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The Role of Theory of Mind in Teenagers' Humor Comprehension

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Abstract: In Howe's study (2002), humor originates from perceiving the thoughts of the subject in the humor. We assume that humor and theory of mind (ToM), the ability to infer one's mental states, could have some relationships. However, the relationships are not clearly known. The present research is aimed to explore the issue by using ToM-jokes, non-ToM jokes, and their unfunny version. The unfunny version is used as the baseline to compare the possible differences. Children between 11-12 years old participated the study and rated the funniness and comprehension scores of the jokes. Participants also rated emotion quotient (Baron-Cohen, 2004) as their ToM score. The results revealed that higher subjects' ToM scores lead to higher levels of the funniness and comprehensibility of ToM jokes. The findings offer an evidence for the relationship between TOM and the processing of humor from a developmental perspective.