An Investigation of the Use of Linking by Chinese EFL Learners

Yanyan ZHANG
School of Foreign Languages and Literature, Wuhan University
lucyzhangyy@whu.edu.cn

Abstract
This paper aims to investigate the use of linking by Chinese EFL learners, with a focus on three major types of linking in English, namely, (1) C-V linking (consonant-vowel linking, e.g. a cup of tea), (2) V-V linking (vowel-vowel linking), including /r/ linking (e.g. there is), /w/ linking (e.g. two eggs), /j/ linking (e.g. three eggs), and (3) C-C linking (consonant-consonant linking, e.g. half finished). The study examined the recordings of 42 participants’ reading of 20 English sentences at two different times, one in their first semester and the other in their fourth semester in university. It was found that on the whole the learners had an infrequent use of linking, and they have not made extensive progress in two years. Among the three major types of linking investigated, the learners have mastered C-C linking relatively well, but their performance in the other two major types of linking was far from satisfactory, especially V-V linking. These results suggest that training in the use of linking in connected speech to our EFL learners needs to be put on the agenda along with other English suprasegmental features.

Keywords
linking, connected speech, suprasegmental features

1 Introduction
The teaching of English pronunciation and intonation has been receiving increasing attention in China. Its effect has been witnessed in the increased clarity and comprehensibility of our students’ oral English in recent years. However, Chinese teachers and students usually pay more attention to the learning of English segmentals, that is, the pronunciation of individual sounds. They spend much less time on English suprasegmental features, such as stress, rhythm, intonation and linking. In fact, suprasegmental features are seldom dealt with either in research or in teaching in the Chinese context.

Linking (also called liaison), a suprasegmental feature, is the process of joining the final sound of one word to the initial sound of the following word. It is a common phenomenon in colloquial, connected English speech. A good mastery of English linking is important for both listening and speaking. Failure to comprehend linking and linked words in connected speech may cause misunderstandings or even failed communication. On the other hand, inadequate use of linking in oral communication would make a speaker sound less fluent or natural. English linking is a very complicated phenomenon with various types, and the Chinese language has little use of linking between words. It therefore, has posed great learning difficulties for Chinese students.

The teaching of linking in China is both infrequent and inadequate. Linking is only sporadically introduced in English textbooks and the types are usually limited to C-V linking and unreleased stops. Moreover, research on the acquisition of linking by Chinese EFL learners is rather scarce. To address the lack, this papers aims to investigate the use of linking by Chinese EFL learners, hoping to shed some light on the teaching of this particular suprasegmental feature.

2 Literature review
Linking in English has been widely discussed by previous researchers (e.g. Roach, 2008; Wang, 2005a; Windsor, 1975). In his discussion on aspects of connected speech, Roach (2008) concludes that it is valuable to have practice on rhythm and linking. He holds that “an essential part of acquiring fluency in English is learning to produce connected speech without gaps between words, and this is the practical importance of linking” (Roach, 2008: 147). In this section, we shall take a close look at various types of linking and previous studies on the acquisition of linking.

2.1 Types of linking
There are three major types of linking in English, namely, (1) C-V linking (consonant-vowel linking, e.g. a cup of tea), (2) V-V linking (vowel-vowel linking), including /r/ linking (e.g. there is), /w/ linking (e.g. two eggs), /j/ linking (e.g. three eggs), and (3) C-C linking (consonant-consonant linking),...
such as lengthening (e.g. half finished), unreleased stops (e.g. art classes), /t/-/j/ (e.g. won’t you), and /d/-/j/ (e.g. could you). At least, eight specific types of linking have been identified in the literature. This paper will examine all of them. In the following is a more detailed description of each type.

1. C-V linking: joining the final consonant of a word with the initial vowel of the following word, as in “a cup of tea”.

2. /r/ linking: linking the final vowel of a word (such as /3/ /a/) with the initial vowel of the following word, and inserting a /r/ sound, as in “there is” and “the idea of”.

3. /w/ linking: linking the final vowel of a word (such as /3/ /3/ /3/) with the initial vowel of the next word, and adding a slight /w/ sound, as in “two eggs”.

4. /j/ linking: linking the final vowel of a word (such as /3/ /3/ /3/) with the initial vowel of the following word, and adding a slight /j/ sound, as in “three eggs”.

5. lengthening: blending the final consonant of a word with the same consonant occurring at the beginning of the next word by lengthening, as in “half finished”.

6. unreleased: when the final consonant of a word is a stop sound, and is followed by another consonant of the next word, the stop is unreleased or arrested, as in “art classes” and “best friend”.

7. /t/-/j/: joining the final /t/ of one word with the initial /j/ of the following word, and the joined sound is /t/j/, as in “won’t you”.

8. /d/-/j/: joining the final /d/ of one word with the initial /j/ of the following word, and the joined sound is /d3/ , as in “could you”.

2.2 Studies on the acquisition of linking

Whereas there have been plenty of discussions on English linking in various articles and books, the research on the use of linking by learners of English as a second/foreign language is much less, especially in the context of China. A search on the study of the acquisition of linking by Chinese EFL learners in the past 20 years has only yielded 2 relevant studies, one general discussion (Quan, 2009) and one empirical research (Sun, 2010).

Quan (2009) claimed that English linking poses learning difficulties for Chinese students because of the prosodic differences between English and Chinese. She said that there is seldom linking between different syllables in Chinese whereas linking occurs frequently in connected speech in English. She proposed a few methods to help learners improve the use of linking, such as contrastive exercises (between English and Chinese), using recorders or mp3, and imitating the speech of native speakers.

Sun (2010) investigated 786 university students’ acquisition of four types of English linking———C-V linking, V-V linking (including /w/ and /3/ linking), C-C linking, and /r/ linking———by adopting three instruments, marking out linking, dictation and reading. He took a quasi-experimental method by using a pre-test, experiment, and a post-test. The experiment lasted for 14 weeks, which aimed to improve students’ acquisition of linking by lecturing and practice. It was found that the students have improved a lot in their marking of linking, particularly in V-V linking and C-C linking. Their perception of linking in dictation has also improved across each type, but their production of linking has not improved much. The production percentages of C-V, C-C, and /t/-/r/ linking increased from around 65% to around 70%. The percentages of V-V linking have not changed much and remained below 5%. Sun (2010) concluded that Chinese university students’ performance of linking is still quite weak.

Though insightful, Sun’s study has several limitations. His classification of linking is quite vague. For instance, he didn’t make distinctions between different types of C-C linking. His paper does not provide detailed information on research method, so we don’t know how the data were collected and analyzed. His discussion on the reasons for the inadequate use of linking does not target on specific types. As different types of linking often pose different learning difficulties, the reasons for such differences may also vary.

3 Method

3.1 Research questions

Given the research gaps as discussed above, the current study attempts to analyze the use of linking by Chinese EFL learners. There are two research questions:

1. What is the frequency of each type of linking used by Chinese EFL learners?
2. Is there a significant increase in the use of linking after two years’ study in university?

3.2 Participants

The participants are 42 Chinese EFL learners.
studying at a university in China. They are English majors from two intact classes and their English is at about the intermediate level. They were taught by the researcher in two semesters in 2009 and 2011, respectively. When they first participated in the study, they had just entered university. Their age was between 17 to 19 years old. The second time they participated in the study, they were toward the end of their second year in university. There were 9 male students and 33 female students. The imbalanced number of students of different gender reflects the imbalanced number of male and female students of English majors.

3.3 Instrument

The instrument used in this study is a list of 20 sentences containing various types of English linking (see Appendix). All the sentences use colloquial English. The list was taken from a reading exercise on linking in a textbook widely used in Mainland China for teaching English pronunciation and intonation for English majors (Wang, 2005a).

All the types of linking mentioned above can be found in the 20 sentences. The potential number of each type is indicated in square brackets as follows: (1) C-V [29], (2) /r/ [2], (3) /w/ [4], (4) /j/ [10], (5) lengthening [3], (6) unreleased [8], (7) /t-j/ [1], (8) /d-j/ [1]. Each sentence contains at least one linking and at most six linking, and the average potential number of linking in each sentence is 2.9.

3.4 Data collection and analysis procedures

The study began in 2009 when the participants took the course “English Pronunciation and Intonation” given by the researcher in their first semester. To investigate our students’ acquisition of English segmental and suprasegmental features, the researcher required all the students to record their readings of English sounds, sentences and passages. The recording of the 20 English sentences was one of the tasks assigned to the participants at the beginning of the course. They recorded their reading outside of the classroom and saved and submitted their recordings to the researcher the following week after being given the assignment.

In the fourth semester, the same students attended another course taught by the researcher, “Linguistics”. At the end of the course, the students were required to make another recording of the same 20 sentences as an assignment.

When the two batches of recordings were examined, it was found that 4 students’ recordings were not valid (2 are incomprehensible and 2 are incomplete). All the 4 students are females. So the final participants whose recordings are clear and complete in both times involve 38 students, 9 males and 29 females. Altogether there are 76 recordings for analysis.

The researcher listened to each recording carefully (often repeatedly), identified every linking used and indicated its specific type. A colleague of the researcher, who also teaches English Pronunciation and Intonation course, analyzed 8 students’ recordings (about 20% of the total number of recordings) independently. The analyses provided by the researcher and her colleague are consistent with each other in over 90% cases.

The data were processed by using SPSS 13.0 in the following steps.

1. Descriptive statistics of the frequency of each type of linking in 2009 and 2011, respectively.
2. A paired-samples t-test of each and every type of linking used by the participants in 2009 and 2011.

4 Results

4.1 Descriptive statistics results

The frequencies of major types of linking used in 2009 and 2011 are summarized in Table 1 and Table 2, respectively. The tables have also provided the percentages (%) of occurrence (against the total number of potential occurrences) in the use of C-V, V-V, C-C, and all types of linking (SUM).

Table 1: Frequencies of Linking in 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linking</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C-V</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>17.05</td>
<td>58.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-V</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>8.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-C</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>9.29</td>
<td>71.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUM</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>42.00</td>
<td>27.71</td>
<td>47.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total = total number of potential occurrences

Table 2: Frequencies of Linking in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linking</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C-V</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>18.11</td>
<td>62.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-V</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>11.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-C</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>9.89</td>
<td>76.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUM</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>41.00</td>
<td>29.82</td>
<td>51.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tables above show that on the whole our learners do not display a high frequency in the use of linking (only about 50%). Among the three major categories of linking, C-C linking is used the most frequently (over 70%), followed by C-V linking (around 60%) in both times. V-V linking is seldom used by our students, with the percentages being only about 10%. The frequencies of linking have increased from 2009 to 2011.

The specific frequencies of each sub-type of linking used in 2009 and 2011 are presented in Table 3 and Table 4, respectively.
Table 3: Frequencies of Each Type of Linking in 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linking</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C-V</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>17.05</td>
<td>58.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/r/</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>17.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/w/</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/j/</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lengthening</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>88.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unreleased</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>64.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/t/-j/</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>60.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/d/-j/</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>86.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that each of the four subtypes of C-C linking has a higher percentage than any other type of linking. Lengthening and /d-j/ have a percentage over 85%, indicating that these two types of C-C linking have been mastered quite well by our participants. C-V linking is also used relatively frequently, with a percentage of 58.79%. However, the frequencies of V-V linking, including /r/, /w/, and /j/, are very low, especially /w/ linking, with a percentage almost being zero.

Table 4: Frequencies of Each Type of Linking in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linking</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C-V</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>18.11</td>
<td>62.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/r/</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>23.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/w/</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/j/</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>12.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lengthening</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>95.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unreleased</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>65.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/t/-j/</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>84.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/d/-j/</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>97.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows that the four subtypes of C-C linking also have the highest percentages in 2011. Lengthening and /d-j/ have achieved above 95%, indicating that these two subtypes of C-C linking have been well mastered. C-V linking is also used relatively frequently, with a percentage of 62.43%. However, the percentage of each type of V-V linking remains low, especially /w/ linking.

A comparison of Tables 3 and 4 indicates that every type of linking is used more frequently in 2011 than in 2009, suggesting that our students have made progress in the use of linking.

4.2 T-test results

To investigate if there is significant increase in the use of linking after two years of university study, a paired-samples t-test of each type of linking and the total number of linking was carried out. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Paired-samples t-test of linking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linking</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>C-V - C-V</td>
<td>-1.05</td>
<td>-1.70</td>
<td>37 .098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2</td>
<td>/r/ - /r/</td>
<td>-1.13</td>
<td>-1.15</td>
<td>37 .257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 3</td>
<td>/w/ - /w/</td>
<td>-1.05</td>
<td>-1.43</td>
<td>37 .160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 4</td>
<td>/j/ - /j/</td>
<td>-2.6</td>
<td>-2.14</td>
<td>37 .039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 5</td>
<td>Lengthening - Lengthening</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>-2.46</td>
<td>37 .019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 6</td>
<td>Unreleased - Unreleased</td>
<td>-2.09</td>
<td>-2.09</td>
<td>37 .044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 7</td>
<td>/t/-j/ - /t/-j/</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td>-3.39</td>
<td>37 .002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 8</td>
<td>/d/-j/ - /d/-j/</td>
<td>-.74</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>37 .160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 9</td>
<td>SUM - SUM</td>
<td>-2.11</td>
<td>-2.43</td>
<td>37 .020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 clearly demonstrates that on the whole, the participants have made significant progress in the use of linking (p=.020 < .05). More specifically, the learners have improved in the use of /j/ linking (p=.039 < .05), lengthening (p=.019 < .05), /t/-j/ linking (p=.044 < .05). In contrast, there is no significant increase in the use of C-V linking, /r/ linking, /w/ linking, and unreleased C-C linking.

5 Discussion

The frequencies of linking used by the participants vary greatly from type to type and the learners have made progress in the use of linking to different extent according to type. These results suggest that different types of linking may pose different learning difficulties, and there may be different reasons for this differential use of linking.

5.1 C-V linking

This type of linking was used in around 60% of its potential situations and there was no significant improvement in two years, suggesting that the learners may have had a basic command of C-V linking by the time they entered university and their production has not improved much. This result is consistent with previous research, which also reported a similar percentage (Sun, 2010). C-V linking occurs frequently in connected speech. The condition under which it takes place is relatively easy to remember, that is, when the preceding word
ends with a consonant and the following word begins with a vowel. It is often introduced in English textbooks in high schools in China. These might account for the above the average frequencies of use. However, there may be various consonants and vowels involved, so the potential situations of C-V linking usually vary greatly. Moreover, C-V linking often occurs frequently within a sentence, such as “Can I look at it?”, where there are three cases of consecutive linking, making it difficult for learners to produce in oral communication. These two reasons may explain the nearly 40% absence of its use in potential situations.

5.2 V-V linking
All the three types of V-V linking were seldom used by the participants. /R/ linking was used the most frequently among the three, though its percentages were also very low (around 20%), and there was no significant improvement despite the two years’ study on English. The inadequate use of /r/ linking indicates that our learners’ knowledge in this type of linking may be very limited. They may not have known the condition under which it occurs, that is, when the preceding word ends with certain vowels, such as /a:/ and /u:/, and the following word also begins with a vowel, then the /r/ sound will be inserted (as in “intrusive r”) or realized from spelling (as in “linking r”). This type of linking is sometimes introduced in the teaching, which may account for its higher frequency than the other two types of V-V linking.

The learners’ performance in /w/ linking was the poorest (near zero) and there was no significant improvement. Almost all the learners have failed in the use of /w/ linking. This type of linking occurs less frequently than the other types as it requires the preceding word to end with vowels such as /u:/ and /o:/, and the following word to begin with another vowel. It is seldom introduced in textbooks in high school or university in China. These may explain the extremely low frequency of production.

The learners’ performance in /j/ linking was also very poor. As with /w/ linking, its occurrences are less frequent and require the preceding word to end with certain vowels such as /i:/ and /u/. This type of linking is also seldom introduced in textbooks. Although the learners have made significant improvement in their frequency, the percentages were still extremely low, below 13%.

5.3 C-C linking
C-C linking was used the most frequently by the participants across each sub-type. The learners have a very good command of lengthening. Its frequency in 2009 was nearly 90% and in 2011 reached 95%. The high percentages and the significant improvement indicate that this type of linking does not pose learning difficulties for our students. This is one of the easiest types of linking, as the rule of usage----two adjacent identical consonants in two different words resulting in its lengthening----is easy to remember and apply.

“Unreleased stops” is the only type of C-C linking that has not improved significantly. Its percentages remained around 65%, the lowest among all types of C-C linking. It is used when the preceding word ends with a stop consonant and the following word begins with another stop, or fricative, or nasal. So the condition of its usage is quite complicated, as there are 6 oral stops, 9 fricatives and 3 nasals in English. This means that there are many situations where this type of linking may be used.

The percentage of /t/-/ linking has increased significantly from 60.53% in 2009 to 84.21% in 2011. This type of linking often occurs when the preceding word is “not”, contracted with auxiliary words, such as “won’t”, “weren’t”, “don’t”, “can’t” and so on, in interrogative sentences. Negative interrogative sentences tend to be avoided by Chinese EFL learners (Milton, 2001), which might explain in part why the percentage in 2009 was not high. Once the learners have mastered its use, as it is relatively simple (with the preceding consonant being /t/ and the following consonant being /j/), its frequency increased a great deal.

The /d/-/ linking was used the mostly frequently, with the percentages being 86.84% in 2009 and 97.37% in 2011. The condition under which this type of linking is used is easy to remember and apply, which may explain the nearly full mastery by our participants in 2011.

5.4 Teaching English linking
The discussion about the reasons for the differential use of different type of linking by the participants suggests that input and complexity of the type often influence Chinese EFL learners’ production of linking. Implicitly, our discussion also suggests that teaching may help learners improve their use of linking. Although input on linking could be obtained through large amount of listening, the amount of intake is hard to determine. Linking occurs in fast connected speech, so learners may not be able to hear linking clearly every time it occurs. Explicit teaching and training of linking are needed in the curriculum. Students need to be informed of the conditions and situations where each type of linking takes place. Increasing their awareness and creating chances of practice may help improve their production of linking.

Some scholars have pointed out that the learning and teaching objective of English
pronunciation and intonation in China should shift from being modeled on the traditional native English speakers to a more practical objective, especially in terms of suprasegmental features (e.g. Wang, 2005b). We also hold the view that our learners need not use linking as if they were native English speakers, but being aware of and being able to use various types of linking in connected speech can help them improve both their listening comprehension and the fluency of oral English. In this regard, teaching English linking is important and practical for EFL learners.

6 Conclusion
This study investigated Chinese EFL learners’ use of various types of linking. It was found that on the whole the learners had an inadequate production of linking and did not seem to have made extensive progress in two years of university study. Among the three major types of linking, the learners used C-C linking the most frequently, but their performance in V-V linking, including /r/, /w/ and /j/ linking, was extremely poor. These findings suggest that it is urgent and necessary to train our EFL learners in the use of various types of linking in connected speech.

The present study is only a preliminary study with several limitations. First, the number of participants is relatively small and all the students are Chinese EFL learners of English majors. This may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the instrument adopted consists of only 20 sentences. The recordings of the participants’ reading may not reflect the learners’ use of linking in real communication. Third, no native English speaker controls were investigated, so the percentages of use of linking were calculated against the potential occurrences of linking, not the occurrences used by fluent native speakers. Fourth, this paper only investigated the use of linking. An examination of perception of linking, such as in listening comprehension may also reveal how well our learners have acquired English linking.

These limitations suggest the need for further research with a more careful design and better analyses of the authentic use of linking by Chinese and other EFL learners.

References

Appendix: Materials for Recording
Please read the following twenty sentences as fluent and natural as possible. Record your reading and save it into a file. Thanks!

1. Take only a little at a time.
2. Come every once in a while.
3. He is the only actor I know.
4. He lives alone.
5. He lives a highly organized life.
6. Who brings it up?
7. She goes to art classes every other day.
8. Who can beat you at tennis?
9. Can I look at it?
10. He looked at it in the window.
11. Would you like to try it out?
12. I lose out to my old pal.
13. I’ll go out for a few weeks.
15. We’ll enjoy an evening together.
16. You have to stay in shape.
17. You don’t want to end up like this.
18. If only I were there.
19. My back’s out again.
20. Come on in.