

Research Paper



A bibliometric analysis of eclectic approaches in reading instruction for students with learning difficulties

Nursara Abdul Munir^{1*}, Syar Meezee Mohd Rashid²

^{1,2}Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia.

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ABSTRACT

Reading instruction for students with learning difficulties has increasingly emphasised the need for flexible and integrative pedagogical approaches. In response to the growing and fragmented body of research on eclectic approaches to reading instruction, this study aims to provide a comprehensive bibliometric overview of scholarly publications in this field. Using a bibliometric research design, data were retrieved from the Scopus database and analysed using descriptive statistics and network-based techniques. A total of 522 journal articles published between 2000 and 2025 were examined to identify publication trends, country-level research contributions, international collaboration patterns, and thematic structures based on keyword co-occurrence analysis. The findings reveal a steady growth in publication output over time, indicating increasing scholarly interest in eclectic and integrated instructional approaches within special education and literacy research. Research output remains concentrated in a small number of countries, particularly English-speaking contexts, while international collaboration is characterised by relatively fragmented co-authorship networks. The keyword co-occurrence analysis further indicates that research in this area is thematically diverse and interdisciplinary, with emerging links to technology-enhanced and STEM-related instructional contexts. Overall, this study provides a structured and data-driven mapping of the intellectual landscape of research on eclectic approaches to reading instruction for students with learning difficulties, offering valuable insights for future research, policy, and instructional practice.

Corresponding Author:

Nursara Abdul Munir

Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia.

Email: p144703@siswa.ukm.edu.my

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reading proficiency serves as a critical academic foundation which enables people to succeed in school and participate in society and continue their education throughout life. The international assessments which assess reading skills in primary school students show that reading difficulties continue to exist across many countries while students fail to reach their reading achievement benchmarks [1], [2]. Students who experience learning disabilities face greater obstacles to developing reading skills because they need to overcome ongoing difficulties with decoding and fluency and comprehension and cognitive processing abilities. Special education settings show these challenges because students with different cognitive and language abilities need multiple teaching methods instead of only one standardized approach. Researchers now focus their studies on teaching methods which allow teachers to customize their instruction according to different student learning requirements.

In response to these challenges, eclectic approaches to instruction have gained growing attention in educational research. The eclectic method is grounded in the integration of multiple teaching methods and learning strategies, based on the principle that learning should be developed holistically rather than through isolated instructional components. Rather than adhering rigidly to a single pedagogical framework, eclectic instruction emphasises the purposeful selection and combination of instructional practices according to learners' needs, learning contexts, and instructional objectives. This approach recognises that no single method is sufficient to address the diverse abilities of learners and highlights the importance of integrating instructional elements as an organic whole [3].

Within the context of reading instruction, eclectic approaches have been discussed across literacy education, special education, and language learning research. Scholars have highlighted how the flexible combination of reading strategies and instructional practices may support learners with varying cognitive and linguistic profiles, particularly those who experience difficulties in reading and literacy development [4]. The recent studies which researchers conducted in various educational settings show that scholars increasingly study the use of eclectic methods for reading research according to their published work [5], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10].

Research about reading instruction has developed during the last twenty years because researchers studied reading methods that combine different elements from special education and educational psychology and literacy studies and teacher education. The research field has developed into multiple pathways which range from theoretical frameworks to research interests and contextual studies according to a typical pattern found in interdisciplinary research areas that study educational topics [11]. The research field has developed through various studies yet researchers struggle to understand how publications and geographical distribution and research partnerships and topic areas have advanced in this discipline. The need for a bibliometric analysis emerges because existing research needs an intellectual framework and a worldwide analysis to examine all studies about eclectic reading methods which educators use with students who experience learning disabilities [12].

The research will perform bibliometric analysis of all published studies about eclectic and integrated reading teaching methods which help students with learning disabilities. The study will examine publication trends between countries and track international research collaboration networks.

Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of this study, the following research questions are addressed:

- i. What are the publication trends over time in research on eclectic and integrated approaches to reading instruction for students with learning difficulties, as indexed in Scopus?

- ii. Which countries have contributed most to the development of research on eclectic approaches to reading instruction for students with learning difficulties, and how has this geographical distribution evolved over time?
- iii. What international collaboration patterns can be identified in research on eclectic approaches to reading instruction for students with learning difficulties, based on country-level co-authorship analysis?
- iv. What are the main research themes and thematic clusters in studies on eclectic approaches to reading instruction for students with learning difficulties based on keyword co-occurrence analysis?

2. RELATED WORK

Research on reading instruction for students with learning difficulties has evolved significantly over the past two decades with the growing trend of teaching methods which allow educators to adapt their teaching to better meet their student's needs. The single-method teaching approach which schools use for reading instruction does not work well because students with reading difficulties have different cognitive and linguistic and behavioral needs. Scholars have investigated various teaching frameworks which use multiple teaching methods to improve reading performance of learners.

The effectiveness of using eclectic teaching methods for reading and language instruction has been tested in various research studies. The eclectic method functions as an integrative instructional system which enables teachers to combine different teaching methods for meeting student requirements according to [3]. Educational institutions through different cases have shown research evidence which supports this viewpoint. The study conducted by [5] showed that secondary students improved their reading skills after they received education through an eclectic teaching method while the research conducted by [8] showed that primary students achieved better reading skills through an eclectic teaching method.

In the context of special education, research has highlighted the potential of eclectic and integrated instructional approaches to support learners with learning difficulties. [4], [7] Emphasised that combining instructional strategies allows teachers to address varied learning profiles, particularly in literacy and language learning. Recent studies have further extended the application of eclectic approaches to motivation, self-confidence, and learner engagement, suggesting broader developmental benefits beyond academic performance [9].

In parallel, the growing body of literature reflects increasing interdisciplinary integration, with eclectic instructional approaches being examined alongside technology-enhanced learning, STEM education, and behavioural research [10]. This expansion has contributed to a fragmented and heterogeneous research landscape, characterised by diverse terminologies, research designs, and contextual applications.

The research field about reading instruction through eclectic methods has expanded through multiple studies yet remains disjointed because researchers investigate different contexts. Researchers investigate teaching success in single classrooms and national settings while studying global research patterns and field development through international partnerships and thematic exploration. The existing literature about this topic needs research through bibliometric methods which studies have not yet conducted. The present study fills this existing research gap through its detailed bibliometric study of research concerning eclectic reading instruction methods which help students with learning disabilities. The study uses publication pattern analysis and international research contributions and research partnership networks and research topic development to present a complete view of research field development from its origins to the present day.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study used a bibliometric research design to investigate the research questions which were stated earlier. Bibliometric analysis serves as a quantitative research method which enables researchers to systematically study extensive academic literature collections in order to discover publishing patterns and

research output and collaborative behaviors and research topic frameworks for particular fields of study. Accordingly, this approach was employed to map publication trends, geographical research contributions, international collaboration patterns, and thematic structures in studies on eclectic approaches to reading instruction for students with learning difficulties.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a bibliometric research design to examine publication trends, geographical contributions, and international collaboration patterns in research on eclectic approaches to reading instruction for students with learning difficulties. Bibliometric analysis enables the systematic examination of large volumes of scholarly literature using indicators such as annual publication output, country contributions, and co-authorship networks. This approach is therefore suitable for providing an overview of research developments and identifying key patterns within a fragmented body of literature.

3.2 Data Collection and Search Strategy

Data collection was conducted using a systematic screening sequence to identify relevant publications related to eclectic approaches to reading instruction for students with learning difficulties. The Scopus database was first searched through its TITLE-ABS-KEY fields which I searched using the following Boolean search string: (“eclectic*” OR “integrated approach*” OR “hybrid approach*”) AND (“reading instruction” OR “literacy”) AND (“special education”). The initial search was designed to gather all potentially relevant literature because it imposed no limitations on time or document types.

The search results were subsequently refined by applying predefined inclusion criteria to ensure the relevance, consistency, and quality of the dataset. Publications were limited to those published between 2000 and 2025 in order to capture both the historical development and recent research trends in eclectic approaches to reading instruction. The subject area was restricted to Social Sciences and Psychology to ensure alignment with educational, special education, and learning-related contexts. In addition, only peer-reviewed journal articles written in English were included. Conference papers, book chapters, reviews, and other non-journal document types were excluded to enhance the reliability of the bibliometric analysis. The refined search strategy applied in the database is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Refined Search Strategy Used in Scopus

Item	Description
Database	Scopus
Search field	TITLE-ABS-KEY
Keywords	(“eclectic*” OR “integrated approach*” OR “hybrid approach*”) AND (“reading instruction” OR “literacy”) AND (“special education”)
Year range	2000–2025
Subject area	Social Sciences; Psychology
Source & document type	Journal articles
Language	English
Final dataset	522 articles

The inclusion and exclusion criteria used during the screening process are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication year	2000–2025	Before 2000 or after 2025
Subject area	Social Sciences; Psychology	Other subject areas
Source type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Conference proceedings, books, book chapters, reviews, trade publications
Document type	Article	Non-article document types

Language	English	Non-English publications
Research focus	Eclectic, integrated, or hybrid approaches to reading instruction in special education contexts	Studies not related to reading instruction or special education

The final search string—TITLE-ABS-KEY (“eclectic*” OR “integrated approach*” OR “hybrid approach*”) AND (“reading instruction” OR “literacy”) AND (“special education”) AND PUBYEAR > 1999 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, “j”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, “SOCI”) OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, “PSYC”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, “ar”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, “English”))—resulted in a final dataset of 522 journal articles, which were subsequently used for the bibliometric analysis.

Data Analysis

The bibliometric dataset was examined through a combination of descriptive and network-based techniques to capture quantitative patterns, intellectual structures and collaboration dynamics within the field [12], [13]. Scopus analytical tools generated descriptive statistics, which were used together with VOSviewer version 1.6.20 to create and display bibliometric networks. The study used descriptive analysis together with network-based analysis to identify publication patterns and research collaboration patterns which existed in the literature.

Descriptive Analysis

The researchers used Descriptive Analysis to study yearly publication numbers and the countries that contributed to research about eclectic reading instruction methods for students with learning difficulties. The analysis of annual publication trends was conducted to examine the evolution and growth of scholarly interest in eclectic, integrated, and hybrid instructional approaches within reading and special education contexts. In addition, country-level contributions were analysed to identify leading research-producing countries and to illustrate the global distribution of research activities in this field. These indicators offer an initial descriptive understanding of the development, scope, and geographical reach of research on eclectic reading instruction in special education [12], [14].

Co-Authorship Analysis

The researchers used co-authorship analysis to study how researchers from different countries collaborated on their research about eclectic methods of teaching reading to students who have learning disabilities. The research study aimed to discover important research centers while measuring international research collaboration which exists within the field of study. The study uses co-authorship network analysis at the country level to demonstrate how researchers work together and share knowledge which helps advance their work on special education reading instruction research. Researchers use co-authorship analysis as a bibliometric method which helps them study research collaboration patterns while they discover important researchers and research connections in a specific academic field [15], [12]. The use of network visualisation enables researchers to study collaboration structures and research hubs and knowledge exchange patterns which enhances the accuracy of bibliometric research analysis [16], [17]. The bibliometric analysis results will be shown in the next section.

Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis

Keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted to identify the main research themes and thematic clusters in studies on eclectic approaches to reading instruction for students with learning difficulties. The analysis was conducted through VOSviewer which processed all keywords that included both author keywords and indexed keywords that the database supplied. This approach was adopted to ensure a more comprehensive representation of thematic patterns by capturing a wider range of concepts used across the literature, particularly in a field characterised by diverse terminology [12]. The research team established two as the minimum occurrence requirement for conducting keyword co-occurrence analysis. The selected

threshold enables researchers to include additional relevant keywords while the dataset shows low usage of specific terms that various users employ in different ways. Emerging research areas where scholars have not yet established key themes need this method because researchers use different keywords to describe their work.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the key findings of the bibliometric analysis, which examines how research studies about hybrid reading instruction methods for students with learning difficulties evolved according to specific publication patterns and research output from different countries and their international research partnerships.

5.1 Publication Trends over Time

The bibliometric analysis shows distinct publication patterns which extend from 2000 through 2025 for research about eclectic reading instruction methods and integrated reading methods and hybrid reading instruction methods. Figure 1 shows that research activity in this field has increased steadily throughout the years because researchers have developed more interest in special education methods which combine flexible teaching with integrative instructional techniques.

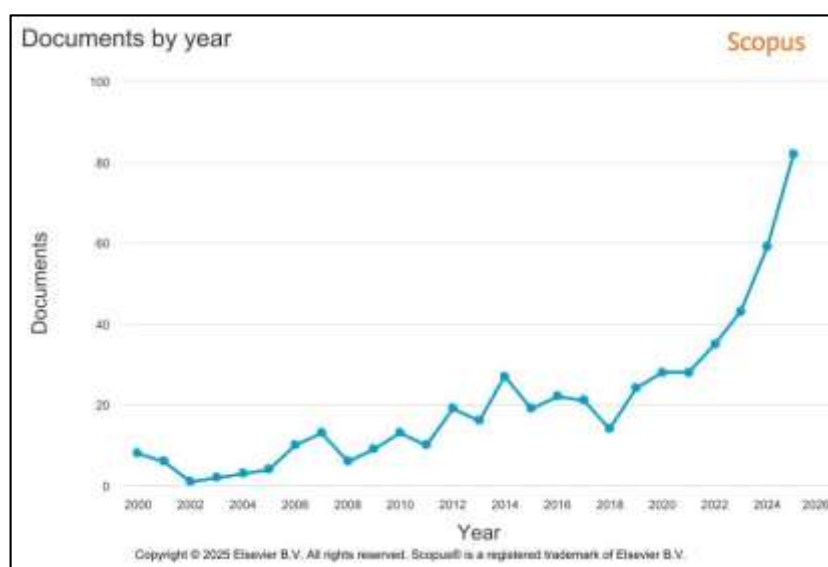


Figure 1. Annual Publication Trends of Studies on Eclectic Approaches to Reading Instruction for Students with Learning Difficulties

The research period from 2000 to 2005 shows low and unstable publication output which reflects the first research stage that studied various reading teaching methods through specific controlled studies. The period shows that researchers were just beginning to study how different teaching methods help students with learning disabilities because the topic had not yet developed into a primary research area for reading and literacy studies.

From 2010 onward, scientists began to publish research findings at a constant rate which lasted until the present day. The research community developed greater interest in eclectic and integrated teaching methods because they became aware that students need different approaches to learn and that single-method teaching methods have certain restrictions. The research output started to grow at a faster rate after 2015 because researchers published more studies each year until they reached their peak output during the final years of the study period. The ongoing growth of research publications connects educational advancements which include worldwide support for inclusive education and differentiated instruction and research-based methods that help students with learning disabilities. The research trend

shows a movement away from exploratory and conceptual work and toward structured research that uses practical evidence to study various approaches to reading instruction through eclectic methods.

All research throughout this study shows that eclectic and integrated reading instruction methods for students with learning disabilities show continuous development until they reach advanced research status. The ongoing rise of academic publications shows that educational organizations need special education teachers who can adapt their teaching methods to meet student needs because this field has become its own research area which keeps developing.

5.2 Country Contributions to Research Development

The researchers used country-level publication data to study how different countries contributed to research about eclectic reading instruction methods which help students with learning disabilities. As shown in Figure 2, the research landscape is characterised by a highly uneven distribution of scholarly output across countries, highlighting the leading contributors and the overall geographical spread of research in this field.

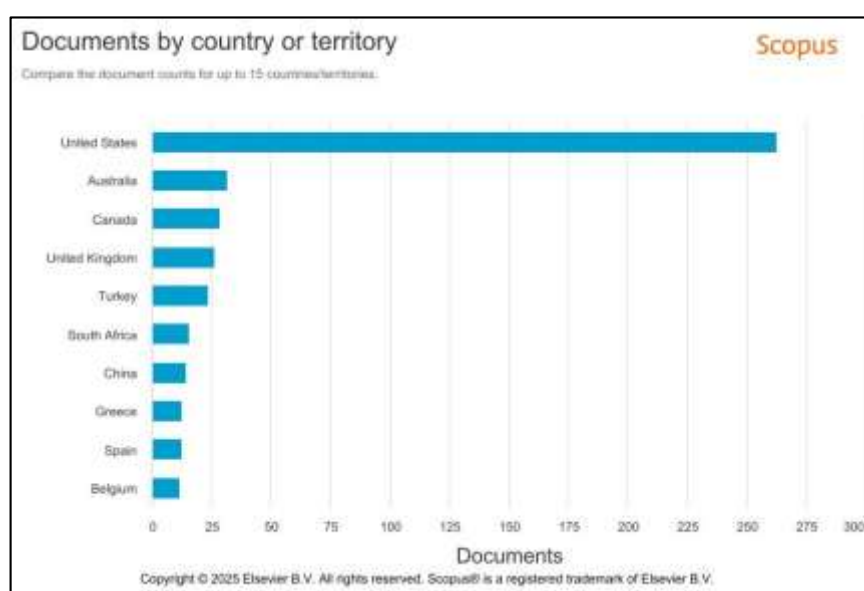


Figure 2. Country-Level Contributions to Research on Eclectic Approaches to Reading Instruction for Students with Learning Difficulties

The research shows that the United States leads all countries in publishing studies about various reading teaching methods which help students who face learning challenges. The United States educational system achieves this research dominance because it maintains strong research capabilities together with ongoing academic research work in special education and reading teaching methods. English-speaking nations show research concentration which follows the United States with Australia Canada and the United Kingdom emerging as significant research partners.

The publication record shows that Turkey South Africa China Greece Spain and Belgium between their main research fields and their distribution show the emerging research areas which exist beyond Western domains. The presence of these countries suggests a growing international interest in eclectic and integrated instructional approaches across diverse educational systems. The research output shows uneven distribution across countries but the index shows that more countries now participate in this field which leads to international research expansion.

The research distributed across different countries shows that a few countries control most research activities while international research activities show initial signs of becoming more diverse. Research on eclectic reading instruction methods for students with learning disabilities should undergo international research partnerships because this approach will help spread research results across different countries.

5.3 International Collaboration Patterns Based on Country-Level Co-Authorship

The third research question required researchers to conduct a country-level co-authorship analysis which examined international research collaboration patterns that studied eclectic reading instruction methods for students with learning difficulties. The co-authorship network used VOSviewer to display all collaborative relationships between countries which shared authorship of their research publications.

Figure 3 displays the co-authorship network which demonstrates that international collaboration occurs at a restricted level with countries forming separate collaboration networks. The network shows the United States as its main node because the country generates most research output while participating in only a few international research partnerships. Australia functions as an important research partner but the total number of collaborative connections between countries remains extremely low.

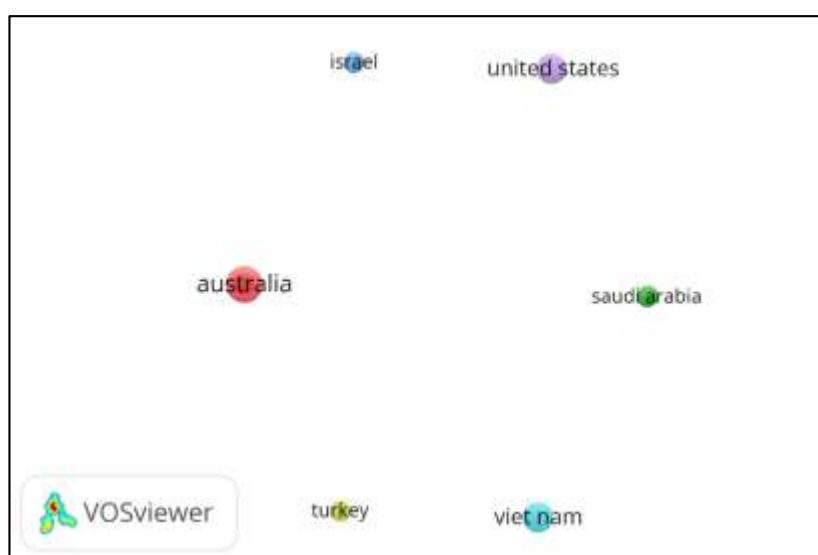


Figure 3. Country-Level Co-Authorship Network in Research on Eclectic Approaches to Reading Instruction for Students with Learning Difficulties

The research output from Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Viet Nam shows that these countries conduct their research work as separate entities which have minimal ties to other nations. The international research collaboration system for this field shows its current state of development through its lack of strong connections and clear research partnership groups. The different educational systems and research priorities and special education and reading instruction publishing languages show how different fields of research execute their research work. The international academic community shows growing interest in eclectic research methods through multiple contributing countries while the limited co-authorship ties between nations show high potential for better international research collaboration.

Overall, the country-level co-authorship analysis suggests that research on eclectic approaches to reading instruction for students with learning difficulties is characterised by emerging but still limited international collaboration. Enhancing cross-national partnerships may contribute to greater knowledge exchange, methodological diversity, and the development of more globally informed instructional frameworks in future research.

5.4 Thematic Structure Based on Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis

To address the fourth research question, a keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted to identify the dominant research foci and thematic patterns in studies on eclectic approaches to reading instruction for students with learning difficulties. The analysis was performed using VOSviewer, with keywords extracted from titles and abstracts of the selected publications. Figure 4 presents the keyword co-occurrence density visualisation, highlighting the most frequently occurring and thematically prominent terms within the literature.

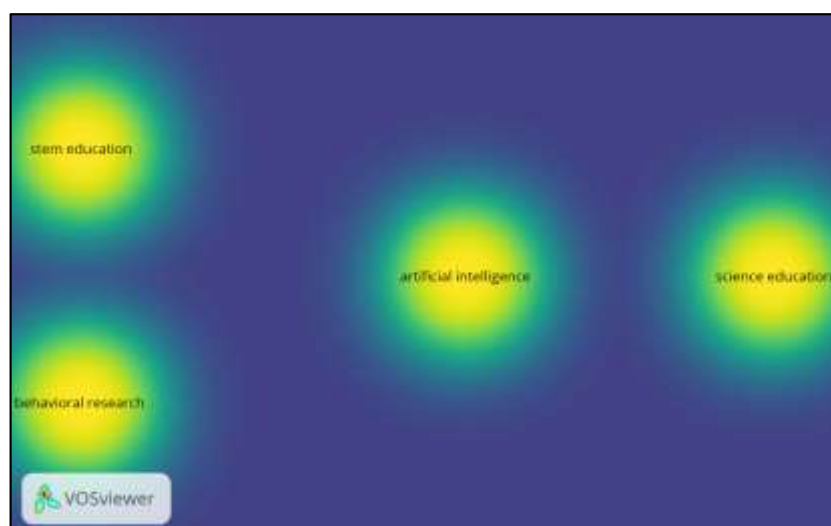


Figure 4. Keyword Co-Occurrence Density Map of Research on Eclectic Approaches to Reading Instruction

The results indicate that the research landscape contains several primary thematic areas which remain separate from each other instead of establishing a complete network of interrelated research concepts. Figure 4 shows that high-density areas of the study include artificial intelligence and science education and STEM education and behavioural research as their main research keywords. The research focus at this institution has expanded its main area of study to include both artificial intelligence and STEM education while maintaining reading instruction as its core research focus. The strong presence of science education and STEM education reflects a growing interest in applying eclectic and integrated instructional approaches within content-rich and cognitively demanding learning contexts. The current trend shows that eclectic teaching methods are used in literacy education while their application extends to all educational fields that use problem-solving and conceptual understanding and student participation.

The rise of artificial intelligence as a commonly used term shows that educational institutions now prefer to use technology-based teaching methods which rely on data for their teaching methods. Research has now shifted its focus to study digital literacy programs which use eclectic reading methods together with technological tools and adaptive learning platforms and modern teaching methods that help students with various learning needs. The presence of behavioral research further highlights the continued relevance of cognitive and behavioural perspectives in shaping eclectic instructional practices. This suggests that studies in this field often draw upon behavioural and psychological foundations to inform the design and evaluation of integrated reading interventions. Overall, the keyword co-occurrence analysis reveals that research on eclectic approaches to reading instruction is thematically diverse and interdisciplinary in nature. Rather than forming a single, unified thematic cluster, the literature reflects multiple research foci that span educational, technological, and behavioural domains. These findings indicate that eclectic reading instruction is conceptualised as a flexible and adaptable framework that can be applied across varied instructional contexts, aligning with contemporary emphases on personalised learning, interdisciplinary integration, and inclusive education.

Limitations and Future Work

Despite providing a comprehensive bibliometric overview of research on eclectic approaches to reading instruction for students with learning difficulties, this study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the analysis was confined to publications indexed in the Scopus database and limited to journal articles published in English. Although Scopus provides broad and reputable coverage of peer-reviewed literature, relevant studies indexed in other databases, such as Web of Science or ERIC, as well as publications in other languages, may not have been captured. Consequently, the findings may not fully represent the entire global body of research on this topic.

Second, the bibliometric indicators and visualisations relied primarily on publication metadata, such as authorship, country affiliations, and keywords. While these indicators are useful for identifying

broad trends and collaboration patterns, they do not provide insight into the methodological quality, instructional effectiveness, or contextual depth of individual studies. The interpretation of thematic patterns and collaboration structures may therefore overlook nuanced pedagogical differences across studies. In particular, the keyword co-occurrence analysis reflects patterns of terminology use rather than the conceptual depth of individual studies, which may limit the interpretation of nuanced instructional themes.

Third, the analysis examined publications from 2000 until 2025 but the dataset shows only the specific moment when researchers gathered their data. The analysis might miss new research directions because articles which were recently published and those which are currently in-press had not yet completed their indexing process. Researchers can overcome existing research limitations by using multiple bibliographic databases which will enable them to examine all languages and combine bibliometric methods with qualitative research to study teaching methods and educational theories. The field of special education research will benefit from bibliometric studies which compare different reading intervention approaches with specific reading intervention frameworks because these studies will demonstrate how eclectic instruction has developed within this research area.

5. CONCLUSION

The research provides an extensive bibliometric assessment of studies which examine diverse reading teaching methods used to assist students with learning disabilities. The research study tracked which publications appeared between 2000 and 2025 and which countries contributed to research activities and international collaboration patterns within this research area. The research results demonstrate a permanent upward trend in academic output which shows researchers increasingly study flexible learning methods and integrated teaching methods used in special education and literacy research. The recent rise in research output demonstrates that eclectic reading instruction methods have transformed from a developing research field into an acknowledged scientific discipline. Research output across different countries shows that most studies originate from a few select nations especially the United States and other English-speaking nations. The research field has started to become internationalized because researchers from various countries have started to make contributions to this area of study. The co-authorship analysis shows that international research partnerships remain limited because most research work occurs within national borders instead of through international collaborations. The analysis of keywords that occur together in this research area shows that research activities focus on different themes which are not strongly connected to each other because the research field shows new developments and fragmented understanding.

The bibliometric analysis which the study presents to the academic community reveals the research field of eclectic reading instruction for students with learning disabilities through a complete data-based assessment which defines its main intellectual areas and global scholarly development. The study establishes essential research patterns together with their geographic distribution and collaborative networks which deliver useful research findings to educators and policymakers who want to improve evidence-based teaching methods. The research findings will support international research partnerships and provide bibliometric data which researchers will use to conduct detailed field studies.

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Author Contributions Statement

Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
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Nursara Abdul Munir	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Syar Meezee Mohd Rashid		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓

C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

E : Writing - Review & Editing

Vi : Visualization

Su : Supervision

P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.

Informed Consent

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their voluntary consent was obtained prior to data collection.

Ethical Approval

The study was conducted in compliance with the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the relevant institutional authorities.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS

	<p>Nursara Abdul Munir, is a researcher affiliated with the Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia. Her academic interests focus on educational research, learning difficulties, and innovative instructional approaches to enhance student learning outcomes. She is actively engaged in scholarly work related to teaching methodologies and inclusive education, with particular attention to evidence-based practices that support diverse learners in educational settings.</p>
	<p>Syar Meezee Mohd Rashid, is affiliated with the Faculty of Education at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia. His research interests include educational leadership, pedagogy, curriculum studies, and teacher professional development. He has contributed to academic research and educational initiatives that support effective teaching and learning practices. His work emphasizes evidence-based educational strategies and continuous improvement in education systems.</p>