Frederick et al. (2010) in Teaching and Teacher Education, each recorded 34 citations. Collectively, these findings indicate that highly cited MRT research in reading instruction is published primarily in reputable journals in psychology, education, literacy, and diversity studies.

Major Themes in the MRT Model in Reading Learning

Figure 7.

Keyword Mapping Based on Network Visualization



The keyword network analysis shown in Figure 7 reveals that research on the MRT model in reading instruction is organized into four major thematic clusters, each representing a closely related area of scholarly focus. The first and largest cluster (red), comprising twelve keywords, includes multiculturalism, students, education, teaching, gender, child, cultural diversity, cultural competence, academic achievement, preservice teacher education, immigrant, and human. This cluster reflects a strong emphasis on student-centered perspectives within multicultural education, highlighting demographic characteristics, cultural competence, academic outcomes, and the role of preservice teacher education in addressing diverse and immigrant student populations.

The second cluster (green) consists of seven keywords: early adolescence, multicultural literature, sociocultural, methods and materials, teacher education, professional development, and qualitative research. This cluster focuses on teacher education and professional development through sociocultural and methodological lenses. The prominence of multicultural literature and instructional methods indicates attention to culturally responsive teaching

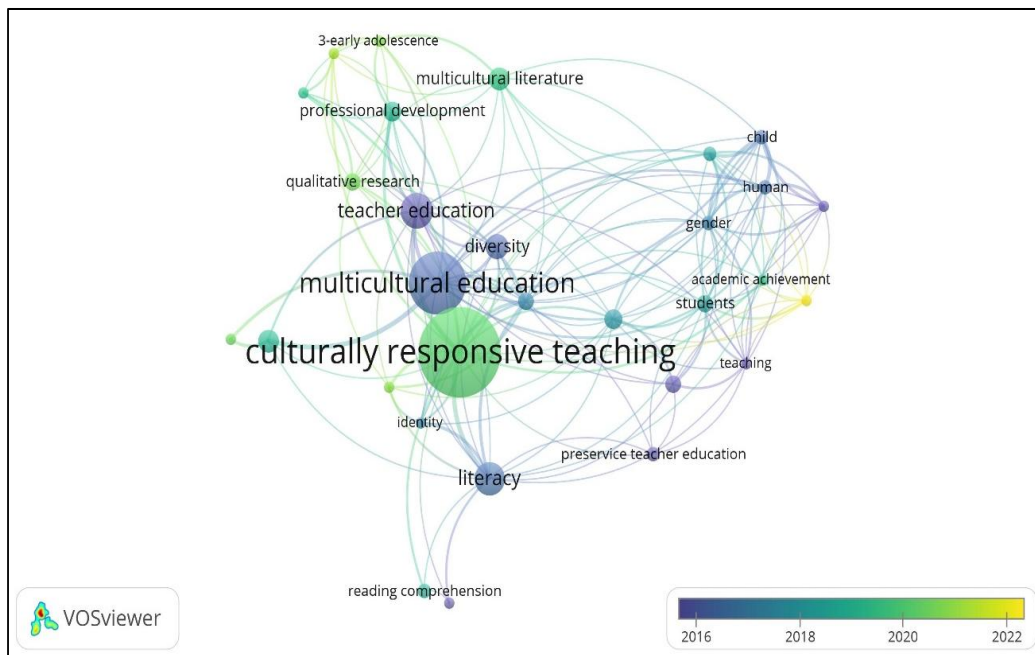
materials and reading strategies. At the same time, the dominance of qualitative research suggests an emphasis on in-depth exploration of teaching practices and educational experiences.

The third cluster (blue), also comprising seven keywords, includes culturally responsive teaching, reading, reading comprehension, literacy, urban education, identity, and English language learners. This cluster captures the core intersection between MRT and reading instruction, with a focus on literacy development, comprehension processes, and learner identity, particularly within urban educational settings and among English language learners. The fourth cluster (yellow) includes four keywords: diversity, multicultural education, social justice, and school improvement. This cluster highlights the normative and policy-oriented dimensions of MRT research, linking multicultural education and social justice to broader efforts to improve school quality. Overall, these clusters demonstrate that MRT research in reading instruction is structured around four central foci: multicultural student contexts, teacher education and development, literacy and reading comprehension, and social justice-oriented school improvement.

Potential Future Research Themes on the MRT Model in Reading Learning

Figure 8.

Periodization of Research Themes Based on Overlay Visualization



The overlay visualization in Figure 8 illustrates the temporal dynamics of MRT research themes in reading instruction based on publication periods. In the early phase, up to approximately 2016, and indicated by dark blue, dominant keywords include multicultural education, multiculturalism, cultural competence, diversity, literacy, teacher education, teaching, preservice teacher education, and English language learners. This pattern suggests that early research primarily focused on establishing conceptual foundations, developing educators' cultural competencies, and addressing literacy issues in diverse learning contexts. During the middle period, around 2019, represented by light green, research themes expanded toward more specific pedagogical and social concerns. Prominent keywords during this phase include multicultural literature, cultural diversity, professional development, social justice, sociocultural, reading, reading comprehension, students, and academic achievement. This shift reflects growing attention to socioculturally grounded reading practices, teacher professional development, social justice perspectives, and their relationship to student learning outcomes.

In the most recent period, around

2022, and indicated by yellowish-green, research themes became more applied and context-sensitive. Emerging keywords include culturally responsive teaching, urban education, school improvement, methods and materials, early adolescence, and immigrant. This development indicates a movement toward the practical implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy in urban settings, the improvement of school quality, the design of instructional materials, and the examination of specific learner groups. Overall, the periodization analysis demonstrates a clear evolution in MRT research on reading instruction, progressing from conceptual discussions to more applied, contextualized, and learner-oriented pedagogical practices.

Discussion

Global Trends and Overview of Research on the MRT Model in Reading Instruction

The slow and sporadic growth of publications from the early to mid-2000s indicates that research on the MRT model in reading instruction initially developed at the margins of mainstream educational research. During this period, studies were grounded mainly in multicultural education,

critical literacy, and anti-racist pedagogy, with a strong emphasis on racial awareness and social justice within teacher education. Research by Mosley (2010) and Frederick et al. (2010) demonstrates that literacy was conceptualized not merely as a technical skill but as a socially situated practice shaped by values and power relations. However, the dominance of cognitive and skills-based approaches in reading research at the time limited the integration of cultural perspectives, resulting in MRT receiving relatively little attention within the broader reading research agenda (Yoon et al., 2010). The more consistent increase in publications since around 2009, culminating in a peak during the 2020–2021 period, reflects a notable shift in the landscape of reading research. This growth coincides with intensified critiques of the science of reading approach, which has been viewed as insufficiently responsive to issues of race, identity, and structural inequality. Scholars increasingly argue for integrating multicultural perspectives and social justice into reading instruction at both conceptual and practical levels (Jensen, 2021; Milner, 2020). In this context, rising research productivity can be understood as a response to demographic change, growing demands for educational equity, and the need for culturally relevant reading practices, particularly for bilingual, immigrant, and marginalized learners (Hilaski, 2020; Ramírez, 2020). Variation in average annual citation rates, including a sharp peak around 2008–2009, further highlights the emergence of influential works that shaped the field. Key publications from this period provided cross-disciplinary frameworks for understanding attitude change, intergroup relations, and pedagogical practices in multicultural contexts (Paluck & Green, 2009; Santamaría, 2009). In subsequent years, citation patterns became more stable, accompanied by greater thematic diversity and methodological approaches, including teacher education, contextualized literacy practices, and evaluations of culturally responsive pedagogy (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2020; Foster et al., 2020; Sinclair, 2025). The recent decline in citation averages is likely attributable to the recency of newer publications, which have had limited time to accumulate citations.

The dominance of the United States as the primary country of origin for corresponding authors reflects the central role of its educational context in shaping MRT research on reading instruction. Much of this work responds to persistent racial, linguistic, and social inequities within the U.S. education system. Research on prejudice reduction and multicultural education underscores the importance of empirically grounded, context-sensitive interventions to influence instructional practices (Paluck & Green, 2009). In reading instruction, U.S.-based studies consistently emphasize integrating students' cultural identities, languages, and lived experiences through culturally responsive differentiation and critical literacy approaches (Mosley, 2010; Santamaría, 2009; Yoon et al., 2010). At the same time, critiques of the normative assumptions underlying the science of reading have encouraged alternative epistemological perspectives that foreground racial justice and cultural relevance (López, 2016; Milner, 2020).

Nevertheless, the predominance of single-country publications from the USA indicates that knowledge production in this field remains primarily nationally oriented, limiting cross-cultural dialogue despite the global relevance of literacy and multiculturalism. Contributions from other countries, although smaller in scale, offer important complementary perspectives. Research from Canada conceptualizes reading curricula as cultural practices and examines the effectiveness of culturally responsive reading instruction using both quantitative and critical approaches (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2020; Petherick, 2025; Sinclair, 2025). Meanwhile, studies from Georgia highlight the roles of classroom practices and teacher education in bridging gaps between monocultural curricula and learners' linguistic and cultural diversity (Hilaski, 2020; Kondo, 2022). Together, these contributions underscore the need for greater international collaboration to enrich MRT research in reading instruction. These findings confirm that expanding international collaboration has strong potential to advance the development of the MRT model in reading instruction by incorporating a wider range of educational contexts, methodological approaches, and conceptual perspectives. The limited

contributions from several countries highlight significant opportunities to strengthen global research networks. Future studies on MRT in reading instruction are therefore expected to represent better the diversity of literacy practices and educational contexts across regions, contributing to a more inclusive and globally informed body of knowledge.

The relatively even distribution of institutional contributions indicates that research on the MRT model in reading instruction is not centralized within a single academic hub but instead develops across a diverse network of universities. This pattern aligns with the field's contextual and practice-oriented nature, shaped by local educational needs and sociocultural conditions. For example, research from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte integrates teacher education, literacy, and global and social-emotional awareness, positioning reading as a critical practice for understanding the world (Byker, 2019; Wang et al., 2020). A similar thematic specialization is evident at Brigham Young University, where studies focus on conceptual clarification and the theoretical foundations of culturally informed literacy instruction, as well as equitable reading practices for marginalized communities (Jensen, 2021; Kelly, L. B. et al., 2021). These patterns suggest that institutional leadership in this field is reflected more in thematic depth and specialization than in sheer publication volume.

Other institutions, including the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Florida, the University of Maryland, and Kennesaw State University, further enrich the research landscape through diverse and complementary approaches. Research from the University of Texas at Austin emphasizes critical race literacy, teacher education, and socially aware reading practices (Mosley, 2010; Nash et al., 2024). The University of Florida and the University of Maryland contribute to the field through studies on literary text analysis, culturally responsive strategies for English language learners, and academic literacy development (Colosimo, 2024; Peercy, 2011; Tondreau et al., 2025). Kennesaw State University adds to this perspective by critically examining reading materials and curricula in multicultural and global contexts, particularly through multimodal and language-focused analyses

(Adams et al., 2018; Jang et al., 2024). Together, these institutional contributions demonstrate that progress in MRT research on reading instruction is driven by cross-institutional complementarity rather than institutional dominance, thereby deepening both theoretical and practical understanding.

The distribution of publication sources, which is dominated by journals in education and literacy, indicates that MRT research in reading instruction is firmly grounded in pedagogical discourse, social justice, and teacher education. The prominence of *Urban Education* as the most productive source underscores the centrality of urban contexts, where issues of racial inequality, language diversity, and access to literacy are often most visible. Studies published in this journal frame reading as a sociopolitical practice closely tied to power relations, race, and educational policy, including research on pedagogical resistance, critical literacy, and instructional practices that challenge culturally unresponsive standardized curricula (Brooks et al., 2022; Hoffman & Martin, 2023). This orientation aligns with ethnographic research emphasizing the roles of families, communities, and student agency in shaping meaningful literacy practices in urban and low-income settings (Volk, 2021).

At the same time, significant contributions from *Multicultural Perspectives*, *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Teachers College Record*, and *Teaching and Teacher Education* demonstrate that the field is evolving through sustained dialogue among critical theory, literacy research, and teacher education practice. *Multicultural Perspectives* plays a key role in articulating conceptual frameworks and reflective tools for operationalizing culturally responsive pedagogy in reading and teacher education (Foster et al., 2020; Montelongo et al., 2014). *Reading Research Quarterly* broadens its scope by integrating issues of race, identity, and digital literacy, while critically examining ahistorical and context-insensitive interpretations of the science of reading (Curiel & Durán, 2021; Jensen, 2021; Kim et al., 2017; Milner, 2020). Contributions from *Teachers College Record* and *Teaching and Teacher Education* further affirm that the advancement of MRT in reading instruction is closely linked to the transformation of teacher education, differentiated pedagogy,

and the development of social awareness among future educators (Cameron et al., 2024; Frederick et al., 2010; Kondo, 2022; López, 2016; Santamaría, 2009). Overall, this pattern of publication sources suggests that MRT research in reading instruction is developing multidimensionally through the integration of theory, empirical inquiry, and socially responsive pedagogical practice. The prominence of Paluck and Green (2009) underscores the strong influence of social psychology on the conceptual foundations of MRT research in reading instruction. Although the study does not focus explicitly on education or literacy, it provides a robust theoretical and methodological framework for understanding prejudice reduction, attitude change, and intergroup relations. These concepts are central to culturally responsive pedagogy, particularly in fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments for culturally diverse students.

At the intermediate citation level, influential works from education and literacy journals reflect a shift toward pedagogical and instructional concerns. Santamaría (2009) emphasizes integrating culturally responsive teaching and differentiated instruction to address students' academic and linguistic diversity. Milner (2020) critiques dominant knowledge constructions within the science of reading, while Kim (2016) highlights cross-cultural literacy practices in digital and transnational contexts. Other cited studies further enrich the field by addressing specific learner populations and instructional challenges. López (2016) demonstrates a positive relationship between culturally responsive pedagogy and the reading achievement of Latino students, while Orosco and O'Connor (2014) emphasizes the importance of addressing cultural and linguistic needs in reading instruction for English language learners with learning disabilities. Mosley (2010) and Yoon et al. (2010) contribute to critical literacy scholarship by examining racism, assimilation ideologies, and cultural representation in reading texts. Finally, Hoti et al. (2017) and Frederick et al. (2010) highlight the role of school contexts and teacher education in supporting social justice, psychosocial adaptation, and pedagogical transformation.

Major Themes in the MRT Model in Reading Learning

The keyword network analysis indicates that current MRT research in reading instruction primarily focuses on students within multicultural educational contexts, emphasizing cultural diversity, cultural competence, and academic achievement. The prominence of keywords such as multiculturalism, cultural diversity, and cultural competence suggests that MRT is conceptualized as an approach grounded in students' social, cultural, and demographic characteristics. These findings align with López (2016), who demonstrated that teachers' beliefs and practices that treat students' cultures and languages as assets are positively associated with reading achievement. Similarly, Orosco and O'Connor (2014) emphasized that successful reading instruction for English language learners with disabilities depends heavily on integrating learners' cultural and linguistic needs. The inclusion of immigrant-related themes further resonates with Hoti et al. (2017) findings that migrant students' reading achievement is influenced more by school quality and multicultural practices than by migration background alone. The presence of preservice teacher education in this cluster reinforces the view that cultural responsiveness is a foundational competency that must be cultivated early in teacher preparation, as emphasized by Santamaría (2009) and Frederick et al. (2010).

The second cluster highlights teacher education and professional development through sociocultural, methodological, and reflective perspectives. Research focusing on teacher education, professional development, methods and materials, and multicultural literature indicates that MRT scholarship examines how teachers are prepared to select culturally responsive texts and instructional strategies. The predominance of qualitative research reflects the need to capture the complexity of pedagogical practice, including classroom interactions and reflective processes. These findings are consistent with Mosley's (2010) work on the challenges of developing critical race literacy among preservice teachers and Kondo's (2022) emphasis on modeling culturally responsive pedagogy in teacher education programs. Yoon et al. (2010) further caution that multicultural literature must be critically

examined to avoid reinforcing assimilative ideologies, while Foster et al. (2020) provide heuristic tools to help teachers identify and enact culturally responsive teaching practices. Overall, this cluster underscores the central role of teachers as key agents in implementing MRT in reading instruction.

The third cluster represents the core of MRT research in literacy and reading instruction, focusing on reading, reading comprehension, literacy, identity, and English language learners, particularly in urban education contexts. This theme conceptualizes reading as a social practice shaped by students' identities, experiences, and social positions. This perspective aligns with Milner's (2020) critique of racial bias within the science of reading and his call for epistemologically approaches. Kim (2016) extends this view through the concept of transcultural digital literacies, emphasizing that reading practices transcend classroom boundaries and involve cross-cultural interaction. Empirical findings by Sinclair (2025) further support this cluster, showing that integrating structured and culturally responsive instruction positively influences language and reading comprehension. Collectively, this cluster highlights MRT's direct contribution to improving literacy outcomes, particularly for linguistically and socially marginalized learners.

The final cluster emphasizes the normative, policy-oriented, and transformative dimensions of MRT through themes of diversity, multicultural education, social justice, and school improvement. This cluster demonstrates that MRT research in reading instruction extends beyond classroom practice to engage with broader equity and institutional change agendas. These findings align with Frederick et al. (2010), who emphasize the role of teacher education in fostering social awareness and positioning teachers as agents of change. Paluck and Green (2009) provide a broader framework by highlighting the importance of evidence-based interventions to reduce bias, which supports MRT's goal of cultivating inclusive school environments. Additionally, Petherick (2025) shows how curricula can reproduce or challenge colonial knowledge structures, underscoring the importance of viewing reading curricula as cultural practices in school improvement efforts. Overall, this cluster positions MRT as an approach

that contributes not only to instructional innovation but also to systemic and structural transformation in education.

Potential Future Research Themes on the MRT Model in Reading Learning

The periodization analysis indicates that the early phase of MRT research in reading instruction functioned as a conceptual and pedagogical foundation for the field. Until around 2016, dominant themes included multicultural education, multiculturalism, cultural competence, and teacher education, reflecting an emphasis on theoretical frameworks and on educators' capacity to address student diversity. This pattern aligns with Santamaría's (2009) emphasis on integrating differentiated pedagogy with culturally responsive teaching, as well as Frederick et al.'s (2010) argument regarding the role of teacher education in fostering social awareness and educational justice. The presence of themes related to English language learners and literacy also suggests that MRT was initially positioned as a means of addressing literacy gaps among students from linguistic and cultural minority backgrounds, consistent with findings by Orosco and O'Connor (2014) and Percy (2011).

Around 2019, research themes expanded to include multicultural literature, sociocultural approaches, professional development, social justice, and reading comprehension, marking a shift from conceptual discourse toward pedagogical practice and social impact. The increased focus on multicultural literature and sociocultural perspectives corresponds with Yoon et al.'s (2010) warning about the risk of reproducing assimilative ideologies through uncritical text selection, as well as Kim's (2016) extension of literacy into digital and cross-cultural spaces. During this phase, greater attention was also given to academic achievement, strengthening the empirical link between MRT and learning outcomes, as demonstrated by López (2016). This period represents a more systematic effort to connect social justice, reading practices, and measurable educational outcomes. In the most recent phase, around 2022, themes such as culturally responsive teaching, urban education, school improvement, methods and materials, and immigrant learners indicate a growing

emphasis on applied, contextual, and institutional dimensions. The focus on urban education and school improvement reflects concern with the structural and policy contexts that shape literacy instruction, echoing Hoffman and Martin's (2023) critique of standardized curricula that constrain teacher autonomy in urban schools. Increased attention to specific learner groups, including early adolescents and immigrant students, signals a deeper engagement with developmental and demographic diversity, consistent with Hoti et al.'s (2017) findings on the importance of school quality and multicultural practices for migrant students' reading success. The emphasis on instructional methods and materials further highlights the need to translate culturally responsive principles into concrete classroom practices, as advocated by Foster et al. (2020) and Jensen (2021). This evolution suggests that MRT scholarship is increasingly attentive to implementation fidelity and contextual constraints, two issues that practitioners frequently identify as barriers to sustainable reform. By situating MRT within institutional and policy frameworks, recent studies move beyond classroom-level innovation and begin to tackle systemic inequities that shape reading achievement disparities.

Based on this thematic evolution, several directions for future research can be identified. First, there is a need for stronger empirical evidence on the causal relationship between MRT and improvements in reading comprehension, particularly through quantitative or mixed-method designs, as suggested by Paluck and Green (2009) and Jensen (2021). Future researchers should build on these bibliometric results to design longitudinal and experimental studies capable of isolating the specific instructional components of MRT that most strongly predict literacy gains. Such research would enrich the existing literature by moving beyond correlational support toward causal inference, thereby addressing persistent skepticism regarding the academic effectiveness of culturally responsive approaches. Second, future studies should explore the integration of MRT with digital and multimodal literacies in cross-cultural and online contexts, extending the trajectory proposed by Kim (2016) and Nash et al. (2024). This direction is particularly relevant

in contemporary classrooms, where students navigate hybrid literacy environments and negotiate cultural identity across digital platforms. Investigating MRT within digital ecosystems may also help address practical challenges related to text selection, representation, and student engagement in increasingly diverse, technologically mediated learning spaces.

In addition, research on MRT implementation at school and system levels, including leadership, curriculum design, and policy, remains limited and warrants further development to support sustainable school improvement (Petherick, 2025; Tondreau et al., 2025). System-level investigations can bridge the gap between policy rhetoric and classroom practice by offering evidence-based guidelines for administrators seeking to institutionalize culturally responsive literacy reforms. By connecting classroom instruction, professional development, and policy alignment, future studies can develop scalable models to reduce literacy inequities in urban and immigrant-serving schools. Overall, the overlay visualization analysis confirms that MRT research in reading instruction is evolving toward a more integrative, contextualized, and justice-oriented agenda. At the same time, this finding provides a structured roadmap for future inquiry and highlights areas where empirical consolidation and practical translation remain urgently needed.

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the development of scientific publications on the MRT model in reading instruction by analyzing publication trends, key contributors and institutions, and the thematic structures shaping this field. The findings indicate that research on MRT in reading instruction has grown significantly since the mid-2000s, paralleling increased scholarly attention to social justice, cultural diversity, and critiques of narrowly technical approaches to reading instruction. Although the United States remains the dominant contributor, the relatively even distribution of institutional output suggests that MRT research is not concentrated in a single academic center. Instead, it has developed through a broad network of universities and journals in education, literacy, and teacher

education, affirming MRT as a pedagogical approach grounded in issues of diversity, identity, and educational inequality.

Conceptually, the bibliometric mapping reveals four central thematic orientations: multicultural student contexts; teacher education and professional development; literacy and reading comprehension as social practices; and social justice-oriented school improvement. The evolution of these themes from foundational concepts toward more applied pedagogical practices indicates the increasing maturity of the field while also highlighting opportunities for further inquiry. Future research may focus on examining causal relationships between MRT and reading comprehension through quantitative or mixed-methods designs, integrating MRT with digital and multimodal literacies across cultural contexts, and exploring MRT implementation at the school and policy levels. Cross-national and cross-contextual studies also remain essential for broadening global perspectives on culturally responsive reading instruction.

The findings of this study have important implications for research, practice, and educational policy. Theoretically, the bibliometric evidence reinforces the MRT model as a relevant framework for literacy and reading research in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts. The results can inform educators and policymakers in designing reading instruction that is more culturally responsive, equitable, and context-sensitive, as well as in strengthening teacher education and professional development programs. Moreover, identifying dominant and emerging themes provides strategic guidance for researchers seeking to position future studies within the existing research landscape.

This study also has several limitations. First, the analysis relies solely on the Scopus database, which may limit representativeness, particularly regarding local or non-indexed publications. Second, the bibliometric approach was not combined with a systematic literature review, resulting in an emphasis on publication patterns rather than in-depth content analysis. Future studies are therefore encouraged to incorporate additional databases such as Web of Science or Dimensions and to integrate bibliometric methods with systematic reviews or meta-analyses. Such approaches would enable

a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the implementation and impact of MRT in reading instruction.

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Conflict of Interest

All authors declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with the publication of this article.

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Ethical Approval

This research is a review-oriented study utilizing a bibliometric analysis method and does not involve the collection or analysis of data from human or animal participants. Consequently, ethical approval from an Institutional Review Board or Ethics Committee was not necessary for this study.

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