

## The English Present Perfect in Authentic Use and Textbooks: A Corpus-driven Study

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### **Abstract**

One of the reasons why EFL learners have difficulties with the English present perfect tense is that little attention has been paid to the relationship between patterns and meanings of the tense (Yoshimura et al., 2014). To fill this gap, the present study takes a corpus-driven approach to the pattern-meaning interface of the present perfect, using British and American English corpora. It is found that the present perfect can express seven groups of meanings: 'accomplishment with relevance to the present', 'continuing from the past to the present', 'change of condition', 'experience', 'recency', 'discovery', and 'possession'. These meanings are found to be associated with distinctive co-occurrence patterns. The corpus-informed insights were then applied to an analysis of present perfect instances presented in textbooks used in Thailand's universities. It is found that the corresponding patterns and meanings can also be found in the sampled textbooks, but the textbooks tend to under-present a core meaning and highlight only a few uses of the present perfect. The study thereby offers a new perspective on the English present perfect and also provides empirical evidence for development of EFL textbooks and teaching materials.

**Keywords:** English present perfect, Pattern grammar, Corpus-driven approach, ESL/EFL textbooks, Corpus linguistics

## **Introduction**

The present study aims to investigate the use of present perfect (henceforth PP) in general corpora and PP samples presented in textbooks used at the tertiary level in Thailand. PP is considered “one of the most semantically complex verb forms” (Kearns, 2011: 182) since it can be used to convey several meanings (Comrie, 1975; Quirk et al., 1985; Eastwood, 1995; Greenbaum and Nelson, 2002; Kearns, 2011). This complex nature of PP may be the reason why it is likely to cause difficulties among second language learners (Karpava and Agouraki, 2014; Han and Hong, 2015; Thumvichit, 2016). It has been found that second language learners tend to convey the PP meanings in other tenses in language, e.g. the past and the present simple tenses. This might be because they fail to work on the form-meaning mapping of PP (Yoshimura et al., 2014), and most of the reference grammar and previous studies on PP themselves tend to treat forms and meanings separately (see e.g. Comrie, 1975; Quirk et al., 1985; Eastwood, 1995; Biber et al., 1999; Greenbaum and Nelson, 2002; Kearns, 2011).

Most of the previous studies on PP and language learners have centered around learner output. That is, they focus on how learners use PP (see e.g. Arakkitsakul, 2008; Payre-Ficout, Brissau, and Chevrot, 2009; Petchtae, 2011; Yoshimura et al., 2013; Patanasorn, 2013; Karpava and Agouraki, 2014; Han and Hong, 2015; Thumvichit, 2016). Few studies have concentrated on such input for learners as teaching materials although it has been observed that textbooks and teaching materials which contain inadequate descriptions could be the reason why second language learners encounter difficulties in mastering PP (Thumvichit, 2016). Among the few studies that have investigated PP in textbooks are Shortall (2007) and Fujimoto (2017), which found that textbooks tend to highlight forms of PP with an extensive presentation of time adverbials used in the PP construction, e.g. ‘already’, ‘just’, ‘ever’, ‘never’.

The present study therefore seeks to fill these gaps by addressing two important questions. The first one is oriented

towards a linguistic question focusing on the relationship between patterns and meanings of PP as observable from general corpora. The second issue the study seeks to explore is oriented towards applied linguistic interests, involving an analysis of the PP samples presented in textbooks used in universities in Thailand. This is in order to investigate whether the patterns and meanings of PP that can be found from general corpora correspond to those found in textbooks. To operationalize these aims, the research questions can be spelled out as follows:

1. What are meanings of PP that emerge from corpus data and what co-occurrence patterns are associated to each of them?
2. Based on the categories in research question 1, what are major uses of the PP, given their frequencies?
3. To what extent do the meanings, forms and distribution patterns found in general corpora correlate with those found in textbooks used by Thai universities?

The present paper employed a corpus-driven approach to analyzing the pattern-meaning relationship of PP. The following sections give details on PP and the theoretical framework, followed by the methodology used in the present study. Results are reported and discussed before a conclusion is given.

### **The English Present Perfect**

PP has received a great deal of attention in English linguistic studies and is considered “one of the most semantically complex verb forms” (Kearns, 2011: 182). This is because PP can be used to convey several meanings. In general, linguistic descriptions and grammar references, works on PP include Comrie (1975), Quirk et al. (1985), Eastwood (1995), Greenbaum and Nelson (2002) and Kearns (2011). These different accounts offer descriptions on PP meanings, which overlap and differ in some ways. They can be spelled out as follows:

- (1) ‘Continuing action/ event/ state from the past to the present’: This meaning indicates an action or event which occurred in the past and that action or event still continues

- to the present, e.g. “Sheila *has worked* in the library since December” (Kearns, 2011: 184; emphasis added)”. This meaning is stated in several studies and references, e.g. Comrie (1975), Quirk et al. (1985), Eastwood (1995), Greenbaum and Nelson (2002) and Kearns (2011).
- (2) ‘Result states’: This meaning indicates that an action or event finished in the past but its results have effects on or are related to the present, e.g. “Henry can’t dance the pas seul, he *has pulled* a tendon (Henry is now injured) (Kearns, 2011: 182; emphasis added)”. This meaning is noted in Comrie (1975) and Kearns (2011).
- (3) ‘Experiential states’: This meaning refers to an experience someone has had from the past up to the present, e.g. “Bill *has been* to America (on at least one occasion, Bill did in fact go to America)” (Comrie, 1975: 59; emphasis added). This meaning has only been mentioned explicitly in Comrie (1975).
- (4) ‘Repeated action/ event’: This meaning indicates an action or event which repeatedly occurs from the past to the present, e.g. “Gayle *has acted* in more than fifty films. (Eastwood, 1995:88; emphasis added)”. A few English grammar references, i.e. Comrie (1975), Eastwood (1995), and Greenbaum and Nelson (2002), state this meaning in their descriptions of PP.
- (5) ‘Recent action/ event’: This meaning makes reference to an action or event which recently occurred, e.g. “Bill *has just* (this minute) *arrived* (Comrie, 1975: 60; emphasis added)”. This meaning is raised only in Comrie (1975) and Kearns (2011).

Based on the semantic categorization above, it seems that the ‘continuing action, event, or state from the past to the present’ meaning is a core meaning of PP since it is stated in several studies. Other meanings, on the other hand, may be taken as relatively marginal. However, these descriptions of PP meanings tend to be based upon an intuitive observation. None of them

provide empirical evidence on the use of PP in communication. This in turn can be a limitation from a communicative perspective, which is often adopted in a pedagogical context. Because empirical evidence can add a quantitative dimension, e.g. frequency of each use, to the PP descriptions, it is useful for pedagogical applications in that it can point to the ways in which some uses may be highlighted to learners more than others (Leech, 1997).

Apart from meanings of PP, previous studies also look at a certain aspect of PP patterns, specifically at verbs and adverbials that occur in the PP construction. As an example, Biber et al. (1999) have found that the three most frequently used verbs in the PP construction are 'been', 'had', and 'got'. Verbs which designate "physical or communicative activities with consequences that can exist over an extended period of time", e.g. 'go', 'do', 'say', and 'make', are also found to be commonly used with PP (Biber et al., 1999: 465).

It has also been found that PP tends to co-occur with some adverbials in its context of occurrence. Most of these adverbials indicate the duration or the beginning point of time (Biber et al., 1999). The examples of such adverbials are 'since' and 'already' as in "We've had it *since last January*" and "The bigger nations, for their part, *have already developed* systems of takeover supervision" (Biber et al., 1999: 468; emphasis added). Other adverbials that have been shown to be used with PP are those which mark the present moment e.g. 'today', 'this month', and 'this year' (Quirk et al., 1985).

While these studies focus on the surface patterns in the occurrences of the PP construction, they do not relate their findings on forms to meanings of the tense. In fact, as illustrated above, the previous studies on PP deal with its patterns and meanings separately. Based upon the corpus linguistic emphasis on empirical evidence of the interface between patterns and meanings, the present study seeks to fill this gap by investigating this relationship in the PP construction. The theoretical framework on the relationship between patterns and meanings is explained below.

**Theoretical framework: The relationship between linguistic patterns and meanings**

The past decades have seen a large number of applications of corpora to develop new descriptions of English grammar, e.g. Gabrielatos (2019) and Charoensirisoonthorn (2017). Many corpus-based studies have found that there is a close relationship between patterns and meanings in English (Partington et al., 2013; Hunston and Francis, 2000; Römer, 2005, 2006, 2009). In corpus linguistics where lexis is prioritized (Mahlberg, 2007), Hunston and Francis (2000: 37) defined ‘pattern’ as follows:

The patterns of a word can be defined as all the words and structures which are regularly associated with the word and which contribute to its meaning. A pattern can be identified if a combination of words occurs relatively frequently, if it is dependent on a particular word choice, and if there is a clear meaning associated with it.

Given the definition above, it can be seen that forms and meanings are regarded as inseparable in the corpus linguistic approach to English grammar; patterns can be identified on the basis of recurrent forms of co-occurrence between words and structures, which are closely associated to particular meanings. Based on this principle, Hunston and Francis (2000: 29) demonstrate how “certain patterns ‘select’ words of particular meanings”. For example, the pattern *it + link verb + adjective + clause* selects only words relating to “modality, ability, importance, predictability, obviousness, value and appropriacy, rationality, truth” to be filled in the adjective slot e.g. “It is *interesting/likely/clear/important/true* that or It is *useful/sensible/possible* to” (Francis, 1995 as cited in Hunston and Francis, 2000: 29).

Based on this theoretical concept, it is hypothesized in the present study that the PP construction, i.e. HAVE + past participle verb, selects some particular groups of verbs in the construction and co-occurs with particular (groups of) lexical items in its close environment in its expression of different meanings. These

hypotheses form the basis of the analysis of PP in the present study.

### **Corpus linguistics and teaching materials**

Textbooks are one of the main teaching materials in language learning. According to Römer (2006), in order to improve teaching materials, studies focusing on the comparison between the language that is used in real life and the language that is used to teach learners are required. This is in order to explore the area that still causes learners a problem.

Römer (2006) illustrates her argument through an investigation into the English progressives taught in German EFL textbooks and that found in the British National Corpus (BNC). The findings show that there are differences between what is presented in textbooks and the ways in which English native speakers tend to use the progressives, as represented in general corpora. For example, the meaning of progressives concerning a repeated action, e.g. 'I remember that from when we were looking at houses down there', is found in the BNC, but no single instance is found in German EFL textbooks. Römer argued that the absence of the 'repeatedness' meaning of the present progressive might mislead learners that progressive forms and repeatedness do not go together.

Besides the English progressives, Römer (2004) also explored the use of modal auxiliaries in the same textbook series compared with the British National Corpus (BNC). The discrepancy between the textbooks and the corpus was also observed with regard to frequencies of the modal auxiliaries. For instance, it was found in the textbooks that the modal 'would' is significantly underused, while it is the second most frequent modal in the BNC. Mukundan and Khojasteh (2011) also found the discrepancy in the frequencies of modal auxiliaries between Malaysian English textbooks and the British National Corpus. For example, while it was found in the BNC that the modal 'could' is one of the most frequent modals, it is relatively rare in the Malaysian English textbooks.

It can be seen from the above previous studies that content and language samples used in textbooks are likely to differ from what tends to be used in authentic communication. This might be partly because the presentation of language in textbooks is based on the pedagogical grammar perspective, which emphasizes rules that are more learning-oriented and easy for learners to learn and understand.

However, pedagogic grammars have some disadvantages. According to Tognini-Bonelli (2001), pedagogic grammars often misrepresent linguistic facts. This often has an impact on learners when they applied rules to produce language, but the rules are not sufficient enough for them to have a good language production. Thus, authenticity of language in textbooks and teaching materials are important and should not be overlooked if we want to develop language teaching and teaching materials.

With respects to the present perfect tense, very few studies have been conducted on the analysis of the English present perfect in textbooks in comparison with general corpora. In addition, previous studies in this line (e.g. Shortall, 2007; Fujimoto, 2017) tend to focus on forms and adverbials used with the present perfect, but not on meanings and their relationship with patterns. Therefore, an investigation into correspondence between present perfect meanings and patterns in general corpora in this study will be compared with those in textbooks.

## **Methodology**

### **Corpus data and compilation**

Data used in this study are from two types of corpora: general corpora, i.e. corpora which contain “texts from different genres and domains of use including spoken and written, private and public” (Kennedy, 1998: 20), and a corpus of PP samples in textbooks.

### **General corpora**

Two general corpora, i.e. British English 2006 (henceforth BE2006) and American English 2006 (henceforth AME2006), were



employed in the present study. The two corpora, compiled by Paul Baker at Lancaster University, are available online via the CQP system. BE2006 is a corpus of 500 contemporary British English written texts, which contains 1,147,097 tokens. Although its size can be considered relatively small when compared with general corpora often used, such as the British National Corpus (BNC), which contains approximately 100 million words, BE2006 was selected in this study as it has more recent samples of English texts, i.e. those published between 2005-2007, than the BNC, which contains texts published between 1960-1993. AME2006 is a comparable American English corpus of BE2006. It is an electronic collection of 500 American English written texts containing 1,175,965 tokens in total. Hence, results from general corpora in the present study are based on approximately 2,000,000-token database of two major varieties of English.

The choice of both British English and American English corpora was made because it is related to a comparison with English textbooks. Most of the English language textbooks in Thailand are from UK and USA publishers, e.g. Cambridge University Press, Pearson ELT, Oxford University Press, and McGraw-Hill Education. Thus, in order to compare the use of PP in authentic English and that in English textbooks used in Thailand, both BE2006 and AME2006 were opted.

A limitation as a result of our choice of data has to be remarked on. That is, no distinction in the use of PP in spoken and written registers cannot be made in this study. This is because the presentation of grammar in textbooks often aims to develop integrated skills, including speaking and writing in English. At the same time, the corpora BE2006 and AME2006 contain only samples from written texts, which also comprise fictional dialogues. Though not being authentic, fictional dialogue is seen as more or less portraying natural language conversation (Oostdijk, 1990) and actually even encouraged in English language teaching (Jones and Oakey, 2019). Therefore, the fictional dialogue data in the two corpora were also included in the study.

### **English textbook corpus**

Because one of the aims of the present study is to examine to what extent PP in textbooks used in Thailand corresponds with real-life usage, a corpus of PP samples in textbooks (henceforth TB) was compiled. English language textbooks from the foundation English courses in the top ten universities according to 2017 QS Asia University Rankings of Thailand were collected. Textbooks used in the foundation English course were selected because the course is normally required for all first-year students in universities in Thailand. The sampled textbooks analyzed in the present paper cover the same level, i.e. the intermediate level. They are therefore representative and comparable in terms of their target learners. A list of the sampled textbooks in this study is provided in Appendix A.

The present perfect samples in the ten sampled textbooks were collected and extracted from the chapters with PP as a focus. These chapters from the ten textbooks contain approximately 70,000 tokens and yield 1,360 present perfect instances. All of these instances were extracted from the PP lessons, including examples of uses, dialogues, reading texts, exercises, and transcriptions of the video or audio files. All of them were converted to plain text (.txt file) for the compilation of an electronic corpus of the present perfect samples in textbooks.

### **Data analysis**

Data from general corpora and from textbooks were analysed from a corpus-driven perspective, i.e. an approach that is used “to derive linguistic categories systematically from the recurrent patterns and the frequency distributions that emerge from language in context” (Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 87). Using the corpus-driven approach, priority is given to data; Analysis of data can lead to a new generalization as new linguistic categories may emerge from the data. Examples of corpus-driven studies include Feng et al. (2018), Granger and Paquot (2015), Biber (2009), Hunston and Francis (2000). To illustrate, Tognini-Bonelli (2001) found that apart from negative sentences, interrogative sentences,

and conditional sentences, 'any' can also be used in the 'semi-negative sentences' and 'lexicalised negative sentences' structures.

The present study adopted this inductive approach to investigate PP in both the general and textbook corpora. Meanings of PP were interpreted on the basis of textual patterns found in the corpora under study. Identification of the meanings might differ from or overlap with the existing descriptions outlined in Section 2, but they all can be explained on the basis of textual patterns in which each case of PP occurs.

### **Analysis of PP in BE2006 and AME2006**

The first step in pattern-meaning analysis was extracting the PP concordance lines from BE2006 and AME2006. In order to examine the PP construction in the two corpora, query expressions of PP were set. These include both non-contracted and contracted forms of PP:

1. have + past participle verb
2. has + past participle verb
3. 've + past participle verb
4. 's + past participle verb

Table 1 below shows the query expressions used to search for the PP construction. We excluded instances of the present perfect construction with modal verbs, e.g. *may have been* and *should have been*, because modal verbs have impacts on meanings and uses of the expressions. With the above query expressions, a total of 5,390 and 4,672 concordance lines were derived in BE2006 and AME2006, respectively. These concordances were then thinned to 680 concordance lines in each general corpus, altogether making up 1,360 concordance lines in total. This is so that the number of concordance lines to be studied in the two general corpora matches that of PP samples found in TB. Consequently, after all data were filtered and thinned, each concordance line was studied. Those which express a similar group of PP meaning were put together in a notional group. The concordance lines in each group were then examined in terms of the verbs in the PP construction and lexical items that co-occur

with the tense. This is in order to examine formal patterns that contribute to different meanings or uses of PP in each group and to find out if the concordance lines in each functional group share any common features.

As meaning in language can be fuzzy, apart from the researcher, co-raters who are native speakers of English of British and American English were asked to identify meanings of each concordance line. This is to enhance the degree of reliability in our interpretation of meanings associated with each case of PP. Inter-rater reliability in the present study was calculated by means of percentage agreement. The percentage agreement in the present study reaches 86.09% for BE2006 and AME2006, higher than the acceptable rate of 75%, as noted in Mackey & Gass (2016).

### **Analysis of PP in TB**

A corpus of PP samples in textbooks was analyzed in comparison with those in the general corpora. The 1,360 instances of PP in TB were generated through AntConc (Anthony, 2014). These include both non-contracted and contracted forms:

1. have + past participle verb
2. has + past participle verb
3. 've + past participle verb
4. 's + past participle verb

Table 1: Query expressions for searching the PP construction in general corpora

Forms	Query Expressions
have + past participle verb	have <<2>> *_VVN
	have <<2>> *_VBN
has + past participle verb	has <<2>> *_VVN
	has <<2>> *_VBN
've + past participle verb	've <<2>> *_VVN
	've <<2>> *_VBN
's + past participle verb	's_VHZ <<2>> *_VVN
	's_VHZ <<2>> *_VBN

Note: <<2>> represents a query for searching two items within a specified range of another

\*\_VVN represents a query for searching the past participle form of lexical verbs

\*\_VBN represents a query for searching the past participle form of the verb BE: been

's\_VHZ represents a query for searching the shorten form of the verb HAVE

(Hoffmann et al., 2008)

Similar to the analysis of general corpora, the concordance lines with modal verbs found in TB were excluded. After all data from TB were filtered, similar steps were taken in analysis of PP samples in TB, including the use of co-raters, in which case the percentage agreement reaches 84.72%. Results from TB were then compared to those from general corpora to see if patterns and meanings of PP in the general corpora and in textbooks correspond with one another.

It should also be noted that in order to find out whether differences between general corpora and PP samples in textbooks are significant, the chi-square goodness-of-fit test was also conducted in the present study. The significance level ( $\alpha$ ) in the present study is at  $p \leq 0.05$ .

## **Results and Discussion**

Results from the study are presented and discussed here in two sub-sections. Section (A) describes meanings and patterns of PP found in the qualitative concordance analysis of PP samples from general and textbook corpora. Section (B) presents and compares frequencies of PP meanings in general and textbook corpora.

### **(A) Meanings and patterns of PP in general corpora and textbooks**

This sub-section aims to answer the first research question stated earlier: What are meanings of PP that emerge from corpus data and what co-occurrence patterns are associated to each of them? On the basis of textual patterns found in the corpora under study, seven groups of PP meanings are found. These include:

- 1) Accomplishment with relevance to the present
- 2) Continuing from past to the present
- 3) Change of condition
- 4) Experience
- 5) Recency
- 6) Discovery
- 7) Possession

Details on each category of PP meanings including their verb types and patterns are explained in 6.1.1 below.

### **Accomplishment with relevance to the present**

This group of meaning indicates an action or event which has already finished in the past but has some kind of relevance to the present. This meaning can be realized formally through the use of an accomplishment verb – a semantic type of verbs classified as telic, durative, and dynamic – in the PP construction. This means that the verb has a finishing point, occupies time, and is not stative (Vendler, 1967). When an accomplishment verb is used in the PP construction, it can indicate an action or event which has already finished or completed, but the PP is surrounded by the propositions expressed in the present tense, indicating its relevance to the time of communication. The pattern of ‘accomplishment with relevance to the present’ is therefore summarized as follows.

HAVE + Past participle <b>accomplishment verb</b> + <i>the present tense</i>
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Examples (1) – (3) demonstrate the pattern ‘accomplishment with relevance to the present’ in the corpora under study.

- (1) At a national level over 500 young people **have been elected** to the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP). Run by young people for young people, UKYP *provides* opportunities for 11-18 year olds to use their energy and passion to bring about social change. (BE2006, H03; emphasis added)

- (2) Someone **has come** for her - someone *is* here!  
(AME2006, K14; emphasis added)
- (3) The children **have made** loads of biscuits. *Do you want*  
to take some home with you? (TB; emphasis added)

Example (1) shows that the action of ‘electing’ was already completed in the past because of an accomplishment verb ‘elected’. However, the verb is embedded the PP construction to show that the action of ‘electing’ is relevant to the current point of discussion, which is reflected by the surrounding contextual information conveyed in the present tense.

Example (2) presents a clear manifestation of relevance of the past action to the present time. That is, the accomplishment verb ‘come’ is embedded in the PP construction, co-occurring with the present tense “someone *is* here” showing that the past and the present time are linked together.

Example (3) shows the PP sample from TB with a similar semantic type of verb, i.e. an accomplishment verb ‘made’, and similar co-occurrence patterns, i.e. the present tense.

### **Continuing from past to the present**

The meaning group ‘continuing from past to the present’ is used to talk about an action or event which occurred in the past and that action or event still continues to the present. This group of meaning is found to occur with particular groups of verbs, i.e. state and activity verbs, according to Vendler’s (1967) verb categorization. These two types of verbs occupy time and have no finishing point; thus, they can be used to convey the meaning of ‘continuing from past to the present’ because both types of verbs can indicate an action or event which has not yet completed. Besides the verb types, the meaning ‘continuing from past to the present’ is also sometimes found to co-occur with time expressions indicating frequency and duration, such as ‘always’, ‘for’ and ‘since’. Thus, the pattern for ‘continuing from past to the present’ is summarized as follows:

HAVE + **Past participle state/activity verb** + [*Time adverbial e.g. always/since/for*]

Examples (4) – (6) illustrate this meaning.

- (4) The Sun **has** *always* **been** a great supporter of our troops and I would ask that you, the readers, continue with that support for all our troops. (BE2006, B06; emphasis added)
- (5) Now on FatCat Records with Animal Collective and equally atmospheric compatriot Sigur Rs, the band **has persisted** *for almost a decade*. (AME2006, F15; emphasis added)
- (6) Donald Roessler **has lived** on his farm *for most of his life*. (TB; emphasis added)

The three examples above show that the PP constructions with the ‘continuing from past to the present’ meaning select verbs which are durative, i.e. ‘been’, ‘persisted’, and ‘lived’. These constructions also co-occur with time adverbials indicating duration.

It should also be noted that the PP meaning concerning a repeated action, noted in Comrie (1975), Eastwood (1995), and Greenbaum and Nelson (2002), is included in this group of meaning since it indicates an action or event which repeatedly occurs over and over and continues to the present time. More importantly, the co-occurrence patterns for the PP construction indicating a repeated action can be seen from activity and accomplishment verbs together with time adverbials indicating repetition, e.g. ‘again and again’ and ‘year after year’. This can be demonstrated by Examples (7) – (8).

- (7) *Year after year*, pensioners **have protested** that they are treated almost like an invisible section of the population. (BE2006, B25; emphasis added)
- (8) She’s **asked** me the same exact question *every day this summer*. (AME2006, P21; emphasis added)



### Change of condition

This group of PP meaning indicates changes that occur in the past and have an impact on the present time. This group of meaning can be realized through a specific group of verb, i.e. those which denote change of states or conditions, e.g. ‘change’, ‘adapt’, ‘transform’, ‘improve’, and ‘become’ (McArthur, 1981). It is also observed that the ‘change of condition’ meaning co-occurs with the present tense, thereby suggesting an impact of changes on the present. A specific pattern for this meaning group is shown below:

HAVE + Past participle verb denoting ‘change’ + *the present tense*

Examples (9) – (11) illustrate this meaning.

- (9) Since the 1990s, the community **has become** a more diverse group: Cardiff and Newport *are* now home to Somalis from the south, e.g. Mogadishu, as well as the north. (BE2006, G53; emphasis added)
- (10) Specifically, that entertainment values **have transformed** what we used to call news, and individuals with independent voices *are* routinely shut out of the public discourse. (AME2006, F21; emphasis added)
- (11) In Japan, people **have become** fanatics of flamenco and there *are* hundreds of dance schools around the country. (TB; emphasis added)

It should be emphasized here that ‘change of condition’ can be considered as a new group of meaning emerging from the corpus data in the present study. Because of the specificity of verb group, this group of meaning is separated from the others. (See Figure 1 for concordance lines illustrating the group ‘change of condition’ with a specific group of verb – ‘change’ verb).

though, that both Bush and his war	<b>have become</b> unpopular, even in communities where, as
war and a shadow enemy, the stakes	<b>have become</b> very high - for the press, for
I write is who I am, or	<b>have become</b> , yet this is a case in
2002 Budget, NHS expenditure plans	<b>have been changed</b> and appropriate adjustments made fo
2002 Budget, NHS expenditure plans	<b>have been changed</b> and appropriate adjustments made fo
Economic and social attitudes	<b>have been transformed.</b>
In the past two seasons that	<b>has changed</b> , although the change has come with
irrational thought : " My whole life	<b>has changed</b> " as he fixed his megawatt stare
Farming	<b>has changed</b> dramatically in the last 30 years , " Lit
their relationship with their children	<b>has changed</b> on completion of a massage intervention
, the rules for forming questions	<b>have changed</b> over the centuries.

Figure 1: Samples of concordance lines of ‘change of condition’ in general corpora

### Experience

This group expresses the meaning about an experience one had in the past. With regard to a semantic type of verbs, it is found that the ‘experience’ group selects verbs denoting sensory, such as ‘see’, ‘hear’, ‘experience’, ‘notice’, and ‘taste’ (McArthur, 1981). It also co-occurs with the present tense or an adverbial indicating the present time, e.g. ‘now’, which indicates that a past experience still matters at present. The pattern for ‘experience’ is therefore summarized as follows.

**HAVE + Past participle sensory verb + the present tense or present-time adverbials**

Examples (12) – (14) illustrate this group of meaning.

- (12) *Now* people **have seen** the magnitude of what happened between the Sunnis and the Shi'ites, we can only pray that nothing else like this or even the assassination of a prominent religious leader takes place because the next time Iraq will certainly blow up. (BE2006, A35; emphasis added)
- (13) “Over the past three years, we **have seen** the length of pregnancy extended by two to two-and-a-half weeks,” *says* Martha Delehanty, Verizon Wireless’s vice president of human resources. (AME2006, E30; emphasis added)

- (14) **Have** you **heard** the news? Louise has left her job!  
(TB; emphasis added)

### Recency

This group of meaning indicates an action or event which recently occurred. It is found that this functional group contains an accomplishment verb, and the construction frequently co-occurs with the adverbials, 'just' and 'recently'. This is summarized in the pattern below:

HAVE + [*just/recently*] + **Past participle accomplishment verb**

Examples (15) – (17) demonstrate this group of meaning.

- (15) I've *just* **listened** to [Sarah] crying down the phone.  
(BE2006, C09; emphasis added)
- (16) A couple of states over in Arizona for example, there's Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West, James Turrell's Roden Crater, Paolo Soleri's Arcosanti; and Jeff Bezos, the Amazon.com billionaire, **has recently bought** 239,000 acres of land north of Marfa where he intends to build a spaceport. (AME2006, J62; emphasis added)
- (17) They **have recently improved** this concert hall. (TB; emphasis added)

### Discovery

'Discovery' is a group of PP meaning used to indicate an act of discovering or finding something that already occurred, and the findings are relevant to the point under discussion. It can be formally realized by an accomplishment verb in a specific semantic field, i.e. verbs indicating finding, showing, and investigating (McArthur, 1981). This group of verb, according to McArthur (1981), is a general or abstract term related to discovery or exposure, e.g. 'find', 'show', 'expose', 'reveal', 'demonstrate', 'exhibit', 'indicate', 'observe', and 'examine'. Patterns of the group 'discovery' are thus summarized as follows.

HAVE + **Past participle finding-showing verb**

Examples (18) – (20) show the PP samples for the ‘discovery’ group from the corpora under study.

- (18) This pragmatic study **has demonstrated** a statistically significant difference between groups undertaking three different types of conservative hand treatments. (BE2006, J40; emphasis added)
- (19) But Bush’s advisers believe he **has discovered** a formula for dealing with the Continent that is working for him. (AME2006, A12; emphasis added)
- (20) But a joint study by the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) and Nasa published in the scientific journal Arctic this week **has found** that, far from thriving, the polar bear is at potentially irreversible risk from global warming. (TB; emphasis added)

It should be noted that apart from the ‘change of condition’ group, this group is also regarded as a new notional group emerging from the corpus data in the present study. This conceptual group is treated as a separate group because of its pattern, which contains the verb type with a specific semantic property, i.e. finding and showing.

### **Possession**

The PP construction can also be used to indicate an idiomatic meaning related to possession which indicates the state in which one has or owns something. This group of meaning occurs in the present perfect construction with the verb ‘got’ only. Thus, we can summarize the pattern for ‘possession’ as: HAVE + **got**. This is illustrated in Examples (21) – (23).

- (21) They’ve **got** a lunchtime special on; a pie, a pint and a woman, eighty pence. (BE2006, G08; emphasis added)
- (22) He’s **got** some trouble. (AME2006, A28; emphasis added)
- (23) It depends to a large extent on where they live and how much money they’ve **got**. (TB; emphasis added)

As may be seen, by adopting the corpus-driven approach, some of these seven meaning groups are found to overlap with the meanings identified in previous works outlined in Section 2 above. These include (1) ‘accomplishment with relevance to the present’, (2) ‘continuing from past to the present’, (3) ‘experience’, and (4) ‘recency’. The groups ‘accomplishment with relevance to the present’ and ‘recency’ may be seen as similar to what Comrie (1975) and Kearns (2011) addressed as ‘the perfect of result/current result states’ and ‘recent actions’, respectively. The group ‘continuing from past to the present’ overlaps with the meaning ‘continuing action/ event/ state from the past to the present’ as raised in Comrie (1975), Quirk et al. (1985), Eastwood (1995), Greenbaum and Nelson (2002), and Kearns (2011). The group ‘experience’ is similar to ‘experiential states’ mentioned in Comrie (1975).

At the same time, notional groups, which are different from the previous studies and reference grammar, emerge from the analysis in the present study. These include (1) ‘change of condition’, (2) ‘discovery’, and (3) ‘possession’. These notional groups of meanings are more specific than those in the literature as particular semantic groups of verbs have repeatedly been found to be associated with the PP constructions (see their frequencies in Section 6.2 below). This suggests that the PP construction, i.e. HAVE + past participle verb, has a tendency to select some particular groups of verbs in the construction. These semantically specific groups of PP meanings might be argued to be part of some more general group indicated above. However, we have distinguished them from the other groups because verbs in these meaning groups are closely related in their semantic properties while verbs in other groups are only loosely so in their general characteristics, i.e. telic/atelic, durative/non-durative, and stative/dynamic.

It is also found that the PP construction co-occurs with particular groups of lexical items in its close environment. For example, the group ‘continuing from past to the present’ co-occurs with adverbials indicating duration, e.g. ‘always’, ‘since’, and ‘for’.

The group 'recency' co-occurs with adverbials indicating recentness, for example, 'just' and 'recently'. Thus, it can be concluded that the meanings of the PP construction as found in the present study are determined by co-occurrence patterns.

### **(B) Distribution of meanings and patterns of PP in general corpora and textbooks**

In this sub-section, findings are reported and discussed in light of the second and third research questions, reproduced here for ease of reference:

- (2) Based on the meaning categories identified through the corpus data, what are major uses of the PP, given their frequencies?
- (3) To what extent do the meanings, forms and distribution patterns found in general corpora correlate with those found in textbooks used by Thai universities?

The quantitative analysis shows that the above seven notional groups of PP, though found in all the three given corpora as mentioned in 6.1, differ in their proportions of occurrences, as demonstrated through their frequencies and percentages presented in Table 2 and Figure 2 below. It should be noted here that for the purpose of the present study, we focus on the overall quantitative results from an examination of the general and textbook corpora even though we are aware that the issue of variety distinctions can be an important factor in the description of PP uses, as reflected by our choices of data from both British and American general corpora as well as textbook publishers. However, upon the quantitative analysis, we have found that there is an overall similar tendency in which PP is used in the two general corpora, i.e. BE2006 and AME2006. Only two of the seven notional groups, i.e. 'recency' and 'possession', were found to suggest significant differences between British and American English. These two groups of PP meanings, however, occur slightly, not only in both general corpora but also in individual textbook samples in TB. Their relatively low frequencies thereby cannot be taken to indicate a correlation between British and American textbook publishers and varieties. We therefore focus on

the general tendencies in which PP occurs in real use and in textbooks in this paper. A thorough discussion on distinction between PP uses in the two major English varieties and distributions of PP meanings in individual textbooks in our TB corpus can be found in Chareonkul (2018).

Table 2: Groups of meanings found in the corpora under study

Groups of meanings	General corpora		Textbooks		P-value
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	
1. Accomplishment with relevance to the present	617	45.37	332	24.41	<0.001
2. Continuing from past to the present	521	38.31	613	45.08	0.006
3. Change of condition	71	5.22	37	2.72	0.001
4. Experience	43	3.16	270	19.85	<0.001
5. Recency	33	2.43	49	3.06	0.077
6. Discovery	37	2.72	28	2.06	0.264
7. Idiomatic meaning related to 'possession'	38	2.79	31	2.28	0.399
Total	1360	100.00	1360	100.00	

Note: The significance level is at  $p \leq 0.05$

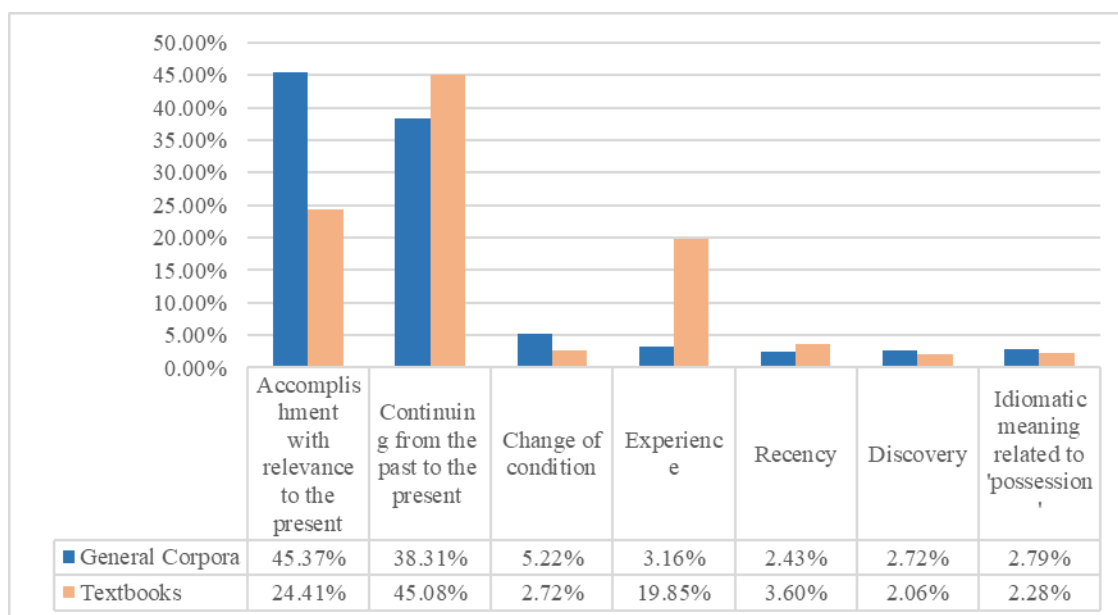


Figure 2: Distribution patterns of seven groups of PP meanings

Based on frequencies and percentages in general corpora, the seven groups of PP meanings can be divided into two categories, i.e. core and non-core meanings of PP. The core meanings include the groups ‘accomplishment with relevance to the present’ and ‘continuing from the past to the present’ with the relative frequencies of 45.37% and 38.31% of all the 1,360 concordance lines, respectively. These two groups are considered as core meanings of PP because their percentages are obviously higher than the other five meaning groups, whose percentages are less than 10% of BE2006 and AME2006 samples and thus can be considered relatively marginal uses of PP. Considering our research question 2, it can therefore be stated that, on the quantitative basis, major uses of PP are ‘accomplishment with relevance to the present’ and ‘continuing from the past to the present’, with the former being the most dominant usage.

In TB, the core meanings of the PP are found to correspond to those in the general corpora. These include the groups ‘continuing from the past to the present’ and ‘accomplishment with relevance to the present’. However, as shown in Table 2 and Figure 2, the rankings for these two groups of meaning swap; while the groups ‘accomplishment with relevance to the present’ and ‘continuing from the past to the present’ are ranked as first and second in the general corpora, respectively, TB features ‘continuing from the past to the present’ as the most frequent, followed by ‘accomplishment with relevance to the present’.

Moreover, the group ‘experience’, which has a very low frequency in the general corpora, is significantly highlighted in TB ( $p < 0.001$ ). Upon a close look, this meaning group is found in six out of the ten sampled textbooks. In addition, it is observed that the textbooks under study tend to present this group of meaning with distinctive patterns. That is, in TB, 159 out of 270 concordance lines illustrating the meaning ‘experience’ (58.89%) are all expressed through the interrogative phraseology, e.g. ‘Have you ever + V?’ and ‘Have you + V?’ (See Figure 3). The high frequency of these two patterns comes from dialogues extensively presented in TB. From a pedagogical point of view, the



predominance of these patterns can affect learners in that they can particularly prime learners for these particular patterns, as Hoey (2007: 8) explained:

We are primed by each encounter so that when we come to use the word (or syllable or combination of words) we characteristically replicate the contexts in which we had previously encountered it.

In this case, it may be speculated that Thai learners are likely to be especially primed for the ‘experience’ meaning with the patterns ‘Have you ever + V?’ and ‘Have you + V?’, when in fact, there are several other meanings and patterns of PP. Indeed, Thumvichit (2016) has found that the pattern ‘Have you ever + V?’ is the most frequently used PP pattern in the Thai Learner English Corpus (TLEC). The focus on learner input in this study thereby has findings that suggest correspondence with that on Thai learner output.

	<b>Have you heard</b> about SkyWatch?
	<b>Have you heard</b> any news stories about gorillas?
Monkeys CD has just come out.	<b>Have you heard</b> it?
at the photos. Which people	<b>have you heard</b> of?
have you heard of?	<b>Have you heard</b> of Charles Dickens?
you use it? What	<b>have you heard</b> on the grapevine?
A: Let me see ... er ... Pierre,	<b>have you met</b> Karimah, Karimah Salar? B: Yes, I think
Let me see ... er ... Pierre,	<b>have you met</b> Karimah, Karimah Salar?
Debra: Have you?	<b>Have you seen</b> any good movies lately?
any good movies lately?	<b>Have you seen</b> Funny Guy yet?

Figure 3: Sample concordance lines of ‘experience’ with an interrogative form in TB

Apart from the particularly high frequency of a specific group of PP meanings and patterns in TB, it has been found that some groups do not tend to receive much attention in textbooks. To demonstrate, it can be seen from Figure 2 that the relative frequency of the ‘accomplishment with relevance to the present’ group in TB, though being ranked second, is significantly lower

than that in the general corpora, wherein this meaning is most commonly found. This is also the case with the 'change of condition' group. Hence, it seems that textbooks used in Thai universities are not likely to serve to prime Thai EFL learners with such common uses of PP as 'accomplishment with relevance to the present'.

It can thus be summarized, in relations to our research question 3, that textbooks also present meanings of PP that are found in authentic use. However, these meanings tend to be presented in proportions different from the core and non-core patterns found in general corpora. This suggests that although textbooks capture all the meanings expressed in real-life communication, they tend to emphasize uses of PP that are more or less different from real use. Some meanings, and even forms, are highlighted, e.g. the 'experience' group with the form: 'Have you (ever) + perception/ cognition verb', whereas some core meaning groups in authentic use, e.g. 'accomplishment with relevance to the present' and 'change of condition' do not tend to be featured in textbooks.

Such over- and under-presentations of some groups of PP uses in the sampled textbooks point to a mismatch between textbooks and the real language use. According to Richards (2001: 13), this might be because textbooks tend to be specially written for pedagogical purposes, and that there are other criteria to consider for developing teaching materials apart from frequency of a particular grammatical features, i.e. simplicity and learnability:

Frequency may also compete with other criteria. The present continuous is not one of the most frequent verb forms in English, yet it is often introduced early in a language course because it is relatively easy to demonstrate and practice in a classroom context.

Although we agree that factors other than frequency are also important, we argue that frequency should not be discarded in favor of simplicity and learnability. As Römer (2004) has

pointed out, frequencies point to words and structures that are common in language use. Without frequency information, “it is difficult to decide what should be included in teaching materials” (Römer, 2004 as cited in Khojasteh and Shokrpour, 2014). In the case of PP, for example, since the group ‘accomplishment with relevance to the present’ is found to be the most common use of PP, it should be highlighted to learners.

Furthermore, although we argue that the core meanings of PP should receive more attention in textbooks, it does not mean that the non-core meanings can be neglected. The presentation of non-core meanings and patterns is also important. As Barlow (1996: 11) stated in his study on the patterns of reflexives, a knowledge of “less frequent patterns is important in moving the language learner from intermediate to more advanced levels of proficiency.” In the present study, it can be observed that textbooks do not ignore less frequent meanings and patterns because relatively marginal uses like ‘recency’, ‘discovery’, and ‘possession’ are also found in TB. Nevertheless, the ‘change of condition’ group is significantly rare. Therefore, it is suggested that textbook authors and developers pay attention to this group of meaning as it is an important part in moving learners towards a more advanced level.

That said, it must be emphasized that the present study does not suggest that textbooks should only comply with the exact frequency of patterns and meanings found from general corpora. We are aware that textbooks have pedagogical purposes while general corpora contain samples of language use in different contexts. We hope to show that insights from corpora are helpful in providing essential information for EFL practitioners, e.g. that there is correlation between meanings and patterns of PP and that some meaning groups are more frequently used than the others. These can benefit EFL practitioners in the development of textbooks and teaching materials.

## **Conclusion**

The present study adopts a corpus-driven approach to the English present perfect and the correlation between general and textbook corpora. Thanks to this, a novel description of seven uses of the present perfect has been proposed on the basis of the pattern-meaning relationship. The emphasis on the interconnectedness between meanings and patterns of PP is beneficial to linguistic descriptions, particularly in the pedagogical context, in that it can make the semantic or functional description of PP precise and accountable with concrete textual patterns. Also, the study has provided quantitative empirical evidence that can lead to differentiation between core and non-core uses of the present perfect, as well as to a comparison between real-life and taught grammar. These quantitative discrepancies in turn hint at a mismatch between authentic and taught grammar in some aspects. Hence, both qualitative and quantitative results of the study can be applied to EFL pedagogical practices. For instance, teachers and textbook developers can highlight some common uses of the present perfect and point out the relationship between patterns and meanings to learners. On a more general plane, the study illustrates a corpus linguistic contribution to an integration of English linguistic and applied linguistic research. Further studies can investigate other grammatical features in general corpora and textbooks or examine textbooks used for various levels of learners in order to compare how textbooks from different proficiency levels present the present perfect meanings and patterns.

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**Appendix A:** List of textbooks used in universities in Thailand

<b>Title</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Publishers</b>
New Language Leader Upper Intermediate	2015	David Cotton, David Falvey, and Simon Kent	Pearson Education Limited
Cambridge English Empower Intermediate	2015	Adrian Doff, Craig Thaine, Herbert Puchta, Jeff Stranks, and Peter Lewis-Jones	Cambridge University Press
Life Pre-Intermediate	2013	John Hughes, Helen Stephenson, and Paul Dummett	Cengage Learning
New Headway: Intermediate B1	2012	Liz and John Soars	Oxford University Press
Stretch 3	2014	Susan Stempleski	Oxford University Press
Cutting Edge Intermediate	2016	Surah Cunningham, Peter Moor, and Jonathan Bygrave	Pearson Education Limited
Four Corners 2	2011	Jack C. Richards, and David Bohlke	Cambridge University Press
Speak Now 2	2012	Jack C. Richards, and David Bohlke	Oxford University Press
Touchstone 3	2014	Michael McCarthy, Jeanne McCarten, and Helen Sandiford	Cambridge University Press
Viewpoint 1	2012	Michael McCarthy, Jeanne McCarten, and Helen Sandiford	Cambridge University Press