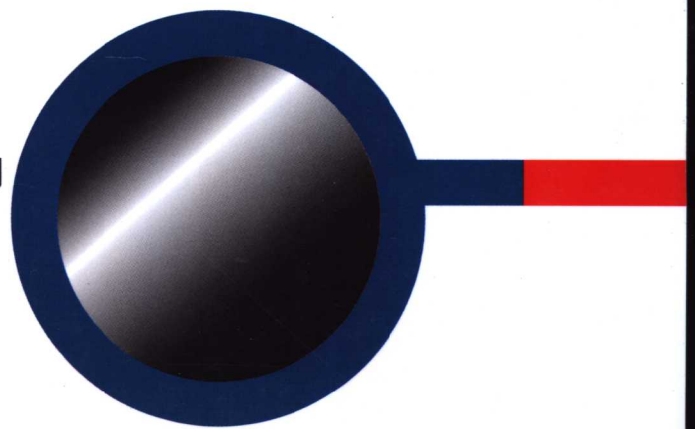


WHADDAYA HEAR



地道美语系列

Practicing listening skills by hearing popular American jokes

[美] Nina Weinstein 著

谈笑风生说美语

Whattaya Hear:
Listening Strategies and Culture Through American Jokes



中国水利水电出版社
www.waterpub.com.cn

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and Culture through
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内 容 提 要

许多人从小开始学习英语,有的甚至到美国定居过多年,但仍听不懂美国的笑话。不同的文化有不同的幽默,被美国人视为可笑的事物,其必定蕴含美国人的价值观、敬畏情结和梦想。如果你理解了一种文化的幽默,你也就理解了这种文化里的人。本书通过美国幽默来讲解美语口语中的音变和口语化的词汇,让我们在笑声中感悟美国文化,在笑声中享受学习美语的乐趣。

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

谈笑风生说美语 / (美)温斯坦(Weinstein, N.)著. —北京:中国水利水电出版社, 2003

(地道美语系列)

ISBN 7-5084-1676-7

I. 谈… II. 温… III. 英语, 美国—口语 IV. H319.9

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2003) 第 076781 号

书 名	谈笑风生说美语
作 者	[美] Nina Weinstein 著
出版、发行	中国水利水电出版社 (北京市三里河路 6 号 100044) 网址: www.waterpub.com.cn E-mail: mchannel@public3.bta.net.cn (万水) sale@waterpub.com.cn 电话: (010) 63202266 (总机)、68331835 (营销中心)、82562819 (万水)
经 售	全国各地新华书店和相关出版物销售网点
排 版	北京万水电子信息有限公司
印 刷	北京蓝空印刷厂
规 格	787×1092 毫米 16 开本 6 印张 100 千字
版 次	2003 年 10 月第一版 2003 年 10 月北京第一次印刷
印 数	0001—5000 册
定 价	12.00 元 (另附有磁带 2 盘, 14.00 元)

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Introduction

Spoken English is often very difficult for students to understand. The reason for this is that spoken English is different from written English in two important areas.

One difference is that spoken English is pronounced differently than it is written. These pronunciation changes include the ***wanna** pronunciation for the written form “want to,” the ***gonna** pronunciation for the written form “going to + verb,” and the ***hafta** pronunciation for the written form “have to.” There are twenty to thirty common pronunciation changes that Americans use in spoken English.

The other important difference between spoken and written English is in the vocabulary used. There are vocabulary items and sounds that English speakers use in speech, but not in writing. Some examples include: the use of “**uh**” and “**um**” to give the speaker time to think, the use of “**you know**” to establish understanding between the speaker and the listener, and the use of “**uh huh**” to show the speaker we’re listening to what he’s saying. The eighteen most common vocabulary items of this type are included in **Whattaya Hear?**.

By learning these two important areas of spoken English — pronunciation changes and special vocabulary — students will find it much easier to understand native English speakers.

But why learn about spoken English by using American jokes?

Many people study English, go on to live in the United States for several years, and still don’t understand American jokes. The humor in jokes is different from culture to culture. The things an American finds funny have to do with his values, fears, dreams,

etc. If a student can learn to understand another culture's humor (values, fears, dreams), he will have a better chance of understanding the people of that culture.

Whattaya Hear? is structured around one character, Tina, teaching another character, Mikio, about American humor by telling and then explaining popular American jokes to him. Through their discussions of these jokes, students will learn the special vocabulary items used in spoken English (**Examples: uh huh, you know, uh, um, etc.**), and will be able to practice conversation, and improve their listening ability. As the humor is explained point by point in the section entitled "**Why Is This Joke Funny?**," students will not only learn to understand the joke, but they will be given additional cultural information as well.

To help students learn where, how, and when this special vocabulary is used in spoken English, a brief definition will appear next to each special vocabulary item for the first eight units of the book.

Whattaya Hear? is a listening/conversation book that comes with audio tapes.

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UNIT 1

“Uh huh”

Vocabulary You Will Need

Work with a partner. Listen to the tape. Find the sentences in the following unit where each vocabulary word and expression are used. Discuss these sentences with your partner.

1. **counterpart** — the same, equal
2. **joke** — a short, funny story (A **joke** can be anything said or done in order to make someone laugh.)
3. **humor** — the quality that makes something seem funny
4. **to struggle** — to do something with great difficulty
5. **to tug** — to pull

EXPRESSIONS

6. **WHY DON'T I** — I want to (This expression is used to make a suggestion. **Example:** **Why don't I** call you next week. — I want to call you next week.)
7. **TO GET IT** — to understand (**Example:** Do you **get it**?)
8. **ALL TIRED OUT** — exhausted (**Example:** He was **all tired out** after the long trip.)
9. **TO GIVE UP** — to stop trying to do something (**Example:** I know it's difficult, but don't **give up**.)
10. **PUNCH LINE** — The punch line of a joke is usually the very last line. It's the part of the joke that makes us laugh.

SPECIAL VOCABULARY #1: "Uh huh"

In spoken English, we often use "uh huh" during a conversation to **show the speaker we're listening to what he's saying**. It's a way to keep the speaker talking. (**NOTE:** "Uh huh" can be the informal counterpart of "yes." It can also be pronounced "um hmm." When it is pronounced "um hmm," the mouth is kept closed.)

Listen to the following conversation and joke.

Tina: I heard a joke the other day . . .

Mikio: Uh huh (**I'm listening*).

Tina: and I thought you might like it.

Mikio: Well, I would. But I rarely understand American humor.

Tina: Uh huh (**I'm listening*). Well, why don't I tell you the joke, and then if you don't get it, I'll explain it.

Mikio: Okay.

Tina: Okay. Here's the joke.

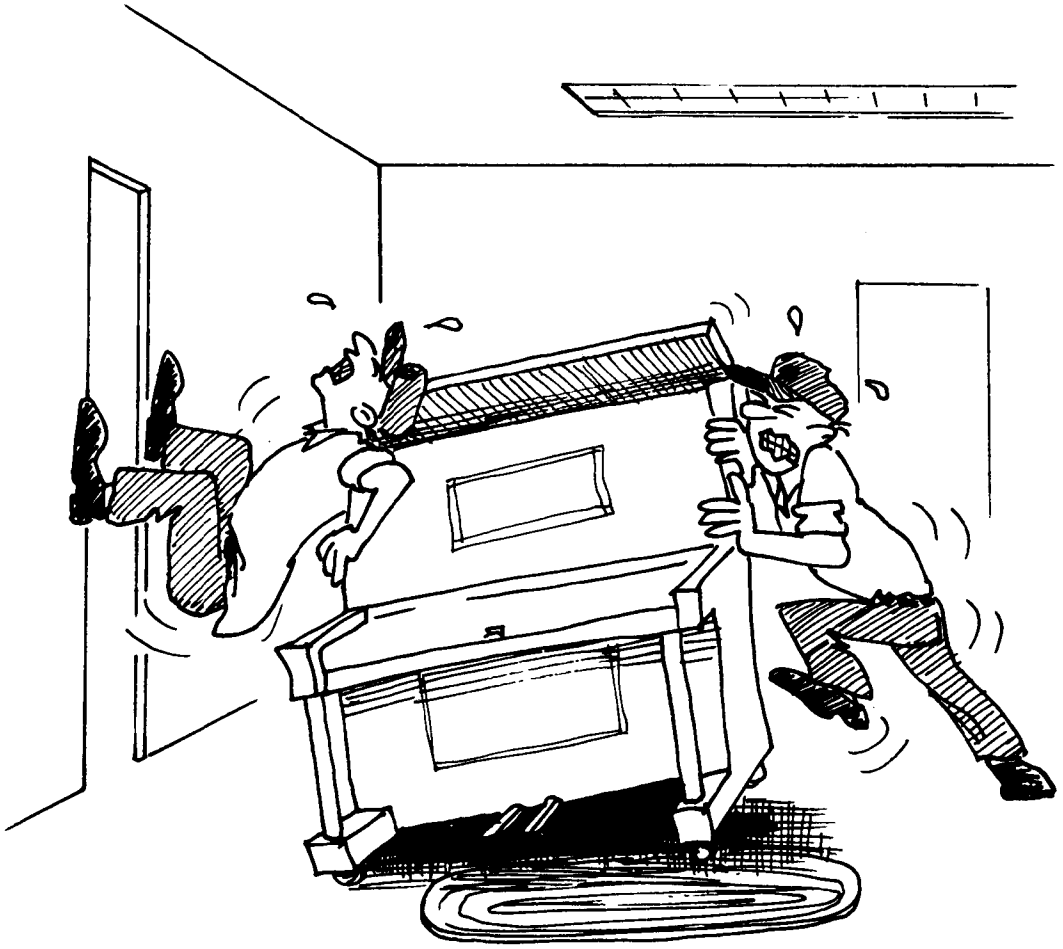
Movers

Two moving men were struggling for hours with a huge piano in a doorway. They pushed and tugged. Finally, they were all tired out, but it wouldn't move.

"Let's give up," said the first man. "We're just never going to get it in."

"Get it *in*?" said the second man. "And all this time I thought we were trying to get it *out*!"

*For the first eight units of the book, the special vocabulary items will be followed by their definitions.



Work with a partner. Listen to the conversation again and repeat. Then practice the conversation and joke with your partner. Can you think of a similar joke from your own culture?

Why Is This Joke Funny?

Work with a partner. Listen to the tape. Then discuss the following.

1. The funniest jokes are often based on experiences we have all had. Since everyone understands how difficult it is to move something heavy, this is a joke that almost anyone can find funny.
2. Many jokes are based on a misunderstanding between two or more people. In this joke, the movers misunderstand their goal—one thinks they are moving the piano **into** the house, and the other thinks they are moving the piano **out** of the house.

3. Jokes contain a story and a punch line, which is usually the very last sentence. We listen to the story and wait for the funny part—the punch line. In this joke, the punch line is, “**And all this time I thought we were trying to get it out!**” This line tells us that the movers misunderstood their goal.

More Practice

Work with a partner. Practice the following conversations.

A: We have many jokes about movers.

B: Uh huh (*I'm listening*).

A: Did you think this joke was funny?

B: Um hmm (*Yes*), I did.

A: The next joke I'm going to tell you is even funnier. It's about a doctor.

B: Uh huh (*I'm listening*).

A: There are many professions that Americans like to joke about. They love to laugh at themselves.

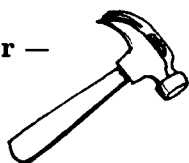
UNIT 2

“Unh unh”

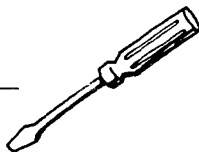
Vocabulary You Will Need

Work with a partner. Listen to the tape. Find the sentences in the following unit where each vocabulary word and expression are used. Discuss these sentences with your partner.

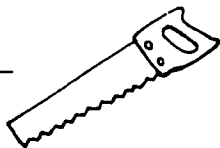
1. hammer —



2. screwdriver —



3. saw —



EXPRESSIONS

4. **TO BE IN PRACTICE/TO HAVE A PRACTICE** — This means “to be in business”/“to have a business,” **but usually refers only to law and medicine businesses.** (Example: That doctor has **been in practice** for over forty years. — That doctor has been in business for over forty years. Or, The young attorney **has a small practice.** — The young attorney has a small business.)
5. **TO RUSH OVER** — to come quickly (Example: He **rushed over** when he heard the news.)
6. **FOR HEAVEN’S SAKE** — This is an exclamation which is used to express anger and frustration (loss of patience). We often begin or end a sentence with it. (Example: **For heaven’s sake**, don’t give up now.)

SPECIAL VOCABULARY #2: "Unh unh"

In spoken English, "unh unh" means "no." It can also be pronounced "mm mm." When it is pronounced "mm mm," the mouth is kept closed.

Listen to the following conversation and joke.

Tina: Have you heard any more jokes since the last time we spoke?

Mikio: Unh unh (No).

Tina: Are you ready for another one?

Mikio: Uh huh (Yes). Sure.

Tina: This one's a "doctor joke." Do you have many jokes about doctors in your culture?

Mikio: Mm mm (No). Not really.

Tina: Okay.

Country Doctor

Mrs. Crawford was very sick. Her husband sent for the only doctor available, a country doctor who had been in practice for over fifty years. The country doctor rushed over, ran into the room where Mrs. Crawford was sleeping, and immediately came out asking for a hammer.

"A hammer?" Mr. Crawford said, but he was worried about his wife, so he got the doctor a hammer.

Ten minutes later, the doctor came out again and asked for a screwdriver.



"A screwdriver?" Mr. Crawford said. But again, he was worried, so he got the doctor a screwdriver.

A few minutes later, the doctor came rushing out asking for a saw.

By this time, Crawford was really getting worried. "For heaven's sake," he said to the doctor. "First you wanted a hammer! Then you wanted a screwdriver! And now a saw. What are you doing to my wife?"

"Nothing yet," said the doctor. "I can't get my instrument bag open."

Work with a partner. Listen to the conversation again and repeat. Then practice the conversation and joke with your partner. Can you think of a similar joke from your own culture?

Why Is This Joke Funny?

Work with a partner. Listen to the tape. Then discuss the following.

1. Many jokes take a serious topic like illness or death and create a tense situation or story about it. The goal of the joke is to try to get the listener to release the tension by laughing.

In this joke, the fact that Mrs. Crawford is sick creates tension in the listener. We've all been sick and it's an experience we can understand.

2. A joke often begins with a serious topic and then gets us involved in a ridiculous situation. Americans respect doctors and think of them as intelligent people. From the beginning of the joke, however, we know something is wrong with this doctor because he asks for a hammer. This shifts our attention away from the seriousness of Mrs. Crawford's illness, and as the doctor asks for more and more things, we become involved in trying to figure out what he's doing.

3. The punch line is "**I can't get my instrument bag open.**" This line tells us that the doctor was using the hammer, screwdriver, and saw to open his bag. The joke had led us to imagine that he was using these things on Mrs. Crawford. The release of tension comes from our relief that he wasn't.

4. Many jokes are based on the number **three**. **Three** situations occur, or **three** questions are asked. In this joke, the doctor asks for **three** things—a hammer, a screwdriver, and a saw.

More Practice

Work with a partner. Practice the following conversations.

A: Did you get this joke?

B: Uh huh (*Yes*).

A: Do you think you can tell an American joke yet?

B: Unh unh (*No*), not yet. But soon.

A: Do you know any jokes about married life?

B: Mm mm (*No*). But I hope you do.

A: As a matter of fact, I do. The next joke I'm going to tell you is a very popular joke about husbands and wives.

B: Uh huh (*I'm listening*).

A: I think you'll like it.

TEST #1

YES OR NO?

In Unit 1, we learned **two ways of saying "yes"**: **uh huh** and **um hmm**. In Unit 2, we learned **two ways of saying "no"**: **unh unh** and **mm mm**. Listen to the following conversations and decide whether the Special Vocabulary you hear means "yes" or "no."

	YES	NO
A: Did you get the joke?		
B: Uh huh.	_____	_____
A: Do you like jokes about marriage?		
B: Um hmm.	_____	_____
A: Do you know any American jokes?		
B: Unh unh.	_____	_____
A: Do you often tell jokes?		
B: Mm mm.	_____	_____
A: Are you often sick?		
B: Unh unh. Not really.	_____	_____
A: Are you ready for the next joke?		
B: Uh huh.	_____	_____