

WORD DEFINITION IN ADULTS WITH LOW EDUCATIONAL AND HIGH EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to expand the current literature on word definitions, to empirically investigate the definitional skills and the preferred definition types of adults with low educational (LE) and high educational (HE) level and to check the effect of grammatical categories, morphological and semantic characteristics of words in content and form of definitions. The sample consists of 50 monolingual individuals (native Greek speakers), who were asked to define 16 words (8 nouns, 4 verbs, and 4 adjectives) orally. Definitions were scored on a five-point scale along a continuum that reflects the developmental path of the definitions. The findings indicated that definitions tend to conform to the conventional rules of Aristotelian format so that adults with university education outperform adults without university education. The results also confirmed the important roles of metalinguistic ability and educational level in producing well-structured formal definitions. This study provides a more complete picture of the development of definitional skills.

Keywords: definition ability; adults; definitional skills; education; oral language
