

## Chapter 6

# Language, Socio–Emotional Skills, and School Performance of Children and Adolescents With Developmental Language Disorder According to Parents' Perceptions

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### ABSTRACT

*The study investigates parents' perceptions of children and adolescents with DLD regarding their understanding of DLD, the developmental language history, their language, socio-emotional, and school performance profile, as well as to what extent oral language skills are associated with their school performance. One hundred parents of children with DLD completed a questionnaire. Most of the parents stated that their child started to communicate efficiently with others after four years of age. They defined DLD as articulation problems and language delay and they reported difficulties apart from articulation with expressive vocabulary, phonological awareness, syntax, etc. Most of the parents rated their child as extroverted with average self-esteem and good social relationships. They reported difficulties in oral lessons, spelling, writing, and reading. Significant relationships were found among oral language skills, narrative, writing, reading, and spelling. The results are discussed in terms of how parents understand DLD and their child's developmental profile.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), previously known as Specific Language Impairment (SLI) is a common developmental disorder with unknown etiology characterized by a slow pace and deficits in language development (Bishop, 2015). Children with DLD present language problems that cannot be explained in terms of other cognitive, neurological, or perceptual deficits (Bishop et al., 2017; Bishop & Hayiou Thomas, 2008; Pennington & Bishop, 2009), while there is a discrepancy between their low oral language skills and a good index of non-verbal intelligence (Zarzo-Benlloch et al., 2017). Initially, it has been considered a childhood disorder, but research shows that it continues to affect individuals in adolescence and adulthood (Palikara et al., 2009).

From childhood and throughout adolescence parents play a key role in supporting their children's development. Parental awareness of their children's needs has been highlighted in previous studies (Adolf et al., 2017) in which it has also been found that the parents were frequently unaware of their children's difficulties. In parallel, according to Bishop et al., (2016), parents (when they are aware of their children's needs) are one of the main referral sources for identifying children with DLD before they start school (Bishop et al., 2016; Christopoulos et al., 2020). A better understanding of parents' perceptions of their children with DLD could provide information that needs to be considered in the design of intervention programs for both parents and children in order to respond efficiently to their needs (Marshall, Harding, & Roulstone, 2017).

The last two decades, only a few studies have focused on investigating parents' perceptions of their children with DLD in different domains such as language, social and emotional skills, and school performance (Hobson et al. 2022; Lindsay et al., 2016; de Lopez et al., 2021; Pratt et al., 2006). Parents of children with DLD encounter a lack of familiarity with the terminologies used to characterize DLD and the possibility that the children's deficits may not be apparent (Forrest et al. 2018). Last, little is known about how parents understand the term DLD (Lopez et al. 2021), while their perspectives on the developmental language profile of those children is underinvestigated.

Therefore, the aim of the present study was to explore parents' perceptions regarding their understanding of DLD, the developmental language history, the oral language skills, and socioemotional profile as well as the school performance of their children with DLD in order to gain a holistic insight into the developmental profile of that group of children through the parents' lenses. Also, another aim of the study was to explore to what extent children's oral language skills are related to their school performance.

## **THE ORAL LANGUAGE PROFILE OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER ACCORDING TO THEIR PARENTS**

In a significant epidemiological study, Tomblin et al., (1997) found that 70% of parents of kindergarten-aged children with DLD were ignorant of their child's language difficulties. Similar findings were found in two other studies with primary school children with DLD. In the first study, parents did not appear to be aware of their children's oral language difficulties (Hendricks et al., 2019) and in another study, parents reported no concerns about their child's speech and language, development (Adlof et al., (2017).

In a more recent research, Hobson et al., (2022), interviewed six parents of children with DLD regarding among others their child's language profile. One parent had been concerned about the child's

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