

DO PROVERBS MEASURE ABSTRACT OR METAPHORICAL THINKING: EVIDENCE FROM HEALTHY GREEK-SPEAKING ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study is to investigate whether proverbs depict abstract or metaphorical thinking. Proverbs were extensively used for the assessment of abstract thinking. However, recent research disputes the previous traditional hypothesis and claims that proverbs are related to metaphorical thinking rather than abstract thinking. Although, metaphorical thinking is part of abstract thinking is compatible with concrete/literal thinking. Factors such as chronological age of the participants, gender, years of education and hand preference found to affect the interpretation of proverbs. In the present study fifty (50) healthy adults participated. Two main tasks were administered to the participants; the first task was tested participants' mental (both verbal and practical) intelligence and the second task was a proverbs test, investigating the interpretation of specific Greek proverbs (N=25). Further information about participants' profile, such as gender, years of education and participants' chronological age were collected. The major findings suggest that intelligence and mainly lexical knowledge was exhibited as predictor variable in the accuracy scores on the proverbs test; while abstract thinking variables (i.e. reasoning, sequences, and analogy) were not found to correlate with accuracy on proverbs task. Participants' chronological age, gender and years of education did not seem to affect participants' performance. However, we should note that all participants were highly educated (university degree). Finally, proverb "transparency" has been found to affect participants' interpretations.

Keywords: Proverbs, metaphorical thinking, abstract thinking, lexical knowledge.