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Recent Trends and Global Perspectives on Critical Reading in ELT: A Bibliometric Analysis

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ABSTRACT

As critical reading becomes increasingly important in English language teaching (ELT), it is attracting growing scholarly attention due to changing literacy needs in contemporary education. The present study aims to trace the evolution of critical reading research in ELT by means of a bibliometric analysis of 251 Scopus-indexed articles published from 2015 to 2025. The PRISMA procedure was followed and Biblioshiny and VOSviewer were used to analyze publication trends, authorship patterns, institutional contributions, citation impact and thematic developments. The results revealed a general increase in publication output over the decade, with a peak in 2024, pointing to growing academic interest in the field. Analyses of author productivity and co-authorship revealed distributed patterns of scholastic contribution by several groups of researchers rather than a single dominant community. The institutional analysis shows that there has been support of critical reading research in different academic environments in different geographical locations. The citation analysis revealed the most important studies on reading processes, instructional practices, translanguaging, biliteracy, and language policy. Keyword analysis also showed a shift of research interest from reading comprehension to critical thinking, academic literacy, digital literacy, critical discourse analysis and critical pedagogy. The findings provide a broad overview of the intellectual development and thematic evolution of critical reading research in ELT, and of the increasing importance of critical reading as a pillar of contemporary literacy and language education.

KEYWORDS:
Critical reading;
ELT;
Bibliometric analysis;
Research trend

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Introduction

In the 21st century, critical reading has become a major focus, especially in English Language Teaching (ELT), as students engage in more interaction with complex and multimodal texts in the digital age. Critical reading is more than just basic comprehension; it involves evaluating arguments, exposing underlying ideologies, and reflecting on how texts construct knowledge and shape perspectives (Janks, 2009). From this perspective, language functions not merely as a medium of communication but also as a cognitive tool that mediates critical thinking and

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meaning-making (Viswavidyalayam, 2024). In the higher education context, its development is essential to enabling students to critically evaluate academic sources, evidence, and claims, thereby supporting informed knowledge construction and scholarly engagement (Wibowo et al., 2024). Although design frameworks such as the 4Cs are often associated with 21st-century competencies, it is better to understand them as a supportive pedagogical orientation that not only provides definitions but also develops critical reading skills (Sutrisno, 2022).

Critical thinking (CT) is widely recognized as a core construct in education, grounded in the Socratic Method, which focuses on reflective questioning and dialogic inquiry to facilitate deeper learning (Harasym et al., 2008). The conceptual framework of modern education defines CT as a set of core cognitive skills, such as interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation, that allow individuals to assess information rationally and to construct meaning actively (Facione, 1998). CT is also defined as a reflective thinking process for rational decision-making and a cognitive skill, and it demands intellectual dispositions such as open-mindedness and responsibility (Ennis, 2011). From the cognitive-action perspective, CT is the ability to perceive, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information to create knowledge and generate meaning. Critical thinking is not about using conventional methods but about learning in different ways, such as connecting new knowledge to what you already know, questioning assumptions, and reflecting on your experiences. Pedagogically, CT must be explicitly taught through instructional designs that enable transfer of thinking skills across academic and social contexts (Halpern, 2014). Such practices equip teachers to promote reflective talk and deliberate interaction with textual and contextual prompts, thus helping learners evaluate information and construct a coherent, critical interpretation of text (Abbasi-Sosfadi et al., 2025).

In the context of English language teaching (ELT), the principle of critical literacy conceptualizes reading as a socially situated practice rather than a technical decoding skill. Freire's critical pedagogy, as Phillips (2014) describes, argues that literacy is not only about textual meaning but also about understanding the social, cultural, and ideological conditions under which texts are produced and interpreted (Freire, 1970). From this perspective, education rejects the "banking model" described by Freire (1970), where learners are passive recipients of knowledge, and instead foregrounds dialogic engagement, reflection, and active meaning construction. Consequently, critical reading enables learners to interrogate texts (Luke & Freebody, 1999), question embedded ideologies (Fairclough, 2003; Janks, 2009), and engage in reflective dialogue (Phillips, 2014), leading to greater understanding and critical awareness.

Recent studies in ELT have explored critical reading from a pedagogical and classroom-based perspective. From a pedagogical perspective, critical reading practices can develop teachers' social awareness and act as agents of reflection. Akkuş and Uysal (2024) show that reading practices can develop teachers' social awareness and serve as agents of reflection. From an instructional model and learning design perspective, Tshering et al. (2025) point out how the four-source model enhances students' reading analysis in the context of English as a foreign language (ESL) teaching. Meanwhile, Abednia and Izadinia (2015) conceptualized critical reading through pedagogical and literacy perspectives. They view reading as a practice embedded in a social context and encourage students to question texts and ideologies in English classes. For example, classroom research examined how innovative teaching methods, such as technology-integrated learning environments, can enhance students' critical abilities (Sutrisno, 2022).

Even today, critical reading is a far harder skill to acquire than just reading comprehension. Zayed (2026) reported that students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) consistently performed better on basic reading tasks than on critical reading tasks, suggesting that critical reading requires a high level of analytical and evaluative skills. Furthermore, research on strategy training stresses the need for a systematic and explicit approach. Critical reading is related to analysis and conceptualized by pedagogical and literacy perspectives. Arifin (2020) explains that systematic critical reading enhances critical thinking and comprehension, emphasizing its relation to analysis and its conceptualization from pedagogical and literacy perspectives.

Furthermore, Mekuria et al. (2024) propose that explicit training in reading strategies may support critical engagement with texts. Taken together, these studies demonstrate an increasing interest in pedagogical and instructional approaches to critical reading in ELT. Recently, critical reading research has expanded beyond explicit strategy instruction toward technology-enhanced learning environments. Yulianawati et al. (2025) demonstrated that EFL learners increasingly require critical reading materials that integrate digital technologies to foster engagement, critical literacy, independent learning, and student-centered learning experiences. However, most studies are context-specific, classroom-based, with little attention to broader research patterns and longitudinal trends.

Several studies have examined the pedagogical aspects, classroom research, and critical reading strategies. Yet, there is a gap in understanding its long-term effectiveness, challenges in application, and the integration of the strategies that have evolved in different educational contexts. To bridge this gap, the present study conducted a bibliometric analysis of critical reading in ELT from 2015 to 2025. Data were retrieved from the Scopus database in English and identified, screened, and included in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 Protocol. This analysis seeks to map the field of research by looking at (1) annual research productivity; (2) the most influential authors and collaboration patterns; (3) contributing countries and institutions; (4) journals and documents with high citation impact; and (5) keyword trends that suggest emerging research directions. This study integrates bibliometric data with interpretive analysis to offer a holistic view of the current scope of research on critical reading and the field's future directions.

Method

The present study uses a bibliometric analysis, a numerical method for evaluating progress on a topic based on the number of publications, patterns of collaboration, key topics, and influential articles (Donthu et al., 2021). The data were analyzed using two software applications, RStudio and Biblioshiny. RStudio also produces descriptive analyses, such as the number of publications per year, the most productive authors and countries, and the most frequent keywords (Liang et al., 2022). Researchers will thus have a complete picture of the evolution of research, in terms of both statistics and patterns of relationships between researchers and study themes (Q. Liu et al., 2025).

The main database used in this study is Scopus, as it provides organized, consistent citation data and metadata for bibliometric analysis. Other databases, such as JSTOR and ScienceDirect, also contain literature relevant to the field of language education; however, Scopus was chosen to avoid overlap in the data analyzed. It provides structured metadata that supports accurate, consistent analysis using bibliometric tools such as VOSviewer and Biblioshiny. Using a single database also prevents duplication and inconsistencies that might

occur when using multiple sources, such as Web of Science or Google Scholar. Scopus is more comprehensive than Web of Science and is therefore recommended for the arts and humanities. Pranckut (2021). Scopus is the primary content provider for WoS and contains comprehensive bibliometric data. Scopus provides data references in various formats and is also compatible with Biblioshiny (W. Liu, 2025). Based on these parameters, Scopus was chosen as the database.

A systematic review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA guidelines during data collection, as shown in Figure 1. Although PRISMA was originally developed for systematic literature reviews (SLR), it has also been widely adopted in bibliometric research because it provides a transparent and systematic procedure for data selection steps, including identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion (Page et al., 2021). In the identification stage, the authors used the Scopus database to search for the term ("ELT" OR "English Language Teaching") with the keyword ("critical reading"). The authors obtained 453 results (as of October 2025). The years 2015-2025 were chosen in this study to represent the latest development of English critical reading research. There were two reasons for the 10-year term. First, the time frame was set to 2015-2025 to capture the growth of critical reading research in ELT, particularly in response to the increasing emphasis on literacy skills and pedagogical innovation in language education. Second, there were significant changes in ELT research after 2015, particularly in higher-order reading skills, digital integration, and critical reading.

In the screening stage, retrieved records were evaluated based on publication year, subject area, source type, and document type. Selection was based on the publication category, source type, and document type to measure data relevance and quality. In Scopus, publications in the social sciences and humanities are indexed only by subject area (e.g., ELT research, critical reading, literacy studies). To ensure that peer-review standards and citation patterns are consistent, we consider only journals as the source type. To maintain consistency in peer-review standards and citation patterns, only journal sources are considered. Based on document type, only research articles and review papers are considered. Peer review is available for book chapters and proceedings, but they are excluded to maintain structural consistency in the metadata and ensure bibliometric comparability. In the eligibility stage, the remaining records were screened for relevance to critical reading in ELT and for meeting the inclusion criteria. Finally, in the inclusion step, 251 articles met all pre-defined criteria and were included in the bibliometric analysis. The framework supports methodological transparency and provides a detailed account of how the final dataset was derived.

The initial search using the keyword "critical reading" in "English Language Teaching OR ELT" returned 453 documents from the Scopus database, based on title, abstract, and keyword searches. The identification process included screening by document type (limited to journal articles) and source type (restricted to verified academic publications), as well as by subject area relevant to English Language Teaching (ELT) and critical reading. After applying these criteria, 251 articles were eligible for further screening and analysis using Biblioshiny (an RStudio interface for Bibliometrics). Data extraction and bibliometric analysis were performed in Biblioshiny for all selected articles, which could be loaded and accessed (see Figure 1).

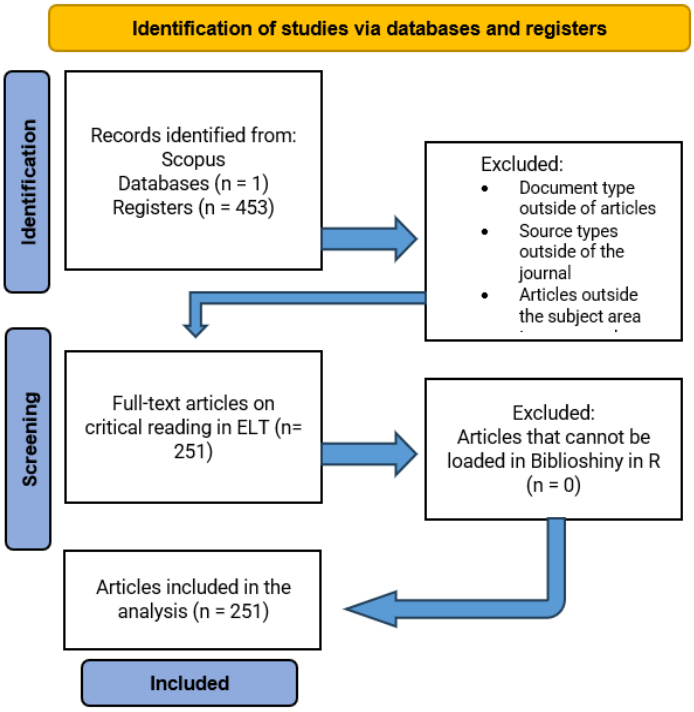


Figure 1. *PRISMA flowchart of the articles collection*

Results

Annual Scientific Production

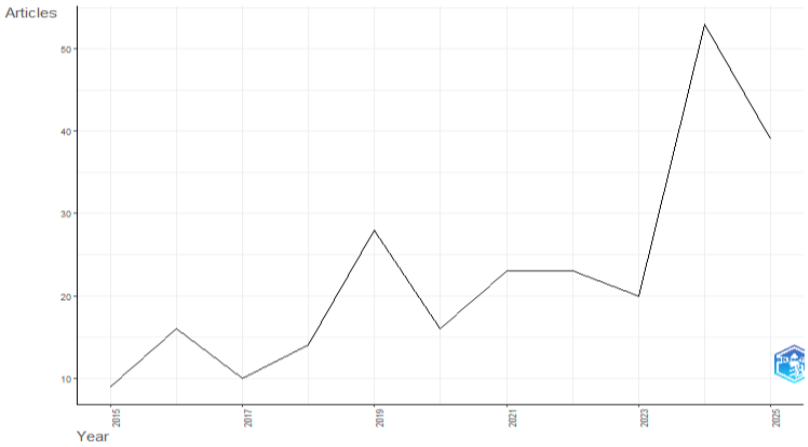


Figure 2. *Annual scientific production of publications on critical reading (2015–2025)*

The annual scientific production analysis showed that 251 articles on critical reading in English Language Teaching (ELT) were published between 2015 and 2025 (see Figure 2). The publication pattern shows a fluctuating but overall increasing trend over the past decade. In 2015, only nine articles were published. Although the number of publications increased in subsequent years, it was not consistently stable. The most significant growth occurred in 2024, with 53 documents published, making it the most productive year. However, in 2025, there was a slight decrease to 39 publications, which can be attributed to data collection in October, leaving the possibility of an increase until the end of the year.

The Most Relevant Authors and Collaboration Network by Articles

Table 1. *Top 10 most relevant authors by articles*

No.	Author	Year	Number of Documents
1.	Alzahrani, Mohammed Abdullah	2025	2
2.	Armelia, Lisa	2018	2
3.	Avni, Sharon	2021	2
4.	Finn, Heather Bobrow	2016	2
5.	Jiang, Yuhong	2015	2
6.	Khonamri, Fatemeh	2022	2
7.	Khoo, Elaine	2022	2
8.	Kinjunk, Jorge Dorman	2024	2
9.	Manan, Syed Abdul	2019	2
10.	Megat Khalid, Puteri Zarina	2014	2

An analysis of authors' productivity in the field of critical reading in English language teaching (ELT) from 2015 to 2025 shows that the ten most productive authors each published two works (see Table 1). This finding indicates a relatively balanced distribution of publication productivity, with no author being a prolific contributor in terms of publication frequency. This pattern suggests the participation of a broad spectrum of researchers in the development of the field, rather than a small core of highly productive authors publishing most articles.



Figure 3. *Author-level co-authorship network*

Figure 3 presents the author-level co-authorship network of critical reading research in English language teaching (2015-2025). The network consists of several clusters, indicating distinct groups of collaborative relationships among researchers. The purple cluster comprises three collaborating authors: Wibowo, Amiruddin Hadi, and Suhartono, while the green cluster includes Zulkepli, Nooraini, Megat Khalid, and Puteri Zarina. At the same time, the remaining clusters comprise Kinjunk Jorge Dorfman and Xu Wen (blue cluster), Finn and Avni (red cluster), and Khonamri and Amirdehi (orange cluster). Node size represents the number of publications, and the link between two nodes represents a co-authorship relationship. The network shows several collaboration groups with few links among them, suggesting that research collaboration in this area is distributed among independent groups of authors rather than organized into a single, highly interconnected network.

Institutional Affiliations and Geographical Production

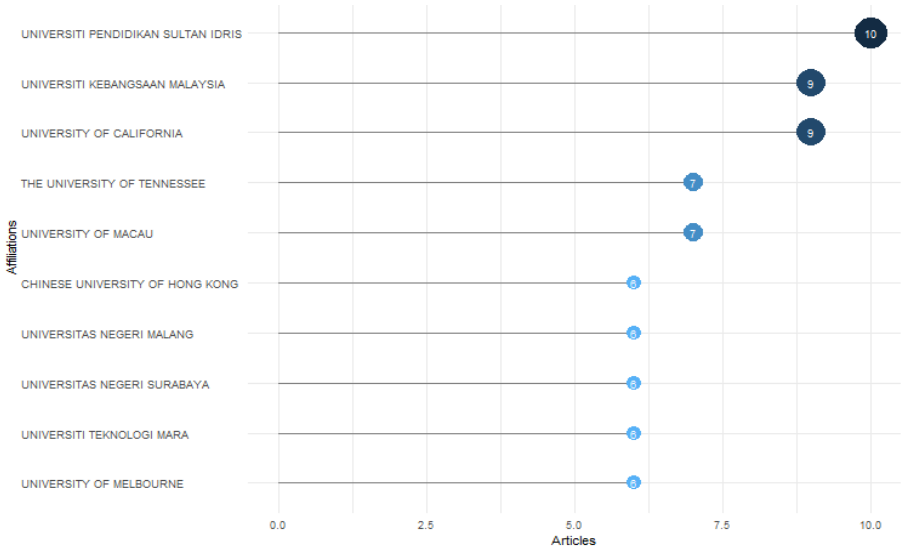


Figure 4. *The most relevant affiliations*

The bibliometric analysis revealed that the most productive institution was Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris with 10 publications on critical reading in English language teaching. Then, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and the University of California had 9 publications each. The University of Tennessee and the University of Macau each contributed 7 publications. Other productive institutions are the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Universitas Negeri Malang, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Universiti Teknologi MARA, and the University of Melbourne, each of which recorded 6 publications. The results indicate that critical reading in ELT has been supported by institutions in different geographical locations, suggesting a widespread scholarly contribution rather than a concentration in a single institution or country.

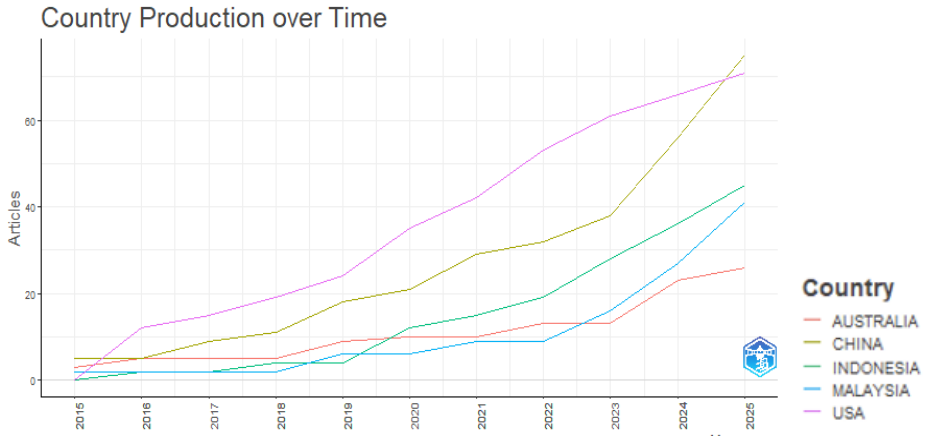


Figure 5. *The country's production*

The country production highlights five countries as major contributors, namely China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, and the United States. These results indicate that research on critical reading in ELT teaching is geographically dispersed in the Asian and Western contexts (See Figure 5)

Table 2. *Frequency of Country Production*

No	Country	Number of Documents
1	China	75
2	USA	71
3	Indonesia	45
4	Malaysia	41
5	Australia	26
6	Iran	25
7	South Africa	24
8	Saudi Arabia	22
9	Turkey	16
10	UK	15

To expand the analysis, Table 2 presents publications by country for the top 10 contributing countries. This pattern indicates that this field is not limited to a few dominant countries but is increasingly spread across various educational contexts.

The Most Globally Cited Document

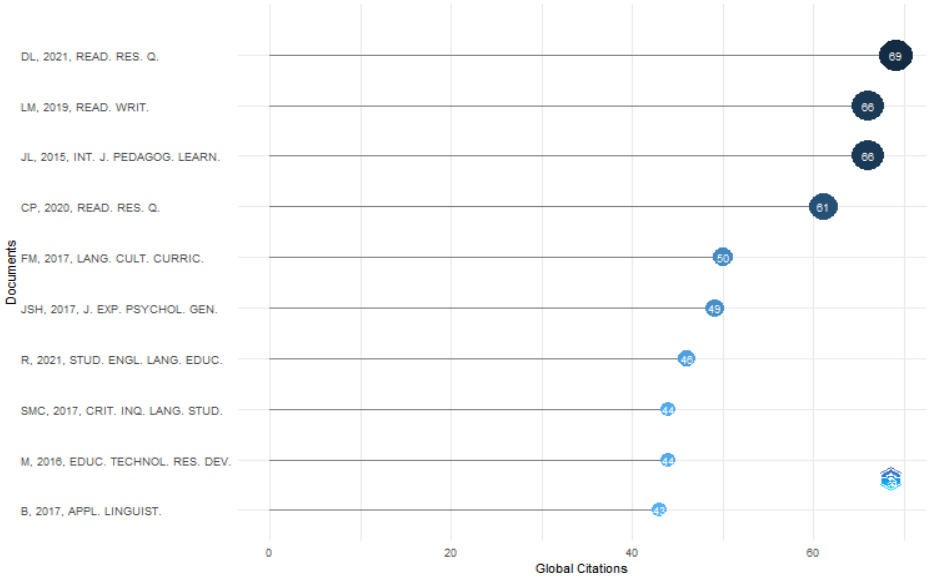


Figure 6. *The most globally cited documents*

Figure 6 presents the top-cited documents in critical reading research in English language teaching. For interpretation and transparency, the major findings of these influential studies are summarized in Table 3, along with complete bibliographic information.

Citation analysis revealed several influential studies that have gained increasing scholarly attention. Share (2021) explored the scope and foundational principles of the science of reading for English literacy and was cited 69 times. Brevik (2019), who has been cited 66 times, examined reading comprehension strategy instruction and said that its use contributes positively to students' understanding. Similarly, Adamson and Coulson (2015) explored translanguaging practices in academic literacy preparation, and the article has 66

citations. These studies illustrate the range of research interests that have influenced critical reading scholarship in ELT.

Table 3. *Most influential documents in critical reading research in ELT*

Authors	Year	Journal	Total Citation	Research Focus	Key Findings
Share, D. L.	2021	Reading Research Quarterly	69	Science of reading	Clarified the scope of reading science in English literacy
Brevik, L. M.	2019	Reading and Writing	66	Reading strategies	Strategy instruction improved comprehension
Adamson & Coulson	2015	International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning	66	Translanguaging	Multilingual practices supported academic literacy
Proctor et al.	2020	Reading Research Quarterly	61	Biliteracy development	Reading engagement and literacy practices
Hult	2017	Language, Culture and Curriculum	50	Language policy	Language ideologies influence literacy practices

In total, the most-cited documents address a range of themes, including reading strategy instruction, literacy development, language policy, and multilingual literacy practices. The citation patterns indicate that the field of critical reading research in ELT has been informed by several perspectives rather than by a single dominant line of inquiry.

Global Trend and Co-occurrence Keyword of Critical Reading

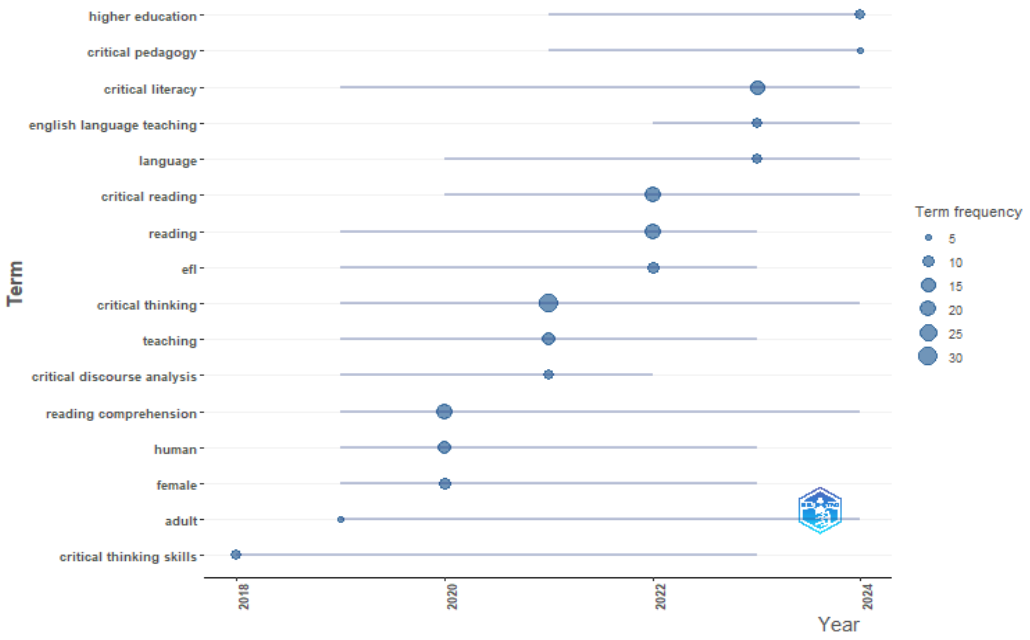


Figure 7. *Global trend topics*

Figure 7 shows the time evolution of research themes in critical reading in English language teaching from 2018 to 2024. The figure presents the differences in the frequency and the length of keyword occurrences. It shows the changes in the research interests over time. The most frequent topics are reading comprehension, critical thinking, critical reading, teaching,

and English Language Teaching, which demonstrates that these themes have attracted the attention of the scientific community during the period analyzed. Critical literacy, critical pedagogy, and higher education are among the more recent topics to have emerged in recent years, indicating increasing research interest beyond reading comprehension to encompass broader educational and sociocultural dimensions.

The co-occurrence of reading comprehension and critical reading suggests that contemporary ELT research increasingly conceptualizes comprehension as the foundation for higher-order reading processes. Rather than treating comprehension as the final objective, recent studies position it as a prerequisite for critical evaluation, interpretation, and argument construction. The close relationship between critical reading and critical thinking indicates that researchers no longer view reading as an isolated linguistic activity. Instead, reading is increasingly associated with learners' ability to analyze evidence, question assumptions, evaluate arguments, and construct informed judgments.

The emergence of these themes indicates a significant shift in the focus of critical reading research in ELT. Previous studies have mainly focused on reading comprehension and cognitive aspects of reading, whereas contemporary research increasingly addresses critical thinking, critical literacy, pedagogical practices, and higher education settings. This development shows a gradual evolution of the field from viewing reading as an individual cognitive process to viewing it as a multidimensional practice that encompasses instructional, academic, and sociocultural perspectives.

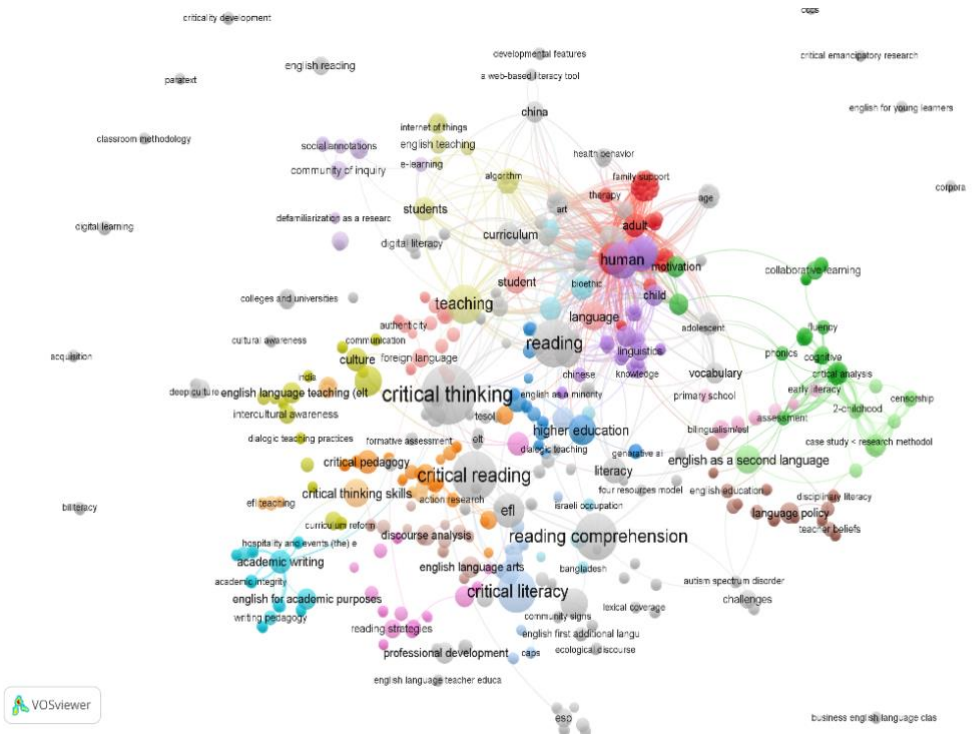


Figure 8. *Visualization of co-occurrence keyword by VOSviewer*

The keyword co-occurrence network generated by VOSviewer is shown in Figure 8. Groups of related keywords are represented by different colors, node size reflects keyword frequency, and links indicate co-occurrence relationships between terms. Critical reading research in ELT comprises several related themes, as suggested by the clusters found.

The gray cluster includes frequently occurring keywords such as critical thinking, reading, teaching, and higher education, indicating the close relationship between critical reading and broader educational contexts. The yellow cluster includes terms such as critical reading, critical pedagogy, culture, and intercultural awareness, representing pedagogical and sociocultural perspectives. Conversely, the red cluster contains human, motivation, adult, child, etc., indicating that attention is paid to learner characteristics and individual factors. In the green cluster, terms such as collaborative learning, discourse analysis, and process approach are included, which represent the methodological and instructional dimensions.

Thus, the co-occurrence network shows that critical reading research in ELT is more than reading comprehension per se. The relationships between the clusters point to the multidimensionality of critical reading research, which has cognitive, pedagogical, sociocultural, and learner-related facets.

Discussion

The bibliometric analysis presents insights into the intellectual development and structure of the research on critical reading in English Language Teaching (ELT) from 2015 to 2025. These findings provide insights into the evolution of critical reading research by analyzing publication trends, author patterns, institutional contributions, influential studies, and thematic developments. The following discussion contextualizes these findings in light of previous studies and broader theoretical perspectives to underscore the current status and new directions of critical reading research in ELT.

The rising number of publications from 2015 to 2025 reflects growing academic interest in critical reading in English language teaching (ELT). The number of publications has varied over the years, but the general trend indicates that critical reading is being recognized as a significant area of research in language education. This finding is in line with Mekuria et al. (2024), who highlight the importance of critical reading in developing meaningful learning and learners' ability to read texts more critically. This increasing focus on the issue also aligns with Janks' (2009) work, which focuses on power, identity, and social consciousness. Taken together, these findings indicate that critical reading has emerged as a growing field in ELT research.

Another important finding concerns the distribution of scholarly contributions and patterns of collaboration in research on critical reading. Table 7 shows the authors' productivity. No single author dominates this field of study. The most productive authors are Megat Khalid Puteri Zarina, Zulkepli Noraini, Wibowo, Amiruddin Hadi, Jorge Dorman Knijnik, and Heather Bobrow Finn, each with two publications. Likewise, the co-author network is not a single tightly connected research community but consists of several distinct groups.

In conclusion, these results show that scientific contributions are not concentrated in a small group of highly productive authors but are spread across different groups of researchers. Such patterns are often observed in emerging or interdisciplinary research domains, where collaborative networks are more dispersed before the emergence of more cohesive communities (Donthu et al., 2021). Thus, the current state of critical reading research in English Language Teaching as a Foreign Language (ELT) is a lively field supported by a range of academic activities.

Because institutional and geographical contexts often influence author productivity and collaboration, the following section analyzes which countries and affiliations contribute

most actively to research on critical reading in English language teaching. Beyond the contributions of individual scholars, universities and research institutions foster the intellectual climate, research culture, and academic support that mount scholarly output and collaboration. Thus, examining productive institutions provides insights into the geographical and academic contexts in which critical reading research has received greater attention and developed more intensively. The results show that the studies on critical reading in ELT have been contributed by institutions from different countries. Sultan Idris Education University is the most productive institution, followed by several universities in Malaysia, the United States, and elsewhere. This pattern suggests that critical reading is a common concern across academic communities, rather than a sign of dominance by any one institution. Such institutional diversity reflects the increasing recognition of critical reading and critical thinking as core competencies in higher education.

Contemporary literacy goes beyond basic comprehension and requires learners to critically evaluate, interpret, and interact with information in increasingly complex and digital environments (OECD, 2019, 2023). Similarly, Yang et al. (2025) highlight that critical thinking has become essential in higher education, particularly in the era of artificial intelligence, where students need to evaluate information and engage meaningfully with academic texts critically. Their systematic review also reveals that institutional support and curriculum alignment are key factors influencing the successful implementation of critical thinking instruction. This institutional commitment is also reflected in recent needs-analysis research showing that universities are increasingly expected to support technology-enhanced critical reading instruction through curriculum innovation and the development of digital learning materials (Yulianawati et al., 2025). Thus, the differences in institutional productivity observed in this study may reflect differences in research priorities, educational policies, and academic cultures across various institutions. In short, these findings suggest that the evolution of critical reading research is made possible by a broad institutional network, reflecting the growing importance of critical literacy and higher-order thinking in language education today.

The citation patterns provide insight into the research's contribution to the scholarly discourse on critical reading in English Language Teaching (ELT). The most influential documents encompass research topics such as reading science, reading strategies, translanguaging, biliteracy development, and language policy. These studies suggest that intellectual discourse on critical reading is linked to broader issues in literacy development and teaching practices. This view aligns with the perspective of Viswavidyalayam (2024), which states that reading is a cognitive process encompassing interpretation, argumentation, and meaning-making by learners. As a result, influential work in this area has broadened perspectives on reading to encompass its relation to literacy development, teaching practices, and academic learning.

Keyword analysis in critical reading shows a significant shift in research direction over the past decade. While the early phase of research used basic terms such as reading comprehension and text analysis, this evolution is also reflected in recent classroom-based evidence showing that effective reading instruction increasingly targets inferential and critical thinking rather than literal comprehension. Desai Karanam et al. (2026) indicated that the greatest improvement in students' performance was on inference-based questions after explicit reading strategy instruction, suggesting a pedagogical shift toward higher-order reading competencies. The latest trends indicate the emergence of more complex clusters, including critical thinking, academic literacy, digital literacy, psychological aspects, critical discourse analysis, sociocultural critical pedagogy, and many other topics related to this

subject. This pattern is consistent with Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, which conceptualizes critical reading as an engagement not only with texts but also with the social realities in which those texts are situated (Freire, 1970). This interpretation is reinforced by Arvianti et al. (2025), who argue that critical literacy develops when learners move beyond understanding textual meaning toward connecting texts with broader social realities through the complementary dimensions of "reading the word" and "reading the world". Such an approach encourages learners to question, interpret, and critically evaluate social issues, thereby extending critical reading from cognitive skill to socially situated literacy practice. This tendency also shows up in recent curriculum development. Critical reading is no longer treated as an isolated language skill but is integrated with creative problem-solving, collaborative learning, and authentic real-world tasks to foster higher-order thinking and learner-centered language teaching (He & Chen, 2025).

The development of digital texts requires readers to adopt more adaptive critical reading, as exposure to multimodal formats and digital sources increases the need for critical evaluation (Nurfazri et al., 2024). Thus, this issue is becoming increasingly multidisciplinary, incorporating pedagogy, cognitive academic literacy, and digital literacy, as evidenced by the shift in terminology from mere text comprehension to critical academic literacy (Morady & Esmaeilpour, 2023). Future studies will therefore probably concentrate on integrating the three primary domains, such as academic, digital, and critical reading, which collectively serve as the cornerstone of 21st-century literacy in the context of ELT.

To conclude, the findings of this bibliometric study indicate that critical reading in ELT has become an important field of research, with an increasing number of publications and a range of scholarly contributions. No single author or institution dominated the field. But the participation of researchers and institutions from different geographical regions demonstrates the broad relevance of critical reading across educational contexts. Moreover, the development of themes concerning critical thinking, academic literacy, digital literacy, and critical pedagogy is needed to address the complexities of modern learning contexts. These developments highlight the dynamic nature of critical reading research and its continued relevance in language education and literacy studies.

Conclusion

The study mapped the development of critical reading research in English Language Teaching (ELT) from 2015 to 2025 by investigating publication trends, author productivity, institutional contributions, influential documents, and thematic developments through keyword analysis. The results suggest a growing scholarly interest in critical reading, despite fluctuations in publication output, with an increasing focus on literacy development and instructional practices. Authorship and co-authorship analyses showed distributed patterns of scholarly contributions from several groups of researchers. In contrast, institutional affiliation analysis revealed research productivity across diverse academic settings and geographical regions. In addition, citation analysis indicated that influential studies have drawn on a range of perspectives, including science of reading, reading strategies, translanguaging, biliteracy development, and language policy. Further, keyword analysis indicated a shift in research interests from reading comprehension and text analysis to broader issues of critical thinking, academic literacy, digital literacy, critical discourse analysis, and critical pedagogy. Together, these findings provide a broad picture of the intellectual growth and thematic changes of critical reading research in ELT.

The study is of interest to researchers, educators, and institutions, as it underscores the growing importance of critical reading in contemporary language education. The findings highlight the need to strengthen and nurture literacy-oriented pedagogical practices and to foster greater scholarly engagement across diverse educational contexts. However, a limitation of the study is its reliance on the Scopus database and metadata-based analysis, which limits in-depth analysis of the article content. In the future, research may involve multiple databases and combine bibliometric methods with systematic or qualitative reviews to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of critical reading research in ELT. Further studies could also investigate the intersections between critical reading and digital literacy, and between academic literacy and pedagogical practices, in different educational contexts.

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