

The Role of Theory of Mind in Teenagers' Humor Comprehension

Yong-Ru Hsiao

National Cheng Kung University, Tainan, Taiwan

Yueh Lin Tsai

National Cheng Kung University, Tainan, Taiwan

Yu-Chi Huang

National Cheng Kung University, Tainan, Taiwan

Shih-Ching Lu

National Cheng Kung University, Tainan, Taiwan

Chia-Jou Chuang

National Cheng Kung University, Tainan, Taiwan

Ya-Lun Liang

National Cheng Kung University, Tainan, Taiwan

Yu-Chen Chan

National Tsing Hua University, Institute of Learning Sciences, Hsinchu, Taiwan

Hsueh-Chih Chen

National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan

Jon-Fan Hu

National Cheng Kung University, Tainan, Taiwan

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.