

A Special Call from Inclusive Classroom Teachers of Turkish Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD): “I Don’t Want Them to Dissappear!”*

Ozge Sultan BALIKCI** Macid Ayhan MELEKOGLU***

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Abstract: Students with specific learning disabilities continue their education in an inclusive environment in Türkiye. Teachers play an important role in effectively teaching students in inclusive settings. Teachers' classroom practices in reading, the most difficult academic area for students with specific learning disabilities, are critical for achieving successful results. There is a limited number of studies on this subject. This study aims to analyse the requirements, problems, and opinions of inclusive primary school teachers who teach students with specific learning disabilities. A qualitative research method was used in this study. The data were collected via semi-structured interviews with 11 inclusive classroom teachers in a study group and analysed through the content analysis method. The results show that the resources required for teaching students with specific learning disabilities in reading are insufficient and that the students need reading improvement programs. In addition, the teachers stated that the additional resources to support the students' reading skills should consist of short, fun, and interesting texts.

Keywords: Inclusive classroom teachers, reading, specific learning disabilities, Türkiye

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**  Corresponding Author: Ankara Medipol University, Türkiye, ozgesultant@gmail.com

***  Eskisehir Osmangazi University, Türkiye, macidayhan@gmail.com

Introduction

In special education, inclusive education models are increasing to provide social justice for students with special needs (Artiles et al., 2006). Inclusion is one of the key aspects of a least restrictive environment (LRE). According to the concept of LRE, students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) should be placed with peers without disabilities, interact as much as possible with them, and receive services in a regular class (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002).

When students with special needs receive all their academic curricula within the general education program, it is possible to integrate them with their peers (Idol, 2006). Inclusion is seen as a way for students with special needs to receive education in an LRE (Idol, 2006). Legislations on education and challenges of people with disabilities, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) in the USA and the Special Education Services Regulation of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 2018) in Türkiye, emphasise that students with special needs should receive educational services in the LRE and should be educated with children in the general education system. Studies show that inclusion is very effective for the academic and social development of students with special needs (Buisse & Bailey, 1993; Cole & Meyer, 1991; Freeman & Alkin, 2000; Giangreco et al., 1993; Hocutt, 1996; Hunt & Goetz, 1997; Willrod & Claybrook, 1995).

Importance of Teachers in Inclusive Classrooms with Students with SLD

Teacher quality is critical for students' academic achievement (Carlson et al., 2004). A teacher is the most basic element for determining the effectiveness and success of teaching methods. Placing high-quality teachers in schools does not eliminate the difference between students, but it can ensure that all students are equally successful (Taylor et al., 2010). However, the most important responsibility of teachers is to ensure that all students are adequate readers (Mathes et al., 2005). Research also shows that a teacher's quality is the driver of a student's natural ability to achieve early success in reading (Taylor et al., 2010). Learning to read is one of the greatest accomplishments of childhood; it is the foundation of academic achievement (Paris, 2005). To be sure, a reading disability may have a negative effect on a student's academic achievement (Reynolds et al., 2002). Hence, general classroom teachers should develop effective reading skills in students with SLD and address their reading-related needs.

Since students with SLD are placed in inclusive settings, classroom teachers play a key role in their development. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers should be encouraged to adapt to various teaching methods and curricula. A study on teachers' views on inclusion showed that teachers were unsure of their

ability to teach individuals in need of special education (de Boer et al., 2011). Hence, in addition to general education programs, resources specifically prepared for such students should also be provided to teachers (Idol, 2006).

Students with SLD who need different levels of academic support are placed in general education classes. This implementation aims to increase these students' inclusion and academic success (Swanson, 2008). Instructional models that support reading difficulties should help students to improve their reading skills and facilitate their progress (Slavin et al., 2011). Gilmour et al. (2019), in their meta-analysis study on the reading achievement of individuals with special needs placed in inclusive settings, indicated that the reading performance of students with SLD was below 1.44 standard deviations or four years for students with typical development. To help them succeed, it is necessary to support reading skills in the classrooms.

While 48%–54% of the students with SLD who received reading instructions in an inclusive environment progressed in standard deviation, 46%–2% did not (Waldron & McLeskey, 1998). This demonstrates that students with SLD do not actually benefit from general reading instructions. Fuchs et al. (2015) also emphasise that specific interventions are required to meet the academic needs of these students.

General classroom teachers may need to use different methods to support students with SLD reading skills. In order to provide research-based reading support to these students, teachers need to be familiar with existing methods and develop the skills necessary to implement them successfully in the classroom. The absence of these practices indicates teachers' lack of acceptance, knowledge, and skills. To offer research-based instruction, teachers need to be supported by meaningful and guided practices (Swanson, 2008). Hence, identifying the problems and needs experienced by classroom teachers is the first step toward developing reading improvement materials for students with SLD in inclusive classrooms.

Special Education and Inclusion in Türkiye

Special education is an important part of the Turkish education system. The MoNE is responsible for regular education and special education in Türkiye. The Special Regulation Law (No 573; Sucuoglu, 2004) protects individuals with special educational needs. According to this law, special education services across the country are planned and implemented by the Special Education and Counseling Services General Directorate of the Central Ministry Organization. Such services are provided by teachers who are trained in various educational institutions (Cavkaytar, 2006). According to one of the basic principles defined in the Special Education Regulation Law (No. 573), students with special needs should be educated in the LRE with their normally developing peers.

The Children in Need of Special Education Act is the first Turkish law that deals with educating children with special needs in an inclusive environment. This law states that 'students with special needs should be educated with their peers without special needs and the school administration should take relevant measures' (Sucuoglu, 2004). Since 1983, all schools in Türkiye have been supported by the MoNE to disseminate inclusive practices. However, teachers in inclusive classes are frustrated due to inadequate training in special education and consequently provide low-level education to students with special needs. To provide better education, it is recommended that all teachers need to be trained on effective inclusion practices and exposed to sufficient opportunities to gain experience (Melekoglu et al., 2009).

According to the Regulation of Special Education Services in Türkiye (MoNE, 2018), inclusion refers to educating students with special needs and their peers in a general education setting. Notably, students can participate in inclusive education either full-time or part-time. In part-time inclusion, students can take some courses in a separate classroom with students with special needs, and some students take lessons in a regular class with their normally developing peers. Special education arrangements require schools to develop an Individualized Education Program for each student with special needs, irrespective of them being educated in an inclusive environment (Cakiroglu & Melekoglu, 2014).

There are official data about students with special needs in inclusive classrooms (Cakiroglu & Melekoglu, 2014). Since the Regulation of Special Education Services came into force in 2006, the number of students receiving special education and the number of students in inclusive classes have increased in Türkiye. From 2010–2011, the number of students in inclusive classrooms increased by 50% to 65.4% of all students with special needs (Cakiroglu & Melekoglu, 2014). Meanwhile, data from 2018–2019 show that 62% of students with special needs receive education in inclusive classrooms (MoNE, 2019). The deeper point here is that a rapid increase has occurred in the number of students in special education and inclusive environments.

Improving educational outcomes for students with special needs continues to be an important agenda in Türkiye and other countries. The increase in the number of students with special needs in formal education indicates the need for inclusion. However, the quality of teaching and special education services in inclusive environments remains debatable (Diken & Batu, 2010; Melekoglu et al., 2009; Sucuoglu & Kargin, 2010).

SLD in Türkiye

According to the Regulation of Special Education Services issued by the MoNE in 2006, an individual with SLD is defined as anyone in need of special education and support services due to difficulty in listening, speaking, reading, writing,

concentrating, or performing mathematical operations. SLD is defined in DSM-5 as individuals who have difficulty in learning and using academic skills such as reading, writing, or mathematics. Reading difficulties within the scope of SLD include difficulties in reading words correctly, reading speed and fluency, and reading comprehension (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2016). In the USA, 38.6% of all students with special needs are diagnosed with SLD (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). In Türkiye, this ratio is not as high as in the USA, probably due to the lack of proper diagnostic processes (Melekoglu, 2015). More specifically, in Türkiye, Guidance and Research Centers (GRC) have diagnosed 3% of all students with special needs with SLD. During 2010–2011, 263 students (79 males and 184 females) diagnosed with SLD were enrolled in inclusive classrooms in primary education (Cakiroglu & Melekoglu, 2014).

Reading is the most common problem for students with SLD. Difficulty in reading can affect performance in all academic fields. Yildiz et al. (2012) conducted a qualitative study to identify the perceptions, experiences, and problems of the families of children with SLD in Türkiye. The families interviewed in the study mentioned that in-class practices used for children with reading difficulties were inadequate and insufficient.

Özkardes (2013) analysed the research on SLD in Türkiye and stated that 23% of this subject was conducted on students with reading problems. The study emphasises the importance of developing programs and determining their effectiveness for students with difficulties related to reading and other academic skills. Gorgun and Melekoglu (2019b) also examined studies on SLD in Türkiye. The results show an increase in research on this subject in the last ten years and notably, 15% of the studies examined were regarding evaluating and supporting reading skills of students with SLD. The results also emphasised the need to prepare applications and training programs for students with SLD. To address the requirements of inclusive classroom teachers with SLD, more research needs to be conducted on this subject (Gorgun & Melekoglu, 2019b).

Studies on SLD in Türkiye, especially reading-related difficulties, are very limited. Baydik, Ergul, and Bahap Kudret (2012) interviewed classroom teachers of students who are not diagnosed with SLD and who have reading difficulties about reading problems and classroom practices. Kuruyer and Cakiroglu (2017) studied the educational needs of classroom teachers' students with SLD. Aktan (2020) conducted interviews with mainstreaming classroom teachers on the educational needs of students with SLD. Gorgun and Melekoglu (2019a) interviewed special education teachers and classroom teachers working in different institutions with SLD. When the studies in the literature are examined, it is seen that there is no study examining and focusing on the views and needs of mainstream classroom teachers, who have students with SLD and who have problems in reading.

This research aims to analyse the requirements, problems, and suggestions of primary school teachers of students with SLD, specifically related to reading. It is stated that special education support services should be provided to students with and without special needs and classroom teachers for successful mainstreaming practices (Gurgur & Uzuner, 2010). Due to the negative educational outcomes with SLD, they may face negative experiences such as academic failure, inability to finish school, and school discipline problems (Thorius & Santamaría Graff, 2018).

Furthermore, research in the literature emphasizes how stakeholders in inclusive education, such as teachers, are aware of, understand, and define problems (Ruppar et al., 2018). By examining current practices and needs of classroom teachers with SLD and reading problems, we hope to shed light on what reading interventions may be developed to enhance special education in students with SLD. Along these lines, the data obtained from teachers should prove helpful in creating content for support programs for students with SLD in inclusive settings.

Method

The data obtained in this research is part of a dissertation study. In the dissertation study, a reading intervention was developed to support the reading skills of students with SLD, and the effectiveness of this intervention was determined by the single-subject research method. Before developing a reading intervention in the dissertation, a qualitative study was conducted with classroom teachers with students with SLD. In this study, from a qualitative perspective, the qualitative data obtained to determine the reading needs of teachers with SLD in their inclusive classrooms will be analyzed.

It is cited that qualitative research, which has the potential to increase our understanding of children with special needs, their families, and those who work for and with them, has the potential to deepen our understanding of the needs and challenges of children with special needs in terms of intervention (Sandall et al., 2002). Therefore, this study utilized qualitative research, which is typically used to explore participants' views, class structure, and needs (McDuffie & Scruggs, 2008).

Qualitative research gives a voice 'to historically silenced or marginalised people with a focus on the personal meaning of the participants' (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Qualitative studies in special education examine the views and personal experiences of the individuals involved. In addition, they also help in monitoring and documenting teaching and learning effects (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Therefore, this study used a qualitative method to understand the issues faced by both teachers and students in an inclusive classroom in terms of reading so that probable solution can be developed to resolve the problems.

A qualitative research design was used in this study to determine the applications and needs of inclusive classroom teachers teaching students with SLD (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). This research is designed as phenomenological research, one of the qualitative research methods. With the phenomenological research design (Buyukozturk et al., 2012), which focuses on the phenomena that are recognized but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding, is aimed to highlight the perceptions and experiences of individuals from their own perspective (Saban & Ersoy, 2019). As a descriptive data collection technique, a semi-structured interview technique was used in this study (Buyukozturk et al., 2012). This technique aims to reveal thoughts, attitudes, intentions, and reactions by asking the related people about a subject and the participants' specific statements about and experiences with it (Buyukozturk et al., 2012; Creswell et al., 2007; Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). This technique was used to raise additional questions and obtain explanations and in-depth information on the subject.

Participants

To determine suitable participants, the first researcher contacted a Guidance and Research Center in Eskisehir and determined the schools where students with SLD studied as part of inclusive education. Then five schools of these teachers were visited. The guidance teachers and administrators of the schools were interviewed and informed about the aim of the study. Then the guidance teachers led the researcher to the teachers who taught students with SLD. After that, teachers were contacted about the students with SLD in their classroom regarding the academic difficulties they experienced. Teachers who have students with SLD and have reading problems were determined. Overall, 11 teachers of those teachers were willing to take part in the study (Table 1). They were asked to sign a consent form, which explained the purpose and content of the study. The interviews, which lasted 30–60 minutes, were conducted in the schools and recorded with the teachers' permission. The participants were informed about the confidentiality of the audio recordings. After the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed without any adaptation.

Table 1.

Characteristics of Teachers Participating in the Study

Name of the participant	Position	Professional experience years	Classes in the last three years	Experience working with students with SLD in years
Zarife	Classroom teacher	24	2-3-4	4

Raziye	Classroom teacher	26	2-3-4	4
Kader	Classroom teacher	29	1-2-3	3
Fulya	Classroom teacher	24	1-2-3	3
Serdar	Classroom teacher	32	4-1-2	1
Narin	Classroom teacher	37	1-2-3	3
Sema	Classroom teacher	16	1-2-3	5
Burak	Classroom teacher	30	1-2-3	2
Esmâ	Classroom teacher	12	1-2-3	4
Neva	Classroom teacher	27	2-3-4	2
Serpil	Classroom teacher	20	1-3-4	1

Data Collection, Analysis, and Reliability

The data of this study were collected using a semi-structured interview form created to determine the opinions of teachers with SLD on reading. The questions used in the interview were prepared according to the questions used in the similar researches through literature review and researchers of the study. Classroom teachers with students with reading difficulties diagnosed with SLD and wanting to participate in the study were determined. Interviews were conducted with the determined classroom teachers to determine the problems and needs of their students in reading. Semi-structured interview questions prepared for this purpose were used. While preparing the questions, expert opinion was used (Buyukozturk et al., 2012). Expert opinion was received from four experts with a doctorate from the department of basic education and one expert with a doctorate from the special education department. The questions were finalized in line with the opinions of the experts. The questions used in the interview of this research are as follows:

- 1) Could you tell us about your process of becoming a teacher of a student with SLD?
- 2) Could you tell us what kind of activities you do for your student with SLD / how you use these materials?

- 3) How sufficient are the existing reading materials and activities for your student with SLD?
- 4) What do you need while doing reading activities with your student with SLD?
- 5) What should be in the program's content to be prepared for your student with SLD to improve reading skills?
- 6) What would you like to add, if any?

The data obtained from this study were summarized and interpreted in line with content analysis. The teachers' expressions about the main themes were examined, and the expressions showing similar characteristics from these statements were grouped as sub-themes and coded. To ensure internal consistency in determining the main themes and sub-themes, the data obtained from all interviews were re-coded by an instructor experienced in qualitative research. As a result of these two codings, the percentage of agreement was determined as 94%. The reliability required for data analysis has been ensured since the percentage of agreement is over 70% (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The Credibility of the Research

The credibility of qualitative research may be provided by direct contact with the participant, conducting the research through a research team, and verification steps in the data analysis (Morrow, 2005). Subsequent studies were carried out for credibility in the research conducted (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). The entire research process is thoroughly explained. Support was provided by experienced experts in the field and method for the validity and reliability of the data collection tools used in the study. Teachers who took part in the study were informed about the research process and their rights as participants, and written permission was obtained. The interviews were held when the participant teachers stated that they were suitable in the school environment where it was thought they would feel comfortable. The researchers ensured the confidentiality of the data in the audio recordings and transcripts of the interviews. Two researchers worked collaboratively in coding the data and creating themes; on the other hand, support was received from a field-method expert in the process of ensuring its validity and reliability. Detailed quotations from the opinions of the participants were included in the study to demonstrate the results of the research.

Results

The data obtained from the interviews were analysed. The participant teachers who had students with SLD in their classrooms were asked questions about the

students' reading problems, activities, needs, and suggestions; the teachers' answers are given below (Table 2).

Table 2.

Themes Obtained from The Study, and Sub-Themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. The process of being a teacher of a student with SLD	Inability to receive family support Difficult to teach Difficulty in conducting classroom activities Time allocation issue
2. Activities with Turkish students with SLD	Fluent reading Reading comprehension Collaborating with peers Offering individual support Silent reading
3. Problems in reading classes	Inadequate reading materials Difficulty in reading skills Difficulty in writing Difficulty in remembering Poor hand-eye coordination
4. What is needed while reading with students with SLD	Specific additional material to match the level Source of reading
5. Suggestions for the reading program for students with SLD	Visual materials Text type Reading activities Having fun Large line spacing Use of reinforcement / reward

The process of being a teacher of students with SLD

The inclusive classroom teachers were asked about the process of becoming a teacher of students with SLD. The teachers mention about the difficulties of being a teacher of students with SLD in their classroom.

Raziye: 'Let me be frank, sometimes there are aspects by which I'm really overwhelmed. But thanks to me, the child is diagnosed. If I did not notice that kid, GRC would not even know that he was here. I said that I wanted this child to be examined and that I sent him/her to school guidance teachers. It makes me happy to think that I saved that kid's life. I am touching a child. I do not want them to disappear.'

Kader: 'In a classroom with 19 students, four students are creating anxiety. I know the label, or rather I noticed the difference. Because it is too crowded, the private time allocated to the student is limited. In addition, families show resistance; they do not want to accept the need.'

Sevil: 'It is very difficult. It is hard to teach. It needs patience. Because you are working hard, but when you look at the results, you look again and see that the child did not understand. You repeat the same thing again. It is a troubling situation.'

Teachers stated that the process was difficult as they did not have family support and were directed to the GRC. The teachers frequently expressed the problem of family denial.

Esma: 'First of all, it is more difficult for the family. So hard. You are dealing with the family; you are dealing with the student. Families do not want to get inclusion reports. When we do not get an inclusion report, our student has to be at the same level as the other students.'

Other problems articulated by the teachers included time allocation and getting students to participate in classroom activities.

Nilgun: 'I tried hard to give him something, and I worked hard. I struggled for three months. But we could not make improvements. Then we directed him to the guidance and research center, GRC.'

Activities with students with SLD

Inclusive classroom teachers were asked about the activities performed in reading classes with students with SLD. The teachers frequently tried to offer individual support to the students by using visuals, picture texts, and simple instructions.

Fulya: 'Now we have to process the texts in Turkish following the curriculum. We need to improve his reading, understanding, and listening skills. Here, in the work of dictating the punctuation marks, the progress levels are different, or the level of the class that he attends is a little more difficult for him to achieve.'

Kader: 'In general, I want him to read the text and answer the questions related to the text to know whether he understands it or not. And what I have given him is a little bit short of writing the story anyway. He can do them even if they are simple.'

They also frequently conduct repetitive and fluent reading sessions, include reading comprehension, reading aloud, and silent reading in their studies.

Raziye: 'First, I am trying to achieve fluent reading in the reading class. Second, I am teaching students to explain what they understand, even in a few sentences. Third, students should understand the content through pictures shown along with the texts. We frequently repeat every session. I did not get an education. I do not know exactly what to do—I am doing it by trial and error.'

According to the teachers, the students also benefit from activities like memorizing poetry and preparing to read.

Burak: 'I choose simpler ones, specifically those they can perceive, especially the coloured ones, with plenty of syllables. The reason is that children with attention deficit or learning difficulties are better with visuals. We usually create the text ourselves. We create text with coloured syllables. After creating text with coloured syllables, this happens when we give the photocopy to the children. What are we doing to reproduce? We are actually giving you a coloured pencil. Instead of coloured syllables, we write in different thicknesses—we use thin and thick syllables to convey the concept.'

Neva: 'The textbooks are a bit scant for them. They are a little different. How can I tell you "he is a little behind. He is a freshman rather than a second-year student. Fourth grade is hard for him.'

Teachers also mentioned about encouraging students with SLD to cooperate with their peers.

Zarife: 'We are reading quietly and reading aloud. If I make the others read a page, I make him read a line. I make him sit next to a friend who reads better. For example, he also receives support from his friend while writing his answers. Because I do not always have a chance to take care of him

Problems in Reading Class

Most of the teachers mentioned that there were insufficient materials in reading classes for students with SLD. The teachers also stated that the existing textbooks were not suitable for the levels of students with SLD.

Kader: 'Existing textbooks are completely inadequate and cannot be used for them. We prepare the text for them all by ourselves. So, the resources we have do not respond to that. Unfortunately, for this reason, we create materials ourselves from different websites, books, etc. As I said, we develop materials in a way that they understand by our own efforts.'

Fulya: 'According to him, when the texts are a little long, he breaks and he is distracted or the source books at his level appeal to him more.'

Teachers mentioned that the students had difficulty understanding what they read and difficulty with writing, mixing letters, and separating words into syllables while reading. The teachers stated that their students had difficulty in word reading, low reading speed, dictation and remembering things, slow reading speed and poor hand-eye coordination.

Raziye: 'The reading speed is low, and of course, he has difficulty in the writing. It is also difficult to create syllables. Other than that, especially while writing

words, letters are forgotten. They have trouble grasping the concepts. Children have difficulty specifically in understanding the concept of syllables.'

Nilgun: 'The child constantly forgets letters. Again, again, again, again ... Repeat, down, down, down at last.'

The teachers also mentioned about the distraction and attention problems of students with SLD, along with the reading difficulties.

Burak: 'Well, now it is very difficult for us to do reading classes with students with SLD. There are attention problems and a lack of perception. They get distracted very quickly. They cannot perceive the ideas adequately due to a lack of attention in class. I was having a lot of trouble dictating. The most difficult thing is dictation.'

Neva: 'Difficulty in following, difficulty in narration, difficulty in understanding. He cannot understand what he reads; that is, he has difficulty in understanding even very simple things. He makes reading mistakes.'

Reading Materials Required for Students with SLD

When asked what was needed in the reading class for students with SLD, the teachers mentioned additional materials, such as specific activity books.

Esma: 'We don't have anything at all. All the materials are made specifically for our students by us within our education system. There is nothing for them. Whatever he does, the teacher makes it specifically, based on his own view.'

Kader: 'I think the scientists know what these kids can't do and what they can do. If I knew what they could not do and what instructions could be used, I would not have to spend a lot of time creating materials for them. Additional booklets can be made for them. For example, a small booklet with instructions may be made. Same text but different instructions may be included.'

They also stated that the existing textbooks used in the curriculum were difficult for the students; they needed resources prepared according to the student's level.

Nilgun: 'For him, it's a little heavier than that, of course. The reading materials are not suitable. But there is no specific book for him. When it comes to reading, we need books. We arrange it ourselves. I visit bookstores. As I said, I download from the Internet, websites, or write it myself.'

Raziye: 'Neither can we use materials nor do we have materials. It is not enough. It was never enough. In fact, we expect your support in this case. We need support, frankly. So we need a hand when we work with these children, both in terms of orientation and the materials we use while working with them.'

Esma: 'Textbooks are normal books prepared for normal students. It isn't enough for students with SLD. The child cannot read long texts. It sounds boring to him. I need specific reading materials, as I said.'

Suggestions for a Reading Improvement Program for Students with SLD

The teachers were asked to provide suggestions about a reading improvement program for students with SLD and reading difficulties. The teachers suggested preparing materials with visuals and interesting, colourful, and short funny texts.

Serdar: 'The pictures can be plentiful—there must be visuals. There must be something that interests him.'

Neva: 'Their font size should be bigger than normal. So, as I said, our texts are very long. And the content is very heavy. It sounds boring to even our normal students. I say, "Oh my God! How do we read this text to these children?" They are not suitable for students with SLD. So it is a little more fun for them, a little bigger. I do not know what might be more interesting; shorter texts, rhymes, and poems could be used. The content should be more fun because they get bored; when the text is difficult, they don't want to read.'

Furthermore, the teachers mentioned that the program could also include different text types such as poetry, rhymes, riddles, and jokes.

Esma: 'Our children with SLD enjoy more poetic texts, rhymes, and riddles; these kinds of texts increase their desire to learn. I think these are useful for fluent reading. For example, a book with short texts and riddles can be prepared. I hope we get our voice heard.'

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to determine the applications, problems, and suggestions of inclusive primary school teachers of students with SLD. The teachers mentioned their problems in the reading classes and the required support. They mostly emphasised that the resources for reading were inadequate and the level of current curriculum materials did not correspond to the level of students with SLD. Additional materials and resource books especially designed for their students and appropriate for their level were also needed. In addition, teachers suggested preparing a program for students with SLD consisting of many visual elements and short texts. Evaluation of the reading performance of the students with SLD in the inclusive environment shows that these students are at a much lower level than their normally developing peers. This shows that it is not enough for students to participate in inclusive classes alone to improve their reading performance and that these students need more intense individual intervention

(Fuchs et al., 2015). The inclusive classroom teachers mentioned during the interviews that the current curriculum is inadequate for improving the reading skills of their students. This highlights the need for supportive practices and interventions to improve the reading performance of students with SLD attending inclusive classrooms.

The primary school teachers' most important responsibility is ensuring that all students are accomplished readers (Mathes et al., 2005). While explaining the process of becoming a teacher, the teachers stated that the teachers are very important for the students with SLD. They also mentioned that they did not want such students to disappear due to the reading gap between them and the normally developing students.

Teachers who have students with special needs in the classroom learn to adapt—for example, they may adapt instructions, change instructional materials, and prepare instructional groups (Scott et al., 1998). In this study, the teachers stated that they tried to create appropriate learning materials based on their students' levels on their own and by forming peer groups.

Integrating students with SLD in an inclusive environment is worthwhile; however, these students also need individual support (Fuchs et al., 2015). The teachers also stressed this particular point in their interviews.

Students with special needs should be offered independent resources rather than general education programs (Idol, 2006). The teachers who participated in this study also emphasised the need for additional resources to be prepared according to the students' reading levels. Notably, students with SLD do not benefit from the reading instructions they receive in general education classes (Waldron & McLeskey, 1998). The teachers participating in this study also support these findings.

The teachers use different instructional practices in their inclusive classroom, such as peer teaching and differentiation of instruction for students with special needs (Finkelstein et al., 2019). Co-teaching and differentiated instruction are used frequently in inclusive classrooms (Saloviita, 2018). Also, in a study, the teachers with reading difficulties mention that they do reading activities using peer (Baydik et al., 2012). Consistent with these studies, the teachers also mentioned using peer teaching strategies and the differentiation of instructional levels according to the needs of students with SLD.

In a study by Gorgun and Melekoglu (2019b), teachers stated that there is no specific reading program or material for students with SLD, but it is required. Also, as a result of another study, it was shown that classroom teachers had both lack of knowledge regarding the preparation of educational intervention programs for SLD (Kuruyer & Cakiroglu, 2017). Parallel to these findings, the teachers in our study also mentioned that they need supporting materials and reading resources for students. To be sure, students in inclusive classes

educated in LREs should be supported so they can succeed in their academics (Fuchs et al., 2015). According to the findings of a study examining the educational needs of SLD, it was determined that teachers need training on learning difficulties in reading (Aktan, 2020). Along these lines, specific interventions should be used to meet the academic needs of students with SLD. In this study, the teachers stated that they needed additional reading-related applications for such students.

Gilmour et al. (2019) showed that the reading ability of students with SLD in inclusive education was normally below 1.44 standard deviations or four years for students with normal development. This difference between non-pupils with SLD reveals the importance of supportive reading interventions to improve reading performance. Students with reading difficulties should be supported with different teaching methods in inclusive classrooms (Slavin et al., 2011). For this reason, it is very important to prepare individualised programs that support reading skills. Before preparing a specific learning program, it is very important to determine the problems, needs, and suggestions of inclusive classroom teachers.

Including teachers and students with SLD in inclusive classes and determining what is needed in this setting will shed light on which reading interventions must be developed. In addition, the data obtained from teachers will also help in creating content for reading support programs for these students.

Ethics Committee Approval: This study was produced from the first author's doctoral dissertation, called "Effectiveness of the Reading Development Program (OGEP) in Supporting Reading Skills and Motivation of Primary School Students with Specific Learning Disabilities", published in 2020. Although the protocols set by Eskisehir Osmangazi University Ethics Review Committee (ERC) were followed throughout the study, an ethics committee approval was not available for this study, because the approval of the Faculty of Education Dean's Office was sufficient for the research before 2020.

Informed Consent: Informed consent were taken from the participants before the research.

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Ozge Sultan BALIKCI

Specific Learning Disabilities, Reading, Language

Ankara Medipol University, Faculty of Health
Science, Language and Speech
Therapy, Ankara

E-mail: ozgesultant@gmail.com

Macid Ayhan MELEKOGLU

Special Education, Specific Learning Disabilities,
Reading, Teacher Training

Eskisehir Osmangazi University, Faculty of
Education, Department of Special
Education, Eskisehir

E-mail: macidayhan@gmail.com