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Hear the one about the joke-detecting robot? Two U.S. scientists have the punchline

Agence France-Presse

Published: Thursday, August 02, 2007

Experts in artificial intelligence have built a computer program that can understand simple jokes, marking an important step in making robots seem friendlier to humans. Previous attempts at getting machines to understand humour have failed, because what is funny to humans is subjective and complex -- and very difficult to program. But in a report in New Scientist magazine, Julia Taylor and Lawrence Mazlack of the University of Cincinnati describe a prototype joke-detection software based on examples of how the same word can have different meanings depending

on the context. So far, the joke-bot only understands rather leaden puns. It still delivers a blank look when facing more complex material or deadpan humour. Even so, the researchers hope it will add a kindlier touch to robots of the near future.

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