

# The Present Perfect in Written L2 English

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**Park, Hyeson. (2016). The Present Perfect in Written L2 English.** *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal*, 24(2), 1-23. This study examines the distribution of the present perfect (the PP) in written essays of Korean university students. A part of the Yonsei English Learner Corpus (Lee & Chung, 2012) was analyzed focusing on the interaction of L2 proficiency and text types with the use of the PP. The main findings are as follows: 1) The learners' use of the PP was not as frequent as NS usage, but was comparable to that of NS and NNS university students reported in previous studies. 2) The error patterns revealed that the confusion between the PP and the simple past was a common source of errors both for the high and low levels. Mismatches between temporal adverbials and the PP also led to ungrammatical sentences. 3) The association between the PP and lexical aspects was not evidenced in our data, contrary to the prediction of the Aspect Hypothesis. Considering the difficulty of grasping fluid pragmatic meanings of the PP and the time constraint in L2 classroom, a more realistic goal is suggested for the instruction of the PP.

**Key Words:** present perfect, learner errors, lexical aspects, temporal adverbials

## 1. Introduction

Tense and aspect are verbal categories that convey temporal relations of events or states. The former "relates the time of the situation referred to to some other time" (Comrie, 1976: 1-2) while the latter refers to "different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation" (Comrie, 1976: 3). In English, the combination of tense and aspect produces 12 various forms with complex meanings and functions (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999: 110). Of these tense-aspect combinations, this paper examines Korean learners' use of

the present perfect (the PP, henceforth), which has been noted as a hurdle for second language (L2) learners due to semantic and pragmatic complexities involved in its use.

The English PP, together with the simple past (the SP, henceforth) refers to events or states prior to the present time. The SP is referred to as a synthetic past and the PP an analytic past, the division of which is common in Germanic languages (Anderson, 1982, as cited in Fuchs, 2016). The analytic past, the PP, differs from the SP in that it presents “current relevance of a past situation” (Comrie, 1976: 52) along with the meaning of anteriority.

The additional feature, “current relevance”, makes the PP complex, both cognitively and linguistically, leading to a late emergence of the structure in L2 acquisition (Bardovi-Harlig, 1997; Housen, 2002), especially if the learner’s L1 does not have a corresponding structure. Korean is such a language, in which one and the same morpheme *-ess* functions as both the SP and the PP marker (Lee, 1993; Oh, 2003; Sohn, 1995). The absence of a distinct form for the PP, not surprisingly, has been identified as a source of difficulty that Korean learners face in learning the English tense-aspect system (Han & Hong, 2015; Kang, 2003; Park & Choe, 2013).

This paper examines the PP utilized by Korean learners in written essays in order to better understand the problems they experience with the PP, a topic that has been dealt with in quite a few studies. This study differs from the previous studies in methodology; while majority of these studies employed controlled experiments utilizing grammaticality judgment questionnaires, cloze tests, or picture descriptions, the current study analyzes learners’ written essays. The results of this study are expected to complement the findings of the experimental studies.

We starts the next section with a brief description of distinctive features of the English PP, followed by a review of previous research on L2 acquisition of the target structure. Section 4 introduces the corpus we analyzed and section 5 presents the results of the corpus analysis with relevant discussions.

## 2. The Present Perfect in English

The meaning and function of the English PP, composed of *have* + *the past participle*, is not easy to describe and have posed difficulties to grammarians (Brinton & Brinton, 2010). It is widely accepted that a sentence containing the PP conveys the same truth-conditional meaning as a sentence with the SP; the difference between the two lies in additional semantic or pragmatic meanings of the PP in contexts (Inoue, 1979; McCawley, 1971; Portner, 2003). Consider the two sentences in (1):

- (1) a. He went to school.  
 b. He has gone to school.

Sentence (1a) and (1b) share the same propositional meaning, i.e. “an event of his going to school”, which happened prior to the time of the utterance. Sentence (1b) diverges, however, from (1a) in that (1b) has an additional meaning; there is some type of connection between the past event of “his going to school” and the reference time indicated by the tense of the sentence, i.e. the present (Portner, 2003). In order to account for the ‘some type of connection’ between the past event and the reference time, features such as recentness, indefiniteness, or current relevance have been proposed in the literature (Wynne, 2000).

The difficulty of identifying the ‘some type of connection’ is well illustrated in the much cited example in (2).

- (2) a. Einstein has visited Princeton.  
 b. Princeton has been visited by Einstein.

(McCawley, 1971: 106)

According to Chomsky (1970, as cited in Elsness, 1997), sentence (2a) is felicitous only if Einstein is still alive, whereas sentence (2b) is felicitous regardless of Einstein’s condition since the sentence is about Princeton rather than Einstein. However, Inoue (1979) suggested that the acceptability of sentence (2a) may increase if uttered in appropriate contexts. For example,

when the discourse topic is “talking about Princeton University having memorable occasions”, it is grammatical to say “Einstein has visited Princeton.” Inoue proposed the ‘repeatability condition’ as the licensing condition of the PP; the PP may be used when a situation has the possibility of repetition.

The current relevance, current possibility or repeatability, as proposed in the literature, appear to be related with interlocutors’ knowledge of the context and the world. McCawley (1971), observing the complex interaction between pragmatic or contextual information and the PP, suggested that the speaker’s estimation of the hearer’s presupposition was a crucial factor in choosing between (3a) and (3b).

- (3) a. Have you been to the exhibition?  
 b. Did you go to the exhibition?

(McCawley, 1971: 107)

Sentence (3a), according to McCawley (1971), can be used if the speaker knows that the exhibition is still running and it is possible to go to the exhibition again; on the other hand, sentence (3b) is appropriate when the exhibition is closed. What makes the use of the PP more complicated is that even when the exhibition is not over, if the hearer is in a situation not being able to visit the exhibition, for example, due to some accident, the speaker may choose sentence (3b) instead of (3a). The inferential element or conventional implicature (Mittwoch, 2008) involved in the use of the PP might be one of the sources behind the target structure’s fluidity and subjectivity, resulting in flexible boundaries between the PP and the SP in some regional varieties of English, especially in American English (Elsness, 1997; Hundt & Smith, 2009; Werner, 2013; Yao & Collins, 2012).

Another property of the English PP is that it conveys a range of meanings. Comrie (1976) classified the PP into four subtypes: the perfect of result, persistent situation, recent past, and the experiential perfect. Kiparsky (2002), on the other hand, included the perfect of recent past (‘hot news’) under the resultative perfect, pointing out the difficulty of distinguishing these two, and added the perfect of stative present instead.

- (4) a. Fred has visited Paris several times. (experiential)  
 b. I have known him since 1960. (universal)  
 c. The police have probably caught the suspect by now.  
     (resultative)  
 d. I've got (=I have) something to tell you. (stative present)  
     (Kiparksy, 2002: 113)

Kiparksy (2002) noted the strong connection between the subtypes of the PP and the lexical aspects of the predicates; the experiential PP and the universal PP generally co-occur with atelic (stative and activity) verbs or telic iterative verbs, while the resultative PP co-occurs with telic (accomplishment & achievement) verbs. This connection is relevant in L2 acquisition in relation with the Aspect Hypothesis (Davydova, 2011). The first prediction of the Aspect Hypothesis is that in learner language, the past and the perfect marking will first appear with achievement and accomplishment verbs, spreading later to stative and activity verbs (Andersen & Shirai, 1996). We will examine whether this prediction of the Aspect Hypothesis is borne out in our data.

To summarize notable features of the PP relevant for this study, the PP has a fluid boundary with the SP, its interpretation is bound to contexts and the speaker's perspective, and it has a range of meanings.

### 3. The Present Perfect in L2 English

Notwithstanding the flexibility of the PP in NS English, the appropriate use of the PP is still considered important in L2 use since misuse of the PP in certain contexts may result in odd non-nativeness (Fuchs, 2016). This concern has led researchers to pay attention to the PP in L2 English and has produced a fair amount of research, which may be divided into two broad strains in terms of the methodology they adopt: corpus (either big or small)-based analyses and controlled experimental studies.

Bardovi-Harlig (1997) examined the production of the PP by 16 ESL learners of various L1 backgrounds in a longitudinal study of a ten-month period. A total of 502 tokens of the PP were found in the written and spoken L2 data, of

which 45 (9% of the total) were the present perfect progressive. The learners' overall performance exhibited high accuracy rates, with 86.9% for the PP and 88.9% for the progressive perfect. Overgeneralization errors (i.e. the use of the PP in contexts where other tenses are expected) and undergeneralization errors (i.e. the non-use of the PP in contexts where it is expected) mainly involved an interchange of the PP and the SP, which was attributed to the strong association of the SP and the PP in NS English as well as the early acquisition of the SP in L2 English. A problem with the interpretation and generalizability of the results is that a rather big variation was shown among the learners, with a single learner producing over 22% of the PP in the writing and 40% in the speech. This student's performance also contributed to the high accuracy rate of the entire data.

In a more recent study, Fuchs, Götz and Werner (2016) analyzed a set of corpus consisting of over 800,000 words to compare the frequency of the PP in the L2 English of German students with that in NS English. They found that the learners produced fewer PPs than the NS, and early learners (with more than 10 years of English instruction) had an advantage over late learners (with less than 10 years of instruction) in the use of the PP. The findings led the authors to conclude that the PP was one of the structures that emerged late in L2 grammar, and only the most advanced learners were able to use the PP with a frequency comparable to that of the NS. One shortcoming of this study is that it did not conduct an analysis of the error patterns, possibly constrained by the large corpus size.

The status of the PP in the developing grammars of Korean students has often been investigated by graduate students in the field of English education as part of their master's thesis project (Hong, 2012; Lim, 2005; Park, 2015; Shin, 2015, *inter alia*). All of these studies employed controlled experimental methods, producing more or less similar findings; the learners' knowledge of the PP lagged behind that of the SP, and the learners had difficulty in grasping the subtle differences between these two temporal markers.

Two recent studies of the PP published in peer reviewed journals also relied on experimental methods to collect data. Park and Choe (2013) examined 20 advanced Korean learners' knowledge of the PP in comparison with 10 native speaker controls. Thirty target sentences with the main verb in the non-finite

form were presented embedded in monologues or dialogues, and the participants were to choose between the SP and the PP that would better complete the targets. The result showed that the learners' preferences diverged from those of the NS in 11 items, in which the learners chose the SP as opposed to the PP preferred by the NS. The learners performed better in selecting the target PP when the sentences contained a temporal adverbial.

Hong and Han (2015), using multiple-choice (10 items) and translation tasks (10 items), examined the behavior of the PP in Korean college students' English. The learners' correct response rates showed that their knowledge of the PP (53.7%) fell behind that of the SP (63.8%) and the present progressive (83.4%). The authors ascribed the slow acquisition of the PP to L1 transfer; that is, the merger of the SP and the PP in the single morpheme *-ess* in L1 Korean might be the cause of the difficulty.

The controlled experimental studies have contributed to demonstrating the difficulty Korean learners have with the PP construction. However, as Park and Choe (2013) also pointed out, experiments with a limited number of items in restricted settings are insufficient to yield a comprehensive picture of learners' grasp of the PP construction. The purpose of the current study is to complement the previous studies by examining the distribution of the PP in the written production of Korean university students. The following are research questions that we set out to answer:

1. What is the overall distribution pattern of the PP in Korean university students' written English?
2. How do L2 proficiency and text types interact with the use of the PP?
3. What are the error patterns and source of errors the learners make?

## 4. Data

We constructed a small corpus out of the Yonsei English Learner Corpus (YELC) (Lee & Chung, 2012), which consists of over one million words compiled from essays (narrative and argumentative) contributed by around 3,000 college freshmen. The compilers of YELC graded the essays and grouped

them into nine levels based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). We selected 40 essays from each level and each text type taking into account the length and topic of the essays. We chose narrative essays with a minimum of 100 words and argumentative essays with 150 words. There were six different essay prompts for each text type, and we made sure to select a similar number of essays from each topic. We excluded the lowest level (A1) due to the short text length of each essay, and combined the two highest levels (C1 and C2) as the C2 level had only two essays. This left us with seven proficiency levels (A1+, A2, B1, B1+, B2, B2+, C). Through this process, we constructed a corpus consisting of 98,620 words (28,658 words for the narrative and 69,962 words for the argumentative).

The distribution of the PP in the data was examined in relation to two variables, the text type (narrative vs. argumentative) and English proficiency. The narrative writing differs from the argumentative writing in that the former concerns a chronological description of events closely related with an individual's situation or environment while the latter involves a presentation of one's opinions or perspectives on some important issues or topics (Ravid & Berman, 2010). We examined how this difference, together with the L2 level, interacted with the use of the PP by Korean university students.

We first tagged the entire data set using the C7 tagset of the CLAWS tagger<sup>1)</sup>, which allowed us to count all the tokens of finite verbs in the simple present and the SP including the passive and the progressive. Following Fuchs et al. (2016), we calculated the ratio of the PP to the finite verbs in the past context.

As a next step, the combination of *have/has* and the past participle was manually searched, and the appropriateness of their use was determined in view of the textual contexts.<sup>2)</sup> For those identified as appropriate uses, the lexical aspects of the verbs were analyzed as telic (accomplishment, achievement), stative or activity. The non-uses of the PP in the contexts where it was expected to occur were also identified as we read each of the essays. Taking into account the findings of previous research that the use of the PP is conditioned by contextual factors and the perspective of the speaker/writer, we

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1) The tagger is accessible through <http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/claws/trial.html>.

2) Unsuccessful attempts such as "have go" or "I have been written" were counted in the total tokens of the PP.



coded as errors only those cases whose unacceptability was clear enough due to mismatches with temporal adverbials, chronological order, or discourse-contextual information. Since NS judgments of the PP were shown to vary across individuals (Park and Choe, 2013), we consulted the Google and the Google Books Ngram Viewer when the acceptability of a target PP was in question.<sup>3)</sup> The behavioral pattern of the target PP in the corpus of the Google and the Ngram Viewer helped us determine its appropriateness. The adverb phrases that are generally associated with the PP were also searched in order to see whether their presence facilitated the use of the PP.

## 5. Results and Discussion

### 5.1. Overall Distribution of the Present Perfect

A total of 67 (2.34/1000 words<sup>4)</sup>) and 93 (1.33/1000 words) tokens of the PP were found in the narrative and argumentative essays, of which 47 (70.15%) and 80 (86%) were appropriate uses. As no clear pattern of development was evidenced in the use of the PP across the seven proficiency levels, probably due to a low token frequency in each group, we decided to combine the seven levels into two, low (A1+ to B1+) and high (B2 to C) levels. The number of the total uses and correct uses are summarized in Table 1.

The high level produced more tokens of the PP (1.75-2.78) than the low level (0.87-2.02), and within the same level, more tokens were found in the narrative than in the argumentative writing. To put the learners' PP use in context, we compared it with that of NS presented in Schlüter (2006). According to his review of seven corpus-based studies, NS's uses varied along different text types; the highest frequency in conversational data (5.9-6/1000

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3) The Google Books Ngram Viewer is a web-based search engine, which allows access to over 450 million word corpus compiled from millions of books. It is accessible through <https://books.google.com/ngrams>.

4) We normalized the frequency per 1000 words rather than 100 words in order to compare our results with those of Schlüter (2006) and Fuchs et al.(2016).

Table 1. The distribution of the PP in low and high groups

	Narrative			Argumentative		
	Total (per 1000)	Correct PP	Correct %	Total	Correct PP	Correct %
Low	33 (2.02)	19	61.9	30 (0.87)	24	74.8
High	34 (2.78)	28	86.1	63 (1.75)	56	88.6
Total	67 (2.34)	47	70.2	93 (1.33)	80	86

words), followed by expository texts (3.46-5.1) and fictional texts (0.7-3.6). A rather lower production of the PP was found in Fuchs et al. (2016). In argumentative/literary essays, US university students produced 0.34 tokens, their UK counterparts 2.41, and German university students 1.67. It appears then that student writers, either L1 or L2 English, employed lower tokens of the PP than NS non-student writers in comparable texts.

According to Fuchs (2016) and Schlüter (2006), the frequency of the PP per 1000 words was higher in speech than in writing, and among written texts, formal texts, such as expository writings or newspaper articles, contained more tokens of the PP than less formal and more interactive texts, such as fictions or web blogs. In the Korean learners' data, such a variation was observed only in the highest level (C); they produced more tokens in the more formal argumentative essays (2.03) than in the less formal narratives (1.43), while the rest groups exhibited the opposite pattern. This indicates that only the most advanced learners may be able to use the PP in a way compatible with specific text types.

In addition to the ratio of the PP to the total words produced, we calculated the percentage of the PP used in the past context in order to examine the learners' tendency to select the PP over the SP in this context. We used Fuchs et al.'s (2016) formula: Present perfect %= present perfect/ [present perfect + simple past] x 100.

Table 2. The ratio of the PP in the past context

	NT	AG
A1+	4.86	6.33
A2	5.63	10.39
B1	5.74	6.33
B1+	2.42	14.12
B2	4.58	13.91
B2+	6.20	14.79
C	3.28	16.79

The Korean learners had a tendency to use the PP more frequently in the argumentative essays than in the narratives. Such a tendency was more visible in the argumentative essays of the higher level learners. This differs from the pattern we saw in Table 1, that is, the distribution of the PP per 1000 words. The essay prompts of the narratives (memorable events, favorite teachers, close friends etc.) which might have required verbs in the SP as well as the learners' L2 proficiency may have contributed to this pattern.<sup>5)</sup> An effect of L2 proficiency was also shown in Fuchs et al. (2016). The early German learners of English (over 10 years of instruction) produced almost twice as many tokens of the PP in the past context as the late learners (less than 10 years of instruction): 19.3% vs. 8.9%.

To summarize, the use of the PP by Korean learners may be said to be the outcome of the interaction of learners' L2 proficiency and the nature of the writing they were asked to produce.

## 5.2. Error: Overgeneration vs. Undergeneration

As we read each of the essays, we identified inappropriate uses of the PP, and grouped them into two types: overgeneration and undergeneration errors. The former refers to the use of the PP in the contexts in which tenses other than the PP are expected while the latter refers to the non-use of the PP in the contexts where the PP is prescribed. Consideration of the textual contexts was crucial in identifying errors.

A total of 33 (20 in the narrative and 13 in the argumentative)

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5) The prompts for the argumentative essays were physical punishment, using animals in medical experiments, using cellular phones while driving etc.

overgeneration errors were found in the entire data set. The average accuracy rate of the low level was 57.6% for the narratives and 80% for the argumentative essays. The higher level performed better than the low level, with an accuracy rate of 82.4% for the narratives and 88.9% for the argumentative essays. The accuracy rates of the Korean data, except for the narratives of the low level, were similar to what Bardovi-Harlig (1997) observed in her analysis of L2 learners' writing (86.9%). The details of the overgeneration errors are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Overgeneration errors

	Narrative		Argumentative			
	Past	Present	Past perfect	Past	Present	Past perfect
Low	10	4	0	2	3	1
High	3	0	3	5	2	0

The substitution of the SP with the PP was most common, with 13 out of 20 errors in the narratives and 7 out of 13 errors in the argumentative essays belonging to this category. This type of errors often involved the use of adverb phrases which did not agree with the tense of the predicate as illustrated below.

- (5) a. My friends have been there 2 years ago. (A1+, NT)<sup>6</sup>  
 b. Few months ago, there has been a hot debate about the physical punishment. (C1, AG)  
 c. At that time I have had hard time because I didn't like my French major. (B1, NT)

The adverb 'ago' in (5a & b) and the adverb phrase 'at that time' in (5c) refer to a specific time in the past, and hence incompatible with the PP. This type of errors persisted into the highest level (C) as shown in (5b).

The use of the PP when the present simple tense was expected was rather frequent in the low level. Sentence (6a) describes a general fact and sentence (6b) a habitual action, both of which require the simple present tense to convey

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6) NT refers to narrative essays and AG to argumentative essays.

the intended meaning. The learners in the low level might still be in the process of learning the diverse functions of the present simple tense, and at the same time, trying to learn the functions of a new structure, the PP.

- (6) a. Today, many people has had smart phone, tablet PC, etc. (A1+, AG)  
 b. I spend my Saturdays usually sleeping longer than other days and I have watched American dramas. (B1, NT)

A total of 23 and 14 undergeneration errors were identified in the low and high level essays, respectively. The errors in the low level were evenly split between the two text types, whereas significantly more errors were found in argumentative essays of the high level.

Table 4. Undergeneration errors

	Narrative		Argumentative		Past perfect	Present progressive
	Past	Present	Past	Present		
Low	4	8	2	7	2	0
High	1	1	4	3	4	1

Replacing the PP with the simple present was the most common error in the low level.

- (7) a. Recently, I buy a guitar and I go to musical room. (A1+, NT)  
 b. Technology of extracting insulin from a non-virus pig is invented. (B1+, AG)  
 c. We are friends for 6years. (B1, NT)

The use of the PP was expected to convey the intended meanings, that is, the persistence of the result of “my buying a guitar” (7a) and “the invention of technology”. In (7b), in order to describe a situation that started in the past and continued into the present for six years, the PP rather than the present simple was needed.

The high level learners produced ungrammatical sentences by substituting the PP with the SP or the past perfect.

- (8) a. Ever since the Korean War, Korean men over 20 of age was force to spend 2 years of their lives in the military. (C, AG)
- b. The locked smoke circulates the closed area and is inhaled by people who didn't even touch a cigarette. (C, AG)
- c. The war between North and South Korea had not ended yet.  
(B2+, AG)

The non-use of the PP in (8a) fails to convey the meaning that the situation “Korean men being forced to do military service” started after the Korean War and it still persists. In (8b), the use of the SP in the relative clause “who didn't even touch a cigarette” cannot convey the experiential meaning that the situation of “touching a cigarette” has not happened during the time span leading up to the present. The connection with the present indicated by the main verb “is inhaled” is lost by the non-use of the PP. The use of the past perfect in (8c) produced a sentence that does not agree with the current situation regarding the Korean War.

A noteworthy tendency we observed in the high level essays is that the learners opted for the SP over the PP in the contexts where prescriptive grammars would prescribe the PP. Some examples are shown in (9).

- (9) a. Many of the teachers say that teaching in the class became so hard.  
(B2+, AG)
- b. Moreover, on the Internet, people swear and intentionally spread rumors that is not true. Indeed, it caused various social problems.  
(C, AG)
- c. Peoples' interest and perspective of peoples' rights changed. (B2, arg)

All the cases involve a description of change of state and the continuity of the resultant state into the present (Huddleston, 2002); classroom teaching became hard in the past, and it still is (9a), rumors caused social problems and the problems are still here (9b), people's interest and perspective changed and the change still exists (9c). According to Brinton and Brinton (2010: 128) and Murphy (2000: 282), it is the resultative PP that alternates with the SP in American English. Recognizing the usage in American English, we did not code

these sentences as errors. It is not clear whether the learners' tendency to use the SP in these cases is due to their exposure to American English or insufficient knowledge of the PP.

To summarize the learners' error patterns, a tendency to use the SP in lieu of the PP was most common, which is consistent with the observations in previous L2 studies. In the low level, the confusion between the present simple tense and the PP also was highly visible. The common temporal domain shared by the PP and the SP, and the PP and the present simple as well as the absence of a distinctive form for the PP in L1 Korean appear to be the source of these errors.

### 5.3. The Adverb Phrases

The co-occurrence of the PP and certain temporal adverb phrases has been noted in previous studies (Fuchs et al, 2016; Park & Choe, 2013; Wynne, 2000). Adverbs such as *since*, *ever*, *never*, *yet*, *already*, *just*, *recently*, and *for* are introduced in traditional grammars as compatible with the PP. In contrast, temporal adverbials referring to definite or specific time in the past (e.g. yesterday, in 1998, etc.) are not compatible with the PP in English. We searched all the temporal adverbials, and identified those occurring with the PP (Table 5).

Table 5. The adverbials occurring with the PP

	Narrative	Token(%)	Argumentative	Token(%)
Low	For*(3) since(3)	10/19	For(2)	7/24
	Ever	(52.6%)	Since(2)	(29.2%)
	Never		ever	
	Until now		until now	
	Recently		from	
High	For(4)	11 /28	For(3)	14/56
	Since(3)	(39.3%)	Since, Ever	(25%)
	Never(3)		From	
	Yet		Recently	
			Still(2)	
			Yet(2)	
		Already		
		Always		
		These days		

Overall, the low level writers used temporal adverb phrases with the PP (29.2-52.6%) more than the high level learners (25-39.3%), and within the same level, the narratives more than the argumentative essays. The ratios are, except for the low level narratives, more or less close to the ratios found in NS and NNS corpus in previous studies. Schlüter's (2006) review of NS studies showed that between 45% (AmE) and 29% (BrE) of the PP in NS writings were accompanied by temporal adverbials. In Fuchs et al. (2016), the range was 26.6%-30.1% in the NS students' writings and 27.4%-30.5% in German learners' essays.

The higher co-occurrence of the temporal adverbials and the PP in the low level is consistent with Bardovi-Harlig's (1997) observation that low proficiency learners tend to rely more often on the support of the temporal adverbials when they use the PP. The adverbials might bootstrap the acquisition of the PP.

#### 5.4. The Present Perfect and Lexical Aspects

The connection between the tense-aspect system and the lexical aspects of individual verbs has been investigated, mostly within the framework of the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1996). The first prediction of the Aspect Hypothesis is relevant for the current study: In learner language, the past and the perfect marking will first appear with achievement and accomplishment verbs, spreading later to stative and activity verbs. In order to examine whether this prediction is borne out in our data, we analyzed the lexical aspects of the verbs in the PP construction based on the criteria provided in Shirai (2013). We combined the achievement and accomplishment verbs together as these two telic verbs behave in a similar way.

As shown in Table 6, there was no indication of the early emergence of the telic verbs; rather, the activity and telic verbs were evenly split in the low level. The higher level argumentative essays contained more tokens of the telic verbs. The spreading of the PP from the telic verbs to atelic verbs in accordance with L2 development was not evidenced in our data.



Table 6. The lexical aspects of the PP

		Narrative	Argumentative
Low	Stative	3(15.8)	8(28.6)
	Activity	8(42.1)	10(35.7)
	Achievement	8(42.1)	10(35.7)
	Accomplish		
High	Stative	6(25)	14(25)
	Activity	10(41.7)	14(25)
	Achievement	8(33.3)	28(50)
	Accomplish		

A similar finding is reported in Rogatcheva (2014), which examined the telicity of the lexical verbs used with the PP in Bulgarian and German learners' English. She observed that though the L2 learners used the PP with telic verbs more frequently than the NS counterparts, the difference was not significant, leading her to conclude that the first prediction of the Aspect Hypothesis was not supported by her data. She suggested that the slightly higher ratio of the telic verbs in the L2 data might be related to the fact that the learners overused a limited number of high frequency verbs, which mostly belonged to the telic verb category.

Im (2008) is another study that paid attention to the lexical aspects of the PP in English of learners from various L1 backgrounds, with a similar result of 'no connection' between the two. Of the 167 verbs in the PP, the stative and activity verbs were most common (76%). In a study of the lexical aspects of the PP utilizing the cloze test, Uno (2014) found that Japanese learners' use of the PP was restricted to atelic verbs when durative adverbials were present; with no durative adverbials, no clear association was observed between the lexical aspects and the PP.

## 6. Conclusion

The English PP construction has been known as a hurdle to L2 learners due to its linguistic and cognitive complexity. This study set out to examine the behavior of this complex system in the developing grammars of L2 English. In

order to complement the findings of previous experimental studies, we analyzed the written essays of Korean university students, focusing on the interaction of L2 proficiency and text type with the use of the PP.

The overall frequency of the PP was not high, possibly due to the small corpus size, and hence, observation of developmental trend along the L2 proficiency levels was not possible. The average frequency normalized per 1000 words was lower than that of NS reported in Schlüter (2006), but was comparable to that of NS and NNS university students as reported in Fuchs et al. (2016).

When measured by the normalized frequency, the PP was shown to occur more frequently in the high level writings than the low level, and within the same level, in the narratives over the argumentative essays. On the other hand, when we calculated the occurrence of the PP in the past context, a higher presence of the PP was observed in the argumentative essays than in the narratives, which may be related to the differences in the essay prompts. This pattern suggests that the nature of the writing task and the L2 level may interact in the use of the PP by L2 learners.

The error patterns show that the confusion between the PP and the SP was a common source of errors both in the high and low level. The low level learners, in addition, had difficulty in distinguishing the PP and the present simple tense. Mismatches between the temporal adverbials and the PP also led to ungrammatical sentences. The pragmatic factors involved in the use of the PP, the flexible boundary between the PP and SP, and L1 influence may have contributed to the confusion the learners experienced with the use of the PP.

The co-occurrence of the PP and temporal adverbials was not high in our data, especially in the high level, a pattern consistent with findings of previous studies. That the low level learners relied more on the adverbials suggests that at the early stages, the presence of the PP may facilitate the acquisition of the PP.

Along with observations of previous studies, we also did not find a strong association between the PP and lexical aspects of verbs. The low level learners did not exhibit a strong preference for the telic verbs with the PP. When it comes to the English PP, more factors seem to be involved other than lexical aspects, contrary to the prediction of the Aspect Hypothesis. Detailed analyses

with more data would help finding other interacting factors.

In general, the observations we made in this study are consistent with the findings of previous research. The PP is one of the difficult structures that emerge late in L2 (Bardovi-Harlig, 1997) and the distinction between the SP and the PP is possible only by the most advanced learners of English (Housen, 2002), which may be more difficult if the L1 does not have a similar construction (Fuchs et al., 2016; Han & Hong, 2015; Kang, 2003).

The difficulty involved in the learning of the PP raises a question regarding the instructional goal of the PP in L2 classroom. A rough estimation of the instruction time required to acquire the PP so that learners can use it in a pattern consistent with the norm in standard English is between over 10 years (Fuchs et al., 2016) and 15 years (Davydova, 2011). The appropriate use of the PP will help L2 learners deliver subtle details of semantic and pragmatic meanings, and do away with odd non-nativeness in their speech and writing. However, considering the time constraint in L2 classroom, the goal of the PP instruction needs reconsideration. As Fuchs et al. suggested (2016), the realistic goal should be native-like use in prototypical contexts, that is, the core cases regarding which the usage rules of diverse regional and register varieties agree. The most advanced students may benefit from knowledge of regional and register variations as well as pragmatic rules involved, especially if their goal is producing formal academic texts.

This study has a limitation in its scope due to the low number of the PP tokens. Future research with a bigger corpus should yield a more detailed picture of the behavior of the PP in learner language.

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