Metaphoric Perceptions of Teachers and Parents Regarding the Concept of Specific Learning Difficulty (SLD)

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to reveal the metaphorical perceptions of parents with children with SLD and teachers who work with the children who have SLD. The design of this study is phenomenology, which is one of the qualitative research designs. The data collected in the study were analyzed by content analysis method. A total of 218 participants, including 117 teachers and 101 parents, took part in the study. In the research findings, the number of metaphors produced by the teachers is 59, and the number of metaphors produced by the parents is 49. While the metaphor most used by teachers is "the person who struggles", the metaphor most produced by the parents is "maze". While the conceptual category in which teachers produced the most metaphors is "a complex situation", the conceptual category in which parents produced the most metaphors is "a situation in which progress is slow". When the conceptual categories obtained from the study were examined, teachers and parents produced six common categories. These are *1) a complex situation, 2) a situation that requires effort, 3) a situation that makes you feel different from the others, 4) a situation that creates a feeling of not knowing what to do, 5) a challenging situation, and 6) a situation where progress is slow*. Except for these common categories, parents have also produced the category of *a situation that feels desperate*. When the metaphors produced are considered from both parent and teacher perspectives, it is seen that the perception about SLD is generally negative.

Keywords: Metaphorical Perceptions, Specific Learning Difficulty, Phenomenological Approach, Metaphor

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INTRODUCTION

Specific Learning Difficulty (SLD) is a biological neurodevelopmental disorder with cognitive differences (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). In this study, Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD) notion will be used as general term including its sub-types. The reason for this is that specific learning disabilities include a very heterogeneous group (McDowell, 2018; Melekoğlu, 2017). For SLD diagnosis, features such as slow and inaccurate reading, difficulty in reading comprehension, difficulty in writing letters and written expression, difficulty in calculation and number perception, and difficulty in basic reasoning skills should continue for at least six months. Besides, the academic skills of the child should be significantly lower than their peers at school and daily life skills should be affected by SLD. In addition, it should be determined that these features are not caused by mental disability, vision and hearing problems or other mental disorders. Considering that 10-15% of school-age children are affected by SLD, students with SLD constitute the most common group among special needs students (Wong et al., 2011).

The most common types of SLD found in the literature can be explained as reading difficulties (dyslexia), mathematics learning difficulties (dyscalculia), and writing difficulties (dysgraphia) (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014). Reading difficulty affects approximately 80% of students diagnosed with SLD (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2004). Students who have reading difficulties generally have difficulties in skills such as phonological awareness, word recognition, word analysis, correct reading and reading fluency (Fletcher, 2009). In addition, difficulties are experienced especially in the areas of language and memory. Difficulties in the field of language can be explained as remembering words and concepts, rapid naming, pronunciation errors, delay in language skills, and problems in expressive and receptive language (Rief & Stern, 2010). Another feature that affects language skills is memory, one of the cognitive features. It is stated that students with reading difficulties have difficulties in short-term memory, working memory and phonological short memory compared to their peers. Problems experienced in memory can cause students to quickly forget what they have learned (Fletcher, et al., 2018). It is stated that students with mathematics learning difficulties often have difficulties in feeling the true value of numbers, correct and fluent calculation operations, mathematical reasoning, mathematical problem solving, and understanding numerical patterns (Desoete & Baten, 2017). The symbolic expression of numbers is stated to perceive and process these expressions more slowly for children with learning difficulties compared to their peers (Desoete, et al., 2012). It is observed that students with math learning difficulties have more difficulties in working memory, executive functions and attention, especially in cognitive areas (Swanson & Siegel, 2011). It can be stated that students with writing difficulties generally have difficulties in two main areas: writing letters correctly and written expression. The fact that writing skill is based on hand and eye coordination shows that writing is a physical process. In this case, the features that affect writing difficulty are motor coordination and planning. This situation causes students with writing difficulties to have difficulties in fine motor skills (Wong, et al., 2011). Preston and Stultz (2018) stressed how researchers in education, mental health, and any other areas need to act from a contextually sensitive perspective to understand and identify issues to come with evidence-based education strategies and services. Therefore, from such a contextual perspective, the researchers in this study consider it very important to reveal how SLD is conceptually perceived by individuals who are in direct contact with students with SLD, who are among the most common needs group. This was the starting point of this study.

Concepts can be expressed as the abstract and general common name of objects or thoughts in the human mind. Concepts form the building blocks of thoughts that make it easier for people to understand and perceive the world (Yilmaz & Çolak, 2011).

Metaphors created by resembling to concepts are use of the words corresponding to a structure based on similarity in place of another figurative word (Ricoeur, 1976). Human thought and conceptual systems tend to think metaphorically (Knowles & Moon, 2006). While metaphor is expressed as a tool used to explain the complex structures of a field and facilitate its comprehension (Low, 2008), it is similarly interpreted as a powerful tool that can be used to understand and explain

highly abstract, complex or theoretical events. Metaphor is the explanation of the expression of a concept in the mind with other concepts that are not related to each other. At the same time, metaphors bear traces of individuals' personal creativity, observation ability, experiences, knowledge levels, and cultural values (Saban, et al., 2006).

Metaphors are frequently used concepts in education and science (Low, 2008). In education, there are examples in which complex concepts and phenomena are explained with familiar concepts through analogy (Geçit & Gencer, 2011). When the literature is examined in general, it is seen that there are many metaphor studies about educational terms (Aydın & Sulak, 2015; Saban, 2004; Yılmaz et al., 2013). Especially in the field of special education, it is seen that there are studies on the metaphorical perceptions of teacher candidates about special education (Flight, 2016), the metaphorical perceptions of pre-school teacher candidates about gifted children (Duran & Dağlıoğlu, 2017), college students' perception of SLD (Öğülmüş et al., 2021), and the metaphorical perceptions of classroom teachers about special education (Başgül & Sağır, 2017).

The present study is important in terms of revealing how parents and teachers perceive the concept of "learning difficulty" as a result of their lives with children diagnosed with SLD and how they give meaning to it in their minds. In addition, this study is important in terms of revealing the similarities and differences that families who have children with SLD and teachers working in the field have in terms of metaphors about the concept of SLD.

In this context, the general purpose of the study is to determine the metaphorical perceptions of families with children with specific learning difficulties and teachers who work with children with learning difficulties about the concept of "learning difficulty". In order to achieve this purpose, it was looked for an answer for the following questions;

1) What are the metaphors in the minds of *teachers* who work with children with SLD regarding the concept of 'learning difficulty'?

2) What are the metaphors in the minds of the *parents* with children with SLD regarding the concept of 'learning difficulty'?

3) How do teachers define the metaphors they associate with the concept of "learning difficulty"?

4) How do parents define the metaphors they associate with the concept of "learning difficulty"?

5) Are there any similar conceptual categories related to the metaphors that parents and teachers associate with the concept of "learning difficulty"?

METHOD

Research Pattern

In this study, the phenomenological design, which is a qualitative research, was used. Phenomena is experiences, opinions, tendencies and concepts in the world we live in. The phenomenological pattern focuses on events that we cannot understand in depth and detail (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Personal experiences form the basis of the phenomenological pattern. In this design, researchers are concerned with the subjective experiences of the participants and their perceptions and meanings attributed to the event (Eatough & Smith, 2008). Phenomenology is a descriptive research design. Instead of generalizing, the most crucial goal of phenomenology is describing participants' perception of a phenomena (Tuffour, 2017). Metaphor studies used in qualitative research can be expressed as a rich source in qualitative data (Botha, 2009; Fennel, 1996). In this study, metaphors were used to determine the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding the concept of SLD.

Participants

This study was conducted in the spring term of 2021 with the participation of 105 parents with children with SLD and 115 teachers working with students with SLD, with a total of 220 participants. Purposeful sampling was used in the selection of the participants. Participants meeting certain criteria were included in the study. Participating parents were required to have a child with SLD and for participating teachers to work with students diagnosed with SLD.

Data collected from both parents and teachers were collected on a voluntary basis in order to compare the participants' perceptions of the SLD concept. 87% (191) of the participants are women, 13% (29) are men. 48% (105) of the participants are parents, 52% (115) are teachers. 90% (94) of the parents participating in the study are women and 10% are men. 85% (97) of the teachers are female and 15% (18) are male.

Data Collection Process

The data obtained in the study were collected through a form created by the researchers. The form consists of three parts. The first part includes information about the research and a participant consent form. The second section contains personal information. In the last part, there are statements about the metaphor perceptions of parents and teachers. From the parents and teachers who participated in the study were asked to fill out the following form: "Learning difficulty is similar with …………………; the reason of this …………..” The sentences in the form written by the participants are considered as a data source. Data has been collected online. The online data collection form (Google Forms) was sent online to teachers and families, and participants were asked to fill in these forms. The online data collection form includes voluntary participation statements, demographic information and metaphor questions. It is also stated in the statement that the answers given to the forms will be used only by researchers for scientific purposes.

Data Analysis

The data collected in the study were analyzed by content analysis method. Also, categorical analysis techniques were used. The process of analyzing the metaphors obtained from the participants in the study consists of following phases a) naming phase, b) elimination, c) recompilation, d) category development, e) validity and reliability study, and f) determining the frequencies of the metaphors obtained. In order to ensure validity and reliability, it is necessary to be consistent in data collection, data analysis and interpretation in the research process and to express all stages of the research process (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). In the study, the opinions of two field experts, who work as an academician in a special education department of a university, were used to check whether the collected data represented the appropriate category in order to ensure internal reliability.

During the naming and elimination phase, the data were transferred to Microsoft Excel program. The data that emerged due to incomplete understanding or misunderstanding in the specified data were not included in the study. The metaphors of 220 valid forms in total were evaluated. It was determined that the participants produced 59 metaphors for teachers and 49 for parents. In the category development phase, in each form, the reasons answered with "the reason of this" in metaphor were taken into consideration. Then, relationships were established between the stated reasons and themes. As a result, six different conceptual categories were determined for the teacher and seven different conceptual categories for the parents.

In qualitative studies, at the stage of credibility, it is necessary to explain in detail what has been done first. Also, how the results of the data are reached should be explained (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). After that, the themes and conceptual categories obtained were compared with those of the experts. Similarities and differences in opinions were evaluated. It was calculated as 93.5% as a percentage of agreement. While organizing the data, the frequency values of the participants showing

59 metaphors and six categories for teachers, 49 metaphors and seven categories for parents were examined. The metaphor themes obtained were expressed in tables as a conceptual category.

FINDINGS

A total of 108 metaphors were produced in this study, which was carried out to reveal how the concept of SLD was perceived by teachers working with students with SLD and parents with children with SLD. The metaphors produced by the teachers were discussed in six categories. These are; *a complex situation, a situation that requires effort, a situation that makes you feel different from the others, a situation that creates a feeling of not knowing what to do, a challenging situation,* and *a situation where progress is slow*. In addition to these categories produced by the teachers, the category of the *situation that feels desperate* was produced by the families. A total of 59 metaphors were produced by the teachers, while 49 metaphors were produced by the parents. While the metaphor most used by teachers is **the person who struggles** (f:8), the metaphor most produced by the parents is **maze** (f:4).

Findings Regarding Teachers

Table 1 Number of Metaphors Produced by Teachers and Number of Producers

Conceptual Category	Number of Metaphors	f
A complex situation	10	27
A situation that requires effort	16	24
A situation that makes you feel different from the others	20	22
A situation that creates a feeling of not knowing what to do	5	7
A challenging situation	5	5
A situation where progress is slow	3	4
Total	59	89

SLD as a complex situation

In the category of SLD as a complex situation, a total of 10 metaphors were produced by 27 participants. The metaphors produced in this category and their frequency of expression are; puzzle (f: 7), chaos (f: 6), maze (f: 4), ball of string (f: 3), knot (f: 2), space (f: 1), hazy image (f: 1), processor (f: 1), still lake (f: 1), and bubble (f: 1). Some parts of the participants' own statements regarding the metaphors in this category are given below:

"The connection between the beginning and the end of the rope is long and knotted" (Teacher: 61).

"It is complex like a maze, s/he knows what to do but does not know how to do it" (T: 65).

"It takes effort to solve it" (T: 68).

"You can overcome a difficulty, nothingness has no solution. There are three keys to solve it: to believe, to be patient and most importantly to be grateful for every single progress" (T: 73).

"When you unwind a tangled ball of string, you can achieve your goal of making the desired product (sweater, scarf, etc.). Similarly, in learning disability, the confusion in cognitive functions should be regulated in order to achieve the desired goal" (T: 85).

SLD as a situation that requires effort

In the category of SLD as a situation that requires effort, a total of 16 metaphors were produced by 24 participants. The metaphors produced in this category and their frequency of expression are; the person who struggles (f: 8), mine (f: 2), a bird which can't fly (f: 2), hidden treasure (f: 1), newly learned song (f: 1), cooking (f: 1), kite (f: 1), dehydrated flower (f: 1), immature fruit (f: 1), influenza (f: 1), flower (f: 1), bamboo tree (f: 1), kite (f: 1), baby (f: 1), old person (f: 1), and excluded child (f: 1). Some parts of the participants' own statements regarding the metaphors in this category are given below:

"If the education s/he needs is not given, s/he will withdraw and fail and will give up and fade" (T: 7).

"If you cannot add the right pieces at the right time, you cannot achieve the consistency" (T: 10).

"In the hands of someone who does not know how to fly, you fly away, if someone who knows how to fly gets you, you float in the sky and dance" (T: 12).

"They do not know how to use their wings" (T: 14).

SLD as a situation that makes you feel different from the others

A total of 20 metaphors were produced by 22 participants in the category of SLD as a situation that makes you feel different from the others. The metaphors produced in this category and their frequency of expression are; rainbow (f: 3), broken electronic device (f: 3), creative human (f: 2), broken CD (f: 2), Volkswagen Beettle (f: 1), vitamin deficiency (f: 1), third eye (f: 1), engine (f: 1), blessing (f: 1), locked door (f: 1), dream (f: 1), circle (f: 1), sun (f: 1), sky (f: 1), brain that thinks differently (f: 1), pressure cooker (f: 1), broken car (f: 1), painting (f: 1), brain (f: 1), volcano (f: 1). Some parts of the participants' own statements regarding the metaphors in this category are given below:

"Because just as different colors create integrity and makes the rainbow looks beautiful; what makes the learning disability and learning styles of these children beautiful is that the situation they are in makes a difference in them. Every individual is different. All of them are vivid parts of rainbow colors" (T: 14).

"Its engine is at the rear, different from most cars. But its function is the same. It does not have any lacks and even looks cute, it is a kind that supports creativity with this difference" (T: 34).

"At the end of the road, they arrive at the same point, but they arrive by working differently and being supported differently. They are not short of other people. Only their brains work differently" (T: 35).

"All cars have a hard time going uphill, but some have less difficulty, some more. By supporting these children, we can make them climb the slope more comfortably" (T: 51).

SLD as a situation that creates a feeling of not knowing what to do

A total of five metaphors were produced by seven participants in the category of SLD as a situation that creates a feeling of not knowing what to do. The metaphors produced in this category and their frequency of expression are; ship (f: 2), sea (f: 2), drowning while swimming (f: 1), being lost (f: 1), mirror (f: 1). Some parts of the participants' own statements regarding the metaphors in this category are given below:

"Because individuals with learning difficulties are trying to be kept in the routes of others. What should be is to create a new route specific to them" (T: 92).

"There is a long and difficult path that awaits a person with dyslexia, this path is often weary and his only consolation is a correct and entertaining guide to accompany him on this path" (T: 96).

"It contains many unknowns. A person cannot know how to move and find the direction" (T: 99).

"If they know how to use their arms when swimming, they will be saved, but because they don't know how to do it, they will struggle in the classroom as if they will be drowned at any moment" (T:101).

SLD as a challenging situation

A total of five metaphors were produced by five participants in the category of SLD as a challenging situation. The metaphors produced in this category and their frequency of expression are; rugged road (f: 3), long journey (f: 1), Ferrari with Şahin motor (Şahin is an old car model in Turkey) (f: 1), marathon (f: 1), staying in balance (f: 1), paralysis of the brain (f: 1). Some parts of the participants' own statements regarding the metaphors in this category are given below:

"If you give up because it is cold, you cannot reach the top of the mountain, if you climb up faithfully without giving up, you will reach the peak, if you think that working with a child with learning difficulties is difficult, you will not achieve success, but if you continue without giving up, and you will see that you get results" (T: 106).

"On that path, you should always track the child's patience, excitement, distress and motivation, and you should always create side paths for the specific solution for the child" (T: 107).

"It requires effort" (T: 111).

"Although it looks like there is no problem, there are many problems in academic situations" (T: 113).

LD as situation where progress is slow

A total of three metaphors were produced by four participants in the category of SLD as a challenging situation. The metaphors produced in this category and their frequency of expression are; crawling baby (f: 2), escalator (f: 1), the wheel that burst (f: 1). Some parts of the participants' own statements regarding the metaphors in this category are given below:

"It is difficult for them to walk on their own without support" (T: 56).

"No matter how much air you give, it doesn't work if you can't find the burst part on the wheel; but if the hole in the wheel is discovered and repaired it may be restored even if the wheel is patched and you can learn to live with the patch" (T: 57).

"Learning has a challenge for every individual. In order to overcome this, it is necessary to read those lines until you understand" (T: 58).

"S/he tries to learn but cannot understand enough and learn. It means "I'm doing, I'm trying, but it's not working" (T: 59).

Findings Regarding Parents

Table 2 Conceptual Categories, Number of Metaphors Produced and Number of Producers

Conceptual Category	Number of Metaphors	f
A situation where progress is slow	8	13
A challenging situation	7	10
A complex situation	6	10
A situation that requires effort	9	9
A situation that creates a feeling of not knowing what to do	9	9
A situation that makes you feel different from the others	7	7
A situation that feels desperate	3	3
Total	49	61

SLD as situation where progress is slow

A total of eight metaphors were produced by 13 participants in the category of SLD as a situation where progress is slow. The metaphors produced in this category and their frequency of expression are; janissary band (Ottoman military band) (f: 3), turtle (f: 2), drilled bucket (f: 2), memory lose (f: 2), water (f: 1), butterfly (f: 1), bike throwing the chain (f: 1), dream (f: 1). Some parts of the participants' own statements regarding the metaphors in this category are given below:

"When the individual goes two steps forward, s/he goes one step back" (P: 38).

"Their progress and learning is always get stuck at a young age" (P: 44).

"No matter how much water the child carries, the bucket is always empty, leaking somehow" (P: 47).

"Suddenly increasing or decreasing gear while driving on the road; (approaching the individual with learning difficulties with a learning style that is not suitable for his needs) causes the chain to come off the gears (unable to complete the learning process, completely confused, decreased self-confidence, etc.). Or the reason why the chain is constantly thrown; the chain is a bit longer for that bike. (Learning difficulty is not mental retardation, on the contrary it can indicate superior intelligence. The individual does not adapt to the learning process in the same way as other individuals, is like the chain being long on the bicycle.) In order to keep the bike moving constantly on the road and not to cause throwing chain, it is necessary to first recognize the bike and then bring the chain to a suitable length. If this is also okay; It is necessary to ride the bicycle with the correct gear setting and without increasing / decreasing the gear continuously (To progress in a controlled manner with the learning styles determined according to the needs of the individual is similar to a bicycle that moves on the road without throwing chain). In short, it is possible for an individual with learning difficulties to complete the learning process and progress in his/her life with correct support and controls" (P: 50).

SLD as a challenging situation

A total of seven metaphors were produced by 10 participants in the category of SLD as a challenging situation. The metaphors produced in this category and their frequency of expression are; climbing a mountain (f: 3), puzzle (f: 2), road (f: 1), broken white goods (f: 1), a person struggling with waves (f: 1), a not working program (f: 1), snowy mountain (f: 1). Some parts of the participants' own statements regarding the metaphors in this category are given below:

"Always trying to do something right but somehow cannot being right and complete, moreover the child understands that this is a different situation and does not understand why" (P: 88).

"Nothing moves calmly in a certain order and flows by itself. Sometimes it moves quickly and throws shore and surprises, but it is necessary to hold on well there, or it can pull it back in and take it back. But it is very deep and fascinating" (P: 90).

"You can never walk comfortably, it is always rough, ups and downs, you cannot see your front fully" (P: 93).

"The reason of this, you move one or two steps, you fall, then you move forward again and fall again, but you continue to move slowly anyway, and you learn to stand alone. While you are learning, your knees bleed many times, it hurts a lot, but you continue without stopping" (P: 99).

SLD as a complex situation

A total of 6 metaphors were produced by 10 participants in the category of SLD as a complex situation. The metaphors produced in this category and their frequency of expression are; maze (f: 4), ball of string (f: 2), deep gap (f: 1), knot (f: 1), memory loss (f: 1), cogwheel (f: 1). Some parts of the participants' own statements regarding the metaphors in this category are given below:

"There is everything but not organized" (P:52).

"The rope can be untied, but s/he does not know how to solve it" (P: 57).

"Your days are passing by always completing something and trying to catch up" (P: 63).

"As soon as we think that we have found a way and moving, we turn to where we started" (P: 65).

"When I say "I took care of this", another problem arises, there is always a problem and an incident" (P: 69).

SLD as a situation that requires effort

A total of 9 metaphors were produced by 9 participants in the category of SLD as a situation that requires effort. The metaphors produced in this category and their frequency of expression are; slow cooking food (f: 1), sailing (f: 1), long road (f: 1), right triangle (f: 1), budgerigar (f: 1), ship (f: 1), mirror (f: 1), digging a well with a needle (f: 1), stubbornness (f: 1). Some parts of the participants' own statements regarding the metaphors in this category are given below:

"It takes a lot of effort, but you will have a very delicious meal" (P: 2).

"Concept confusion means gaining victory sooner or later in return for the path taken by explaining some things over and over again while there is a lot of talent for other things" (P: 5).

"If you work on it you can train and get it talked. But if you say "I'm tired, I give up, that's enough! This bird doesn't speak" you shouldn't have any expectations from the bird either. We must first turn the mirror to ourselves and then to the other one. But after you make an effort and when you see that the bird is talking and trying to learn, there is nobody happier than you. Yes you get tired; but, when you see that s/he succeeded, the moment you say yes we succeeded, I think is the best moment" (P: 7).

"What can eyes and hands do when the brain cannot understand?" (P: 14)

SLD as a situation that creates a feeling of not knowing what to do

A total of nine metaphors were produced by nine participants in the category of SLD as a situation that creates a feeling of not knowing what to do. The metaphors produced in this category and their frequency of expression are; a person who walks in the dark (f: 1), a complex path (f: 1), sea (f: 1), fictional hero (f: 1), eagle that can't fly (f: 1), sleepy person (f: 1), living abroad (f: 1), broken compass (f: 1), a person who lost in the desert (f: 1). Some parts of the participants' own statements regarding the metaphors in this category are given below:

"It is not clear when and what you will encounter, sometimes wavy, and sometimes flat like a sheet" (P: 73).

"Because I think s/he will always need support in order to fly independently, even when support is provided in areas where academic skills are insufficient or lacking" (P: 76).

"There is potential, but there is no guide that shows the direction to reveal it" (P: 79).

"You cannot know where you are, how to go and how to find your way" (P: 80).

SLD as a situation that makes you feel different from the others

A total of seven metaphors were produced by seven participants in the category of SLD as a situation that makes you feel different from the others. The metaphors produced in this category and their frequency of expression are; mirror (f: 1), deserted island (f: 1), a person who carry overload (f: 1), computer (f: 1), bird without wings (f: 1), miracle (f: 1), ability (f : 1). Some parts of the participants' own statements regarding the metaphors in this category are given below:

"Her brain and perception are as if imported from another world" (P: 20).

"While everyone other than you came to the end of the book, you could not learn the alphabet" (P: 27).

"While individuals without dyslexia perceive correctly, they see and think from different angles and see different directions. He behaves reluctantly about things that do not attract his attention, and when something is in his mind at that moment, because he wants to solve it first" (P: 30).

"S/he sees the details that other individuals look but cannot see. S/he has a different productivity. But s/he gets very battered in reading and math in classes. This is a huge challenge" (P: 33).

SLD as a situation that feels desperate

A total of three metaphors were produced by three participants in the category of SLD as a situation that feels desperate. The metaphors produced in this category and their frequency of expression are; pressure (f: 1), myopic (f: 1), dead end street (f: 1). Some parts of the participants' own statements regarding the metaphors in this category are given below:

"You feel stuck. You feel alone, desperate and under pressure" (P: 16).

"There is awareness about the problem but there is no solution" (P: 17).

"He was not noticed in primary school and he always exposed to this treatment. They made fun of him. Whereas, he is a desperate, innocent individual who has to experience this situation as a Turk in that class" (P: 18).

"We are stuck" (P: 19).

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study was carried out to reveal how the concept of SLD is perceived by teachers working with students with SLD and parents with children with SLD. When the conceptual categories obtained from the study were examined, teachers and parents produced 6 common categories. These are; *1) a complex situation, 2) a situation that requires effort, 3) a situation that makes you feel different from the others, 4) a situation that creates a feeling of not knowing what to do, 5) a challenging situation, 6) a situation where progress is slow*. Except these common categories, parents have also produced the category of *a situation that feels desperate*. Although similar categories are produced, it is seen that the metaphors formed under the categories and their frequencies differ. A total of 108 metaphors were reached in the study. Teachers produced 59 metaphors and parents produced 49 metaphors. Teachers have produced more metaphors. It can be said that this situation stems from the SLD trainings they attended and their professional experiences. In addition, it can be assumed that teachers do not experience feelings of helplessness felt by families because they know more about students' performances. The first of the common conceptual categories is the situation in which SLD is seen as "*a complex situation*". In this category, while the most frequently repeated metaphors by the teachers were puzzle and confusion; they were maze and ball of string by the parents. These metaphors show that participants have more negative perceptions about SLD. When metaphors produced by teachers and parents are compared with the literature, it is seen that there are explanations about the confusion and complex process in explaining and defining SLD (Akhutina, & Pylaeva, 2012; Brigham & Scruggs, 2011). There are many theories and approaches explaining SLD, it is difficult to diagnose, and students' performances are very different (Schultz et al., 2006). These situations may have caused the process to be described as complex.

In the second common category, it is seen that SLD is expressed as "*a situation that requires effort*". In the literature, expressing SLD as a situation that requires effort in terms of intervention programs, teaching processes and coping strategies with learning difficulties (Meltzer, et al., 2004; Spekman & Goldberg, 1992) is in line with these findings. Similarly, Güner (2012) found similar themes in his study. In this category, the most repeated metaphors by teachers were the person who struggles, mine and a bird which cannot fly, while the most repeated metaphors by parents were slow cooking food and sailing. It can be said that an individual with SLD is in a constant struggle and effort due to difficulties in school or home life (Grant et al., 2010). The need for more systematic and repetitive studies especially on academic skills compared to their peers (Rief & Stern, 2010) can be associated with this situation.

It is stated that the third common conceptual category is "*a situation that makes you feel different from the others*". In this category, while the rainbow and broken electronic device metaphors are mostly repeated by the teachers, the mirror and deserted island metaphors were used by the parents. There are both positive and negative perceptions in this conceptual category. In the literature on individuals with SLD, there are various information regarding the areas in which they are both strong and have difficulties. It is stated that they can be strong in creative thinking, visualization, storytelling, design and art (Everatt et al., 1999; Rief & Stern, 2010; Wolff & Lundberg, 2002) and it is also stated that they have difficulties in areas such as attention, language skills, shaping memory and remembering (Rief & Stern, 2010). Special education is an area where individual differences are more prominent (Subaşıoğlu, 2008). Individual differences can cause people to be perceived differently on various issues.

In the fourth conceptual category, SLD is expressed as "*a situation that creates a feeling of not knowing what to do*". In this category, while the metaphors of ship, sea and drowning while swimming were mostly repeated by teachers, the metaphors of a person who walks in the dark and broken compass were used by the parents. And an important amount of the participants reported SLD as a situation that is difficult for others to know what to do from time to time. In particular, the difficulties experienced by families in school life, the cannot have a continuous support, sometimes

not knowing how to progress, and not meeting with the right educators or teachers can put the family and the child in a situation of not knowing what to do (Reid, 2011). Difficulties experienced by students with SLD in regulating their emotional states make it difficult to control their emotions and behaviors (Pavri & Monda-Amaya, 2000). This can cause confusion for parents about what to do in this situation. In terms of teachers, it is seen that this situation is expressed mostly with instructional analogies.

As the fifth conceptual category; it expressed as "*a challenging situation*". While the most frequently repeated metaphors of rugged road, long journey (f: 1) and Ferrari with Şahin motor (Şahin is an old car model in Turkey) by the teachers in this category, climbing the mountain and puzzle are the metaphors used by the parents. It can be said that this situation arises from the fact that coping with problem behaviors faced by parents with children with SLD is both a challenging and an extra stressful situation (Howie-Davies & McKenzie, 2007; Lardieri et al., 2000). In the recent and quite innovative OPV study on SLD, college students also reported many main themes related to this concept that SLD is challenging process and requires support. In addition, because children with SLD are emotionally sensitive, the excessive stress they experience increase the risk of depression, and may cause them to need continuous support from family members or relatives in social and emotional terms (Bender et al., 1999). However, it may be difficult for families and sometimes teachers to support a child with SLD continuously as found by some other researchers (Studenska, 2017).

The sixth conceptual category is "*a situation where progress is slow*". In this category, while the crawling baby and the wheel that burst metaphors are mostly repeated by the teachers; janissary band (Ottoman military band), turtle and the drilled bucket metaphors were used by the parents. For this situation, it can be said that the progress is slow due to the problems of attention, working memory, focus and forgetting that affect the learning process of children with SLD (Swanson, 1994). In addition, it is known that the cognitive processing abilities of children with SLD differ from their peers (Johnson et al., 2010). This situation may cause learning and progress in various fields to occur slowly. It is known that especially SLD students have difficulties in processing speed, which is caused by the learning and reading speed (Moll, et al., 2016).

Except common categories, "*a situation that feels desperate*" category emerged from the findings obtained from families. In this category, the metaphors of pressure, myopic, dead end street are the most frequently repeated by families. It can be said that this is due to the fact that the speed of information processing is low in individuals with SLD (Moll, et al., 2016) and that SLD decreases the learning speed by affecting the visual and auditory processing speed (Weiler et al., 2003). In addition, one of the main characteristics affecting the learning and progress process of the individual with SLD is the problems experienced in memory (Swanson, 1994). Other features affecting the learning process and progress are difficulties experienced in areas such as attention, executive functions, working memory, processing speed, and reasoning (Fletcher et al., 2018). When families cannot find solutions to the difficulties experienced by their children over time, they may feel desperate. Tuttle and Paquette (1993) state that this may be due to the insufficient knowledge and experience of teachers, whom children with SLD encounter or receive education, in the field of SLD.

As a result, it has been seen that the conceptual categories and metaphors that emerged within the scope of the research support the explanations in the literature. For teachers who work with students with SLD, environments can be created in which they can benefit more from instructive training on SLD (Gokool-Baurhoo & Asghar, 2019; Marjoribanks, 1994). Therefore, more interventions that bring family, children with SLD, and their teachers and others spent time with the children are needed. It is thought that informing families to increase their self-confidence and capacity to support their children by knowing the strengths and weaknesses of children will be beneficial. More psychoeducational face-to-face and distance/online mental health support can be provided to the parents.

This study was conducted with a limited number of teachers and parent's participation. Similar studies can be conducted with different sample groups. Furthermore, metaphor studies in the

field of SLD can also be performed in subtypes such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia. Participants can also be composed from different occupational groups or students with SLD.

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