



Estetisk-filosofiska fakulteten

Fabiana Andrioli Sklar

Present but not perfect

A study of problems Brazilian students encounter when learning
the English present perfect tense

English Linguistics

Master's thesis

Termin: Vårterminen 2011

Handledare: Michael Wherrity

Abstract

Title: Present but not perfect: A study of problems Brazilian students encounter when learning the English present perfect tense

Author: Sklar, Fabiana Andrioli

Pages: 57

Abstract: Most Brazilian students learning English face difficulty when studying the present perfect. It is one of the most challenging aspects of the English language for Portuguese speakers due to the similar form with a divergent semantic value. The Brazilian Portuguese present perfect forces iteration and the student automatically transfers the same meaning when translating an English sentence literally. Brazilian learners get confused about when and in what situations to use the English present perfect and frequently are not able to distinguish it from the simple past use. This study is comprised of two parts. First, a comparative study was done to investigate which Portuguese tense translators of famous literary books consider to be equivalent to the English present perfect according to the message which is being conveyed. The database used was the bidirectional parallel corpus of English and Portuguese COMPARA. Second, textbooks developed to teach English in Brazil were analyzed in order to verify from what perspective students were being instructed concerning the present perfect and whether the semantic differences between the two languages were pointed out. According to the translation corpus, the English present perfect is mostly equivalent to Brazilian Portuguese simple past. Adverbs are also often needed to express the English present perfect meaning in Portuguese. The textbooks were found to present poor explanations and seem not to call the learners' attention to the source of the problems. Textbooks do not stress the importance of the semantic value and the context, and do not call attention to the different meanings between the Brazilian and the English present perfect.

Key-words: English present perfect, Brazilian Portuguese present perfect, EFL textbooks, EFL teaching, simple past, corpus, corpora, COMPARA, translation.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Aims	2
2. Background	2
2.1 Tense and aspect.....	3
2.1.1 Perfective and imperfective	4
2.2 Present perfect in English.....	4
2.2.1 Present perfect: different readings.....	4
2.3 Present perfect versus simple past.....	7
2.3.1 Adverbials	9
2.4 Brazilian Portuguese tense-aspectual system	12
2.4.1 The Portuguese tense system.....	12
2.4.2 Aspect in Portuguese	13
2.4.3 The Present perfect in Portuguese	15
2.5 Present Perfect in English and in Brazilian Portuguese.....	16
3 Methods	19
3.2 Translation corpus	20
3.2.1 Procedures with the corpus data	20
3.3 Textbooks	21
4. Results and analysis.....	21
4.1 Translation corpus analysis	21
4.1.1 Continuative perfect	24
4.1.2 Experiential perfect	25
4.1.3 Resultative perfect.....	27
4.1.4 Perfect of recent past	28
4.1.5 Others	30
4.2 Textbook analysis.....	34
4.2.1. Advanced Grammar in Use	37
4.2.2. Compact English	38
4.2.3. Commercial English	39
4.2.4. Get to the point	40
4.2.5. Graded English.....	40
4.2.6. Graded exercises in English	41
4.2.7. Inglês Doorway	41

4.2.8. New Dynamic English.....	42
5. Discussion	43
6. Conclusion.....	47
References	49
Appendix	52

1. Introduction

Teaching the English present perfect to speakers of Brazilian Portuguese is one of the biggest challenges for ESL teachers. Instead of introducing the variety of possible readings of the present perfect in English, most Brazilian textbooks only present general rules and refer to the English present perfect as only used to express a past action with a present relevance (e.g. Aun et al, 1996). Furthermore, many Brazilian teachers are not prepared to compensate for the lack of guidance from the textbooks as they could do by exploring the different readings of the present perfect and showing the students the range of choices that they have when using the target language. According to Schmitt (2001:403), given the existing variation on how languages encode tense and aspect information, such learnability issues are bound to arise.

L1 transfer can be considered to be the major cause of the difficulties Brazilian Portuguese speakers have using the present perfect in English. For example, Brazilian Portuguese speakers tend to opt for the simple past in English where present perfect would be more suitable or required. Moreover, literal translation into Portuguese often leads to misinterpretation. In *She has lost her keys*, a literal translation (*ela tem perdido as chaves dela*) would be that ‘She has been losing her keys over and over’, since in Portuguese the present perfect denotes iteration of the event. Here, although the Portuguese present perfect is morphologically analogous to English present perfect (auxiliary *have* + past participle in English and *ter* (have) + past participle in Portuguese), it is considered to be semantically divergent. This similar morphology frequently leads Brazilian learners to erroneous literal translation. As Graver (1986: 74) observes, difficulties for foreign learners arise either from the fact that their own language has not led them to look at events in this way, or from the fact that their language contains a verb form that looks similar to the English form but operates differently.

Most English language grammars list four different readings of the present perfect: the continuative, the experiential (or ‘existential’) perfect, the resultative perfect, and the perfect of recent past. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 143-145) state that these can be thought of as a classification of the main ways in which the concept of a time-span up to now can be involved in the use and interpretation of the present perfect or as different ways in which the past situation may have ‘current relevance’.

In Portuguese most ideas represented by the present perfect in English correspond to those conveyed by combinations of certain adverbs, prepositions, adverbial phrases with verbs, or compound predicates with the main verb in the present, past, *-ing* or infinitive form (Schütz 2000). Santos (1996: 7) observes that there is no translation of the present perfect meaning in its totality, and that in relation to different parts of its global meaning, there are different possibilities of expressing it in Portuguese to achieve a satisfying translation.

Brazilian students are not taught to be conscious of the different readings the present perfect can have and are left in confusion as to when and why it is used. The approach taken by Brazilian textbooks focuses on grammatical rules and does not stress the different meanings and uses. Publishers developing English textbooks for Brazilian learners seem not to be aware of the problems involved in learning the English present perfect and insist on referring to it only as a verbal tense designated to describe past events without a reference time.

1.1 Aims

The present study will examine the different readings and meanings of the English present perfect, which are very difficult for a Brazilian Portuguese speaker to understand and use correctly when speaking or translating. The major purpose of the analysis is to explain why Brazilian Portuguese speakers have problems with the English present perfect tense and to suggest how this tense may be effectively taught to Brazilian students. In my study, I will look at how present perfect is used in English and also contrast it with simple past. A comparison will be made between the use of the present perfect in English and Brazilian Portuguese based on data found in the bidirectional parallel corpus COMPARA in order to determine what barriers Brazilian students encounter when learning the present perfect in English. The information given in English textbooks used in Brazil will also be analyzed in order to evaluate what information Brazilian students receive concerning the present perfect and the divergence from the English to Brazilian Portuguese present perfect.

2. Background

In the background, I will review the meanings and functions of the English present perfect and compare it semantically and pragmatically with the simple past. The background will also

present an overview of previous studies about the similarities and differences between the present perfect in Brazilian Portuguese and English.

2.1 Tense and aspect

Distinguishing tense and aspect is important when considering the perfect. Especially for non-native English speakers the distinction between the two terms can be confusing. Tense and aspect are both related to time, but from different perspectives. Schmitt (2001: 403) points out that tense is concerned with the relation between the location time of an event and the time of speech (tense properties) and aspect is concerned with the temporal properties of an eventuality description and how these temporal properties are related to some reference time. While tense basically situates an event or state in present or past, aspect is concerned with such notions as duration and completion or incompleteness of the process expressed by the verb (Downing, 2006: 361).

The different perspectives from which the event is viewed are hence what distinguishes aspect from tense, rather than when the event occurred. Comrie (1976: 5) states that aspect is not concerned with relating the time of the situation to any other time-point, but rather with the internal temporal constituency of the one situation; one could state the difference as one between situational-internal time (aspect) and situation-external time (tense).

The perfect is very often referred to as an aspect. Nevertheless, some English grammarians classify the perfect as tense, some as aspect. Zagana (2008: 1772) observes that ‘analyses in the tradition of Reichenbach (1947) generally treat the Perfect as a “double” tense: (a) a tense (ordering) relation between Event Time (ET) and Reference Time (RT), and (b) a second relation between RT and Speech time (ST)’. Comrie (1976:6) claims that the perfect does not seem to apply to the definition of aspect as concerned with the internal temporal situation of an event or state, but neither can be considered just a tense, since it differs in meaning from the various tense forms.

Biber et al (1999: 460) classify the perfect as an aspect and consider it to designate events or states taking place during a period leading up to the specified time. Like Biber et al, Collins and Hollo (2000: 74) also consider the perfect to be an aspect and state that whereas tense is concerned with locating events and situations at points along a ‘time line’, aspect is concerned with certain other temporal aspects of an event or situation, such as whether it is ‘in progress’ and whether or not it has been completed.

2.1.1 Perfective and imperfective

The perfective is characterized by presenting the event as complete; by contrast, the imperfective presents the event as incomplete. Comrie (1976: 4) points out that ‘the perfective looks at the situation from outside, whereas as the imperfective looks at the situation from inside, and as such is crucially concerned with the internal structure of the situation’. Perfective aspect comprehends a whole situation, including its beginning and end points, while Imperfective aspect focuses on the internal parts of an event.

2.2 Present perfect in English

In this section I will present an overview of previous studies of the present perfect in English, focusing on the different readings it conveys. I will also explain each reading and provide examples by way of illustration.

2.2.1 Present perfect: different readings

The present perfect is classified by most of the grammars as having four major readings: continuative perfect, existential perfect, resultative perfect and perfect of recent past.¹ Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 143) state that these different uses can be thought of as a classification of the main ways in which the concept of a time-span up to now can be involved in the use and interpretation of the present perfect. Pancheva (2003: 277) observes that the different types of perfect make different claims about the temporal location of the underlying event with respect to the reference time, while according to Thomson and Martinet (1986: 166) the present perfect may be said to be a sort of mixture of present and past. Further, Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 48) claim that the fact that the present perfect is a compound tense combining past and present is the cause for the different meanings.

¹ Depending on the grammar, different terminologies are used, and it is also common to find different classifications for the meanings of the present perfect. In the present paper I will use the classification and terminology found in Huddleston and Pullum (2004). Some different terminologies commonly found are going to be pointed out in each subsection.

Continuative perfect

The continuative perfect reading is used to describe an event that started in the past and persists until the present time. Downing and Locke (2006: 365) define the continuous perfect as being a state, duration or repeated occurrence of a process lasting up to speech time. They claim that an adjunct of extent (e.g. headed by *for, since*) is virtually necessary to complete the meaning. Cases in which the event overlaps the speech time are labeled continuative perfect. Portner (2003: 460) points out that the continuative reading simply indicates the continuance of a past event into the present. Examples:

Mary has lived in London for five years. (i.e. she still lives in London)

I have known Peter since last year. (i.e. I still know him)

We have walked for hours. (i.e. we were walking up to the present moment)

Experiential perfect

The experiential perfect is also referred to as ‘existential perfect’. Michaelis (1994: 133) explains that the continuative and the experiential readings of the perfect have the same semantic property of locating an episode (an event or state) with respect to a time span which includes the present. In the experiential present perfect one or more events of a given type are located within this time span, whereas in the case of the continuative present perfect, a state phase occupies the entire time span.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 144) compare the experiential perfect and the simple past in the following examples: *It is better than it has ever been! It's better than it was.* They argue that in the first example the comparison is between the referent's quality now and its quality at any time within the time-span – clearly the potential for it to be of such and such quality still exists. In the simple past example the comparison is between now and then; the past is contrasted with the present, the ‘then’ situation is over and excludes now.

Downing and Locke (2006: 364 - 365) state that the experiential meaning refers to the fact that there have been one or more experiences of the event in the recent history (1 and 2), or in the life-span (3) of a certain person up to the present time.

1- I've *been* ill.

2- *We've been* away.

3- *You've lived* in Brighton, and *you've lived* in Kingston and now you live in Lewes.

Resultative perfect

Three examples of resultative perfect (from Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 145) are the following:

She has broken her leg.

He has closed the door.

They've gone away.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 145) explain that examples such as these are the clearest cases of the resultative perfect, where the situation is one that inherently involves a specific change of state: breaking a leg yields a resultant state where the leg is broken, closing the door leads to the door's being closed, going away (from place *x*) results in a state where one is no longer at place *x*, and so on. The connection with the present in this resultative use is that the resultant state still obtains now. The results above are also known as continuing result: the result state begins at the time of occurrence of the past situation itself and continues into the present.

In examples such as *She has been to the bank* and *She has run ten kilometers* the resultative is clearly not mutually exclusive with the experiential. Both examples have resultative and experiential components in their interpretation, according to Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 145).

Perfect of recent past

Klein (1994: 113) refers to the perfect of recent past as when the present relevance of the past situation referred to is simply one of temporal closeness, that is, the past situation is very recent. The general constraint on combining the perfect with a specification of time does not hold when the time specification is the adverb *recently* or one of its close synonyms (e.g. *just*). Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 145) point out that one respect in which a past situation may be connected with now is that it is close in time to now. It does not have to be recent, but there is nevertheless a significant correlation between the present perfect and recency.

Downing and Locke (2006: 365) say that the recent present perfect lends itself to a ‘hot news’ interpretation, which can be reinforced by *just*.

The Prime Minister has resigned.

The Red Sox have won!

We’ve just eaten/had lunch.

2.3 Present perfect versus simple past

Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 142) argue that the difference in meaning and use between the present perfect and the simple preterite ‘reflects the fact that the former is a compound tense combining past and present, whereas the latter is a simple tense, just past. With the simple preterite the focus is on the past situation; with the present perfect the primary focus is on the present.’

According to Leech and Svartvik (1994: 68) the past tense is used when the past happening is related to a definite time in the past, which may be referred to as ‘then’. E.g. *He was in prison for ten years* (= ‘Now he is out’). In contrast, the present perfect is used for a past happening which is seen in relation to a later event or time. For example: *He has been in prison for ten years* (‘He’s probably still there’). One way of illustrating the distinction between present perfect and past tense can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The distinction between present perfect and past tense (based on Downing and Locke 2006: 362).

Present Perfect	Past Tense
a. Its time-frame is the extended now , a period of time which extends up to speech-time.	Its time-frame is the past , which is viewed as a separate time-frame from that of the present.
b. The event occurs at some indefinite and unspecified time within the extended now. The Perfect is non-deictic – it doesn’t ‘point’ to a specific time but relates to a relevant time.	The event is located at a specific and definite time in the past. The Past tense is deictic – it points to a specific time in the past.
c. The event has ‘ current relevance ’, that is, it is viewed as psychologically connected to the moment of speaking.	The event is seen as psychologically disconnected from the moment of speaking.

Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 49) claim that the present perfect ‘includes explicit reference to the present as well as the past’, while the simple preterite is purely past. They suggest that

under certain conditions the present perfect allows time adjuncts referring to the present while the preterite does not. And conversely, the present perfect usually excludes time adjuncts referring to the past, since they disassociate the situation from present time. So we have the contrasts:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| We have by now finished most of it. | * We by now finished most of it. |
| * She has finished her thesis last week. | She finished her thesis last week. |

The comparison below (from Huddleston and Pullum 2005: 49) suggests that the past situation is expressed by the present perfect as having some kind of current relevance to the present, whereas the preterite does not express any such relationship.

- | | |
|--|--|
| i a. She has lived in Paris for ten years. | i b. She lived in Paris for ten years. |
| ii a. She has met the president. | ii b. She met the president. |
| iii a. The premier has resigned. | iii b. The premier resigned. |
| iv a. You've put on some weight. | iv b. You put on some weight. |

In [ia] she still lives in Paris; it requires the continuative reading, since the event of her living in Paris began at a prior point in time and continues into the present; in [ib] she lived in Paris for ten years but no longer lives there. Example [iia] suggests that the president is alive and still president at the moment of speaking. This can be considered as an experiential perfect as the event of her meeting the president occurred in an unspecified time and has a current relevance in the present. In the case of [iib], the speaker is simply describing a past event. The perfect of recent past can be seen in example [iia], which refers to a very recently completed action. And [iva] is considered to be the resultative perfect since the fact that you have gained some weight shows a change of state, which is a visible result. In [ivb] the speaker is simply describing a past event.

Schaden (2009: 125) maintains that nobody would deny that there are at least some contexts in which one can choose more or less freely between a simple past tense and a present perfect tense. Yet, in other contexts, one has to choose one form rather than the other. Pancheva and von Stechow (2004) state that given an intended meaning, a speaker chooses the most specified semantic feature available in the language, to express at a syntactic node. Similarly, upon comprehending an utterance, a hearer chooses the most specified semantic feature available that corresponds to the morphology realized at a syntactic node.

Celce-Murcia et al (1999: 124-125) point out that the choice between present perfect and the simple past is independent of when the event took place. ‘The use of the present perfect has more to do with our present perspective on the event rather than on the actual time at which it took place.’ The authors call our attention to some additional sentence-level ways to help students determine whether to use the present perfect or the simple past tense:

- The simple past often occurs with specific past-time adverbials. Recall that the core meaning of the past tense is remoteness. The use of specific past-time adverbials (e.g., yesterday, last year, 1990) makes the past tense obligatory. The use of certain more general temporal adverbials is commonly associated with the perfect (e.g., already, since, yet).
- Even if a past-time adverbial isn’t explicit, the remoteness may be defined elsewhere in the context or simply implied:

John Lennon was a creative genius.

- The past tense is used for a completed historical period versus an incomplete one:

My father lived here all his life. (complete – implies the father has left or is dead)

My father has lived here all his life. (incomplete – the father still lives there)

- The present perfect is used for an indefinite versus a definite query:

Have you ever gone to Phoenix?

Did you go to Phoenix? (You said that you traveled to the Southwest last summer)

Celce-Murcia et al (1999: 125) suggest that ‘the speaker would almost have to have some shared knowledge with your listener to use specific past tense in such situations’. The use of the present perfect in such contexts does not require previous knowledge about the listener.

2.3.1 Adverbials

Downing and Locke (2006: 363 - 364) observe that the present perfect aspect is frequently accompanied by time adjuncts that refer to a period of time that is still open at the moment of

speaking, e.g. this week, this month, this year, etc. Adjuncts which refer to a period of past time that is now over (e.g. last month, last year, yesterday) are incompatible with the perfect. They summarize the comparison between specific or unspecific time adjuncts and which of them are compatible with present perfect or simple past in Table 2.

Table 2. Adjuncts of indefinite and definite time (from Downing and Locke 2006: 363)

Adjuncts of indefinite or unspecified time used with the perfect, such as:	Adjuncts of definite or specific time used with past tense, such as:
Sometimes, often, always, never, at times	Yesterday
Twice, three times	Last week, last year, last month
In the last ten years	An hour ago, two years ago
Lately, recently, now	Last June, in 1066
	At 4 o'clock, at Christmas, at Easter

Leech and Svartvik (1994: 72) present examples of use of adverbials in relation to the past and the present perfect. They point out that some adverbials go with the past and other go with the present perfect, but they also present some examples that are compatible with both.

- **The past** (point or period of time which finished in the past):

I rang her parents yesterday (evening).

My first wife died some years ago.

In 1989 a new law was introduced.

- **The present perfect** (period leading up to present, or recent past time)

Since January, life has been very busy.

I haven't had any luck since I was a baby.

Plenty of rain has fallen here lately.

- **Either the past or the present perfect**

The following pairs have almost the same meaning. However, in the first pair, the choice of the perfect suggests the speaker is speaking during the morning. The choice of the past, on the other hand, suggests that the morning is already past. But this is not a hard-and-fast rule.

{ We *have seen* a lot of horses *this morning*.
We *saw* a lot of horses *this morning*.

{ I *have tried* to speak to you about this *today*.
I *tried* to *speak* to you about this *today*.

{ *Have you spoken* to him *recently*?
Did you speak to him *recently*?

It is possible to note the different meanings that the present perfect in combination with time adverbials can express by looking at the examples from Celce-Murcia et al (1999:122-123). They consider the different answers to the question below to illustrate the different meanings associated with the verb-aspect combinations in English with different adverbs:

Has Chris finished her M.A. thesis?

1. *Yes, she has just finished it.*
2. *Yes, she has already finished it.*
3. *No, she hasn't finished it yet.*

In answer 1, *just* signals recent completion, while in 2, *already* is used to signal a result that occurred previously – perhaps earlier than anticipated. In 3, the adverb *yet* indicates noncompletion.

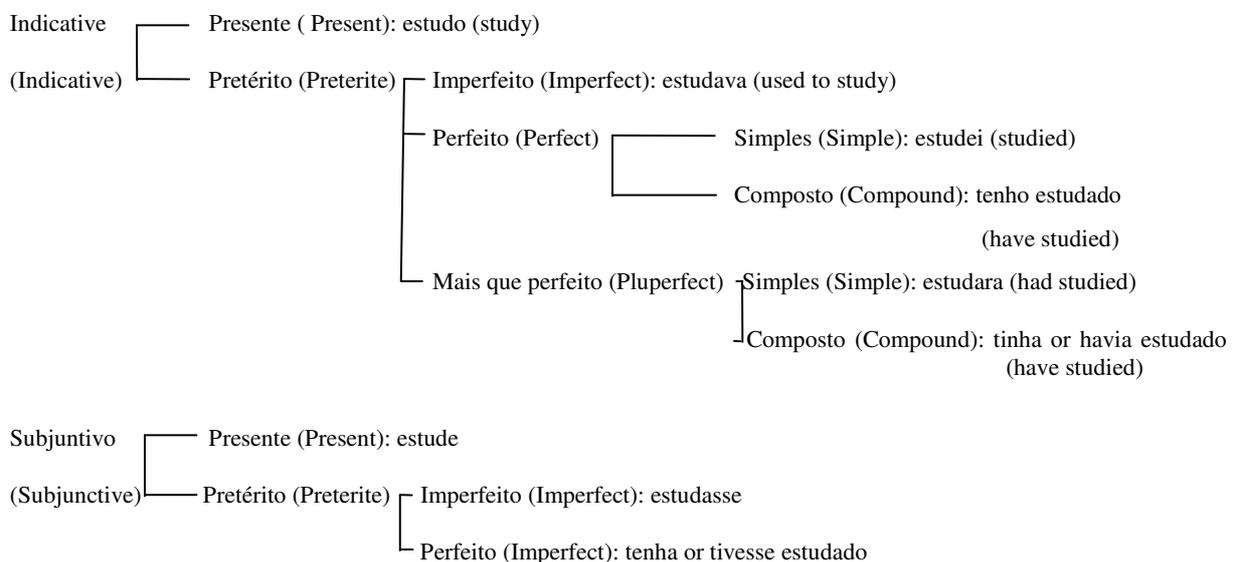
Portner (2003: 493) observes that if the adverbial is lacking, the sentence may perfectly well describe an event which occurred yesterday. That is, the event may have occurred yesterday, but one may not mention yesterday while describing it with the perfect. Baker (2002) argues that it is very important to note that the choice of simple past or present perfect often resides with the speaker, rather than any temporal location of an event or situation. For example if asked, “Have you ever been abroad?” it would be perfectly acceptable to reply, “Yes, I went to Mexico last year” or, “Yes, I’ve been to Mexico”. The selection relies on the speaker’s perception of the situation, and whether the speaker thinks it is necessary to give a definite time or an indefinite time.

2.4 Brazilian Portuguese tense-aspectual system

I will start this section by illustrating how the tense system of the Brazilian Portuguese language works, so it is possible to have a better understanding to compare it with the English language. I will first show in detail the division of tenses according to the mode and then explain some aspects of the language that will contribute to understanding the Brazilian Portuguese present perfect. Following I will present previous studies of the present perfect in Portuguese.

2.4.1 The Portuguese tense system

According to Cunha and Cunha (2001: 381) tense is the variation that indicates the moment in which the action is expressed by the verb. Brazilian Portuguese is divided into three tenses: present, preterite (or past) and future. The preterite and the future are subdivided into the indicative and the subjunctive. The scheme below illustrates the Brazilian Portuguese tense system (Cunha, 2001). I will only present the tenses relevant to the discussion.



According to Schmitt (2001: 408-410) the terminology that the Portuguese tenses in the indicative assume in English studies are listed below. This terminology is going to be used throughout this paper to designate Portuguese tenses.

- Presente = Present
- Pretérito imperfeito = Past imperfect
- Pretérito Perfeito simples = Simple past
- Pretérito Perfeito composto = Present Perfect
- Pretérito mais-que-perfeito simples = Pluperfect
- Pretérito mais-que-perfeito composto = Past perfect

2.4.2 Aspect in Portuguese

Travaglia (1981: 39) observes that both tense and aspect are categories of time, but they do not overlap. Tense places the moment of occurrence of the situation we refer to in relation to the moment of speech as previous (past), simultaneous (present) or subsequent to this moment. It is a deictic category, since it indicates the moment of the event in relation to the speech time. Aspect is not a deictic category, because it refers to the situation itself. Cunha (2001: 382) considers aspect to designate the grammatical category that expresses the point of view from which the speaker considers the action expressed by the verb. It can consider it as concluded, which means that the event is observed from the ending, in its outcome; or it may be regarded as not concluded, which means that the event is observed in its duration, in its repetition.

Brazilian Portuguese has 14 different classifications of aspect; I will briefly describe six aspects which are relevant to the study of the present perfect, according to Travaglia (1981). In general aspect is signaled by verbal form alone or in combination with adverbials.

Perfective

Perfectivity can be represented semantically in the verb, e.g. *to break, to die, to close*; or it can be expressed by the verbal form: the perfective presents the situation in its totality, complete. It does not divide the situation into phases of development.

Example:

José cantou a música o dia todo. (simple past)

José sang the song the whole day.

Imperfective

The event is presented as incomplete; the focus is on the duration of the event, the action performed in a certain temporal space.

Example:

*A festa **terminava** quando ele saiu.* (past imperfect)

The party was ending when he left.

Iterative

The event has limited discontinuous duration. This means that it is presented as suffering disruption in duration, which creates the idea of repetition.

Example:

*Marcos **tem chegado** tarde.* (present perfect)

Marcos has been arriving late. (lately)

Ongoing

The event described is in progress, after its beginning and before its ending.

Example:

*Minha cabeça **tem doído** muito.* (present perfect)

My head has hurt a lot.

Concluded action

The event is presented as finished.

Example:

O pobre animal morreu. (simple past)

The poor animal has died.

Durative

It presents the situation as having a continuous limited duration.

Examples:

Ele estava nadando desde às 6 da manhã. (past imperfect continuous)

He had been swimming since 6 in the morning.

2.4.3 The Present perfect in Portuguese

According to Cunha (2001: 455), the simple past indicates an action that is produced at a certain moment in the past; it is used to describe the past as it is perceived by the observer in the present, who considers it from the present. E.g. *Eu dormi como um anjo* ('I slept like an angel'). The compound form usually expresses the repetition or continuation of an action until the present moment of the speech. E.g. *Tenho escrito muitos poemas* ('I have been writing many poems'). In sum, Cunha points out that the simple past denotes concluded action, distant from the present. The present perfect, on the other hand, expresses a repetitive or continuous action, closer to the present.

Costa (2002:45) claims that the present perfect (pretérito perfeito composto) is the only compound structure in Portuguese which can support the imperfective characteristics, since it refers to iterative or habitual activities that extend up to the present time. Travaglia (1981: 165) and Molsing (2006: 240) state that although iterativity is a phenomenon specific to the present perfect in Brazilian Portuguese, it can also express single, durative situations.

Examples:

Maria tem estado doente.

Maria has been sick.

José tem engordado muito.

José has gained a lot of weight.

Schmitt (2001: 404) observes that ‘unlike the other Perfect tenses in Portuguese, the so-called Present Perfect in Portuguese has the striking property of forcing the iteration of the eventuality described’. Schmitt (2001: 405) illustrates this with the example below and confirms that in cases where the predicate cannot be iterated the result is unacceptable. The sentence below cannot have the meaning of (a) or (b); it only has the pragmatically odd reading of many completed dying events (c). The equivalent of example (a) would most likely be simple past in Portuguese since the verb *to die* cannot normally convey the iterative meaning the present perfect carries; dying many times would only apply in limited circumstances and mostly figuratively.

O Pedro tem morrido.

a. ≠ Pedro has died.

b. ≠ Pedro has been dying.

c. #Pedro has died many times.

2.5 Present Perfect in English and in Brazilian Portuguese

The perfect in English and in Brazilian Portuguese hence can be seen to convey different meanings. Molsing (2006: 240) considers that the main readings to be considered for English are experiential perfect, perfect of result, perfect of recent past and perfect of persistent situation (Comrie, 1976); while the main readings that arise from the Brazilian Portuguese are those of iterativity and durativity.

Giorgi and Pianesi (1997) have proposed that the iteration forced by the present perfect in Brazilian Portuguese is due to a covert habitual operator. Schmitt (2001: 449) argues that ‘present tense morphology in Portuguese selects for states, and that this explains why only in the present the perfect is forced into an iterative reading. Since the present in English also selects for states, but does not force iteration, the differences between the perfect in Portuguese and in English follow from the fact that the perfect in Portuguese is not stative’. Schmitt, however, (2001: 447) points out that the English present perfect presents a state which holds at the time of speech while in Brazilian Portuguese even when the predicate is stative it seems to create a ‘bounded eventuality’. The sentence *Mary has known German*

since she was a child can illustrate the difference: in English it denotes that Mary knows German; in Brazilian Portuguese the equivalent sentence expresses that Mary has shown knowledge in German on many occasions. The verb to *know* is a stative predicate, but in Brazilian Portuguese perfect it assumes an iterative reading. Ilari (2001) claims that both theories are problematic because, while present perfect is characteristically iterative, it also expresses single, durative situations. E.g.: *A Maria tem estado doente* ('Maria has been sick').

In order to find out what the equivalences of the English perfect in Portuguese are, Bond (2001) has described of the uses of the present perfect in English and investigated how these uses can be translated into Portuguese. Bond selected a variety of sentences which represented the different uses of the present perfect in English and translated them into Portuguese. The English translations in Tables 3-6 represent typical and/or expected errors. Students were then asked to translate the Portuguese versions into English. The author concluded from her study that the English present perfect cannot be simply translated into Portuguese, and that a whole host of verb tenses and adverbials are used instead to convey the various meanings and aspects it suggests. This can lead to significant L1 interference. Below I have summarized her findings and taken into account only the four uses we are looking at in this present paper. I also adapted the terminology to the one used previously in the paper.

Table 3. English resultative perfect and its Brazilian Portuguese equivalent.

English:	Resultative perfect
	<i>I've broken my leg.</i>
Portuguese:	Simple past
	<i>Quebrei minha perna. Veja, ela esta quebrada.</i> Lit. 'I broke my leg. Look! It is broken!'

In Bond's study, 73% of the students translated the Portuguese sentence into *I broke my leg* instead of *I've broken my leg*.

Table 4. English experiential perfect and its Brazilian Portuguese equivalent.

English:	Experiential perfect
	<i>Have you already/ever been to Salvador?</i>
Portuguese:	Já + Simple past or <i>conhecer</i> + simple present
	<i>Voce ja esteve em Salvador?</i> Lit. ‘You already been in Salvador?’

100% of the students chose the present perfect in this situation. *Já* is a near-equivalent of the English *already, ever* and *yet*.

Table 5. English perfect of recent past and its Brazilian Portuguese equivalent.

English:	Perfect of Recent Past
	a) <i>She’s just left.</i> b) <i>I’ve been working a lot.</i>
Portuguese:	Acabou de + infinitive or recentemente/ultimamente + present progressive
	a) <i>Ela acabou de sair.</i> Lit. ‘She just left.’ b) <i>Estou trabalhando muito ultimamente.</i> Lit. ‘I am working a lot lately.’

Even though teachers often consider this form to be quite easy for Brazilian learners due to the near equivalent of “have just”; Bond (2001) observes that ‘a number of errors could be found regarding aspect, adverbial, and past participle usage, in the translation of this sentence’. For example:

≠*She is just gone.*

≠*She has just leaved.*

≠*She's gone right now.*

The adverbs in Table 5, *recentemente* and *ultimamente*, are translated as *recently* or *lately*. This form does not seem to be a problem for learners (27% made errors), but the present progressive and even the present perfect may be used instead of the present perfect progressive:

≠I'm working a lot recently.

≠I've worked a lot lately.

Table 6. English continuative perfect and its Brazilian Portuguese equivalent.

	Continuative perfect
English:	<p>a) <i>I've lived/been living in Brazil for a year.</i></p> <p>b) <i>I've been here/I've been waiting here since 10 o'clock.</i></p>
Portuguese:	<p><i>Há + que+ simple present or desde + simple present</i></p> <p>a) <i>Há um ano que eu moro no Brasil.</i> Lit. 'There is one year that I live in Brazil.'</p> <p>b) <i>Estou aqui desde as 10 horas.</i> Lit. 'I am here since 10 o'clock.'</p>

54.5% of the students made errors while translating and used forms such as *≠I live... and ≠I'm living...* in sentence a). The preposition *desde* is translated as *since*; only 55.5% of respondents were able to translate sentence b) correctly.

3 Methods

The main purpose of this study is to find out what makes the English present perfect so difficult for Brazilian speakers to learn. Accordingly an analysis of representative translations of literary source texts and English teaching textbooks used in Brazil was carried out. The translations were used in order to learn what constructions the English present perfect corresponds to in the Portuguese. The English textbooks were required in order to examine the approach and the perspective from which Brazilian students are taught the English present perfect. Both the translations and textbooks were contrasted in order to determine whether

they were consistent with the previous studies presented in the background and whether the descriptions in the textbooks were adequate or whether they were in need of revision.

3.2 Translation corpus

The database used was the bidirectional parallel corpus of English and Portuguese COMPARA, which is a free resource.² The corpus contains 75 pairs of original published literary source texts and translations in these two languages that have been linked sentence by sentence. COMPARA totals around three million words and is currently the largest post-edited Portuguese-English parallel corpus in the world. In COMPARA it is possible to access extracts from original or translated texts from Angola, Brazil, Mozambique, Portugal, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States. Since this study focuses on Brazilian Portuguese speakers, the search was limited to Brazilian sources; the English texts, however, were not delimited since the different varieties of English are not relevant to the investigation.

3.2.1 Procedures with the corpus data

I decided to perform the search from English to Portuguese since in Portuguese there is no single form which corresponds to the English present perfect. In order to access the data for the investigation, I tried several tag queries without success. Consequently the process I used was more manual in that I had to type *have* and *has* and remove all hits which were not present perfect. There were 428 hits of present perfect samples; I divided them into the different messages they communicate (Continuative, Experiential, Recent Past and Resultative) and chose 120 relevant examples for further analysis. The English present perfect was compared to the corresponding construction in Brazilian Portuguese for the purpose of investigating which tenses were used to translate each different message into Portuguese. At the same time I checked to see if both the English and the Portuguese sentences expressed the same meaning. Bond's study from 2001 was also used to check how consistent the translations were both semantically and morphologically.

² <http://www.linguateca.pt/COMPARA/>

3.3 Textbooks

Eight English textbooks currently used in Brazilian regular and language schools were examined to see how they present the English present perfect. Three questions were asked: 1) Do they distinguish the different messages conveyed by the English present perfect?; 2) Do they point out the different ways of translating them into Portuguese? and 3) Do they make clear the uses and meanings so that the student will be able to come up with translations similar to those presented in COMPARA? Only relevant examples are included in the study.

4. Results and analysis

In this section I will present the results of my investigation. In 4.1 I will account for the results from a general perspective and present the analysis of the data for each message independently. I will also explain how the samples were translated from English into Portuguese and vice-versa as well as discuss them both semantically and morphologically, comparing the Portuguese and English samples. In 4.2 I will present and analyze the data from the textbooks and see how they compare with the translation results.

4.1 Translation corpus analysis

A total of 120 samples of translations was selected for further analysis; they were classified according to which message/reading (Continuative, Experiential, Resultative and Recent Past) was salient; a fifth category was created to include the sentences in which more than one reading was possible. As can be seen in Figure 1, only 18 sentences were classified as having a *continuative* reading. *Resultative* and *experiential* perfects had relatively similar frequencies of 26 and 27, respectively. The message most frequently found, *perfect of recent present* (31 occurrences) accounted for 25.8% of the total number of sentences (Figure 2).

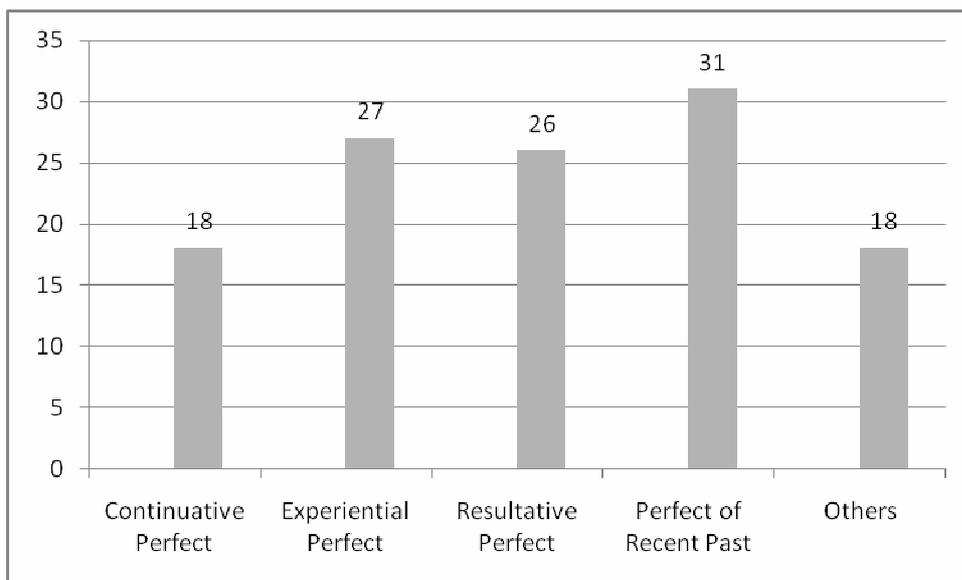


Figure 1. Type of perfect used in the corpus sentences in absolute numbers.

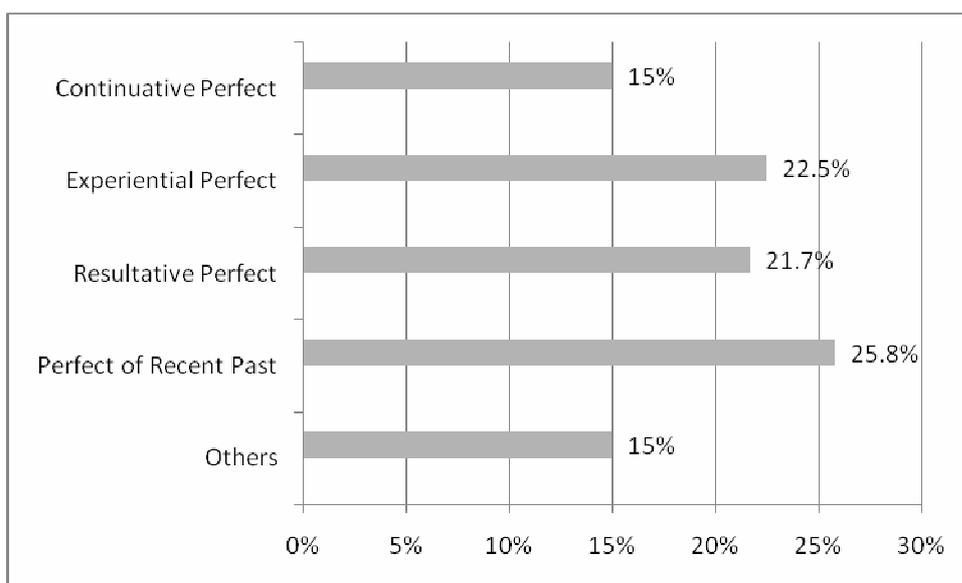


Figure 2. Number of different messages in percentages.

As mentioned above the category *others* includes the samples in which more than one reading was possible and in Figure 3 can be seen which combinations were found. *Others* totaled 18, and in section 4.1.5 the combinations of readings will be further analyzed.

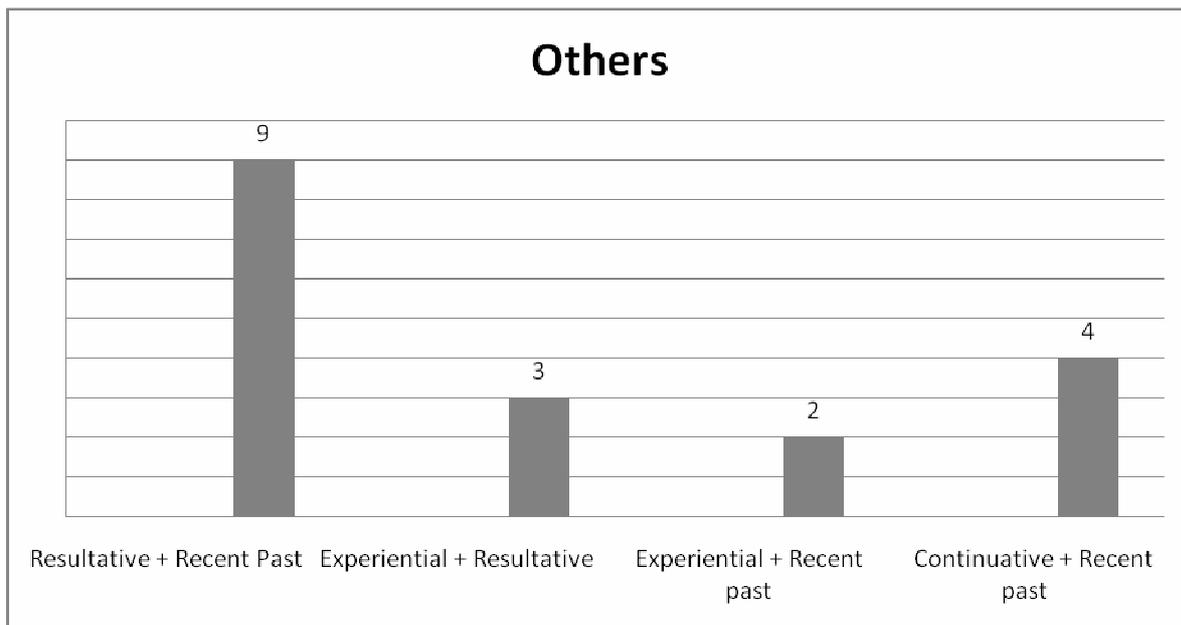


Figure 3. Data included in the category *others*

Counting each message individually within the category *others* and adding this number to the total number of hits per message, the individual frequencies increase (see Figure 4); this increase, however, does not influence the results. The order of the most frequent to the least frequent remains the same; the perfect of recent past is still the most frequent while the continuative perfect is the least used. It is to be observed, however, that the resultative perfect increased by 8% and the perfect of recent past by 5%, while the continuative perfect and the experiential perfect increased by only 1%.

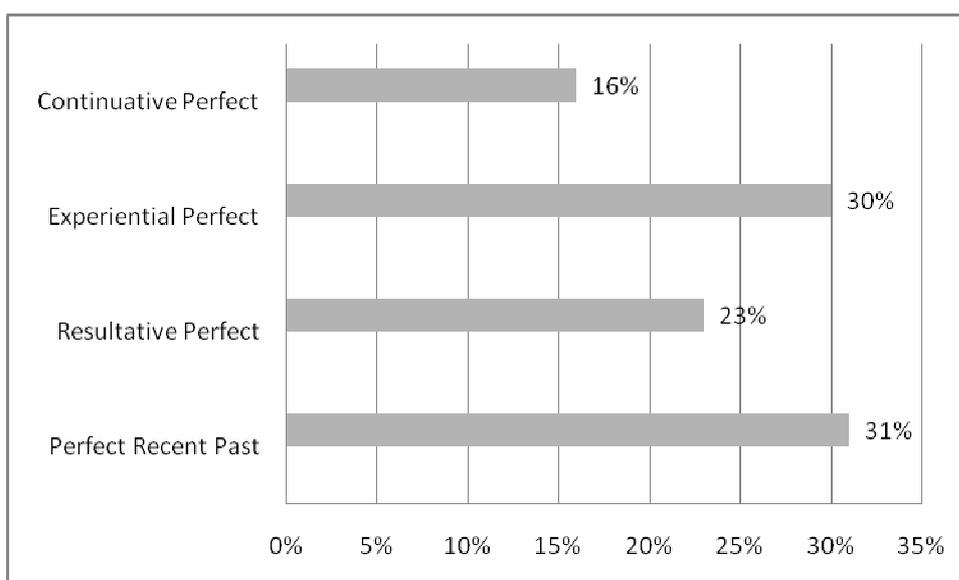


Figure 4. Number of different messages in percentage including the individual hits included previously in *others*.

4.1.1 Continuative perfect

The continuative perfect describes an event which started in the past and continues up to the present moment. Regardless of it being one of the most common readings of the present perfect, the continuative message was found to be the least frequent among the four messages in the 120 sentences analyzed in this study. According to the translations, the continuative message mainly corresponds to simple past in Portuguese. Figure 5 illustrates that twelve out of 18 sentences used the simple past in Portuguese as the equivalent of the English present perfect. A few other constructions were found, each occurring once: *há* + past, *já* + past, simple present and past imperfect.

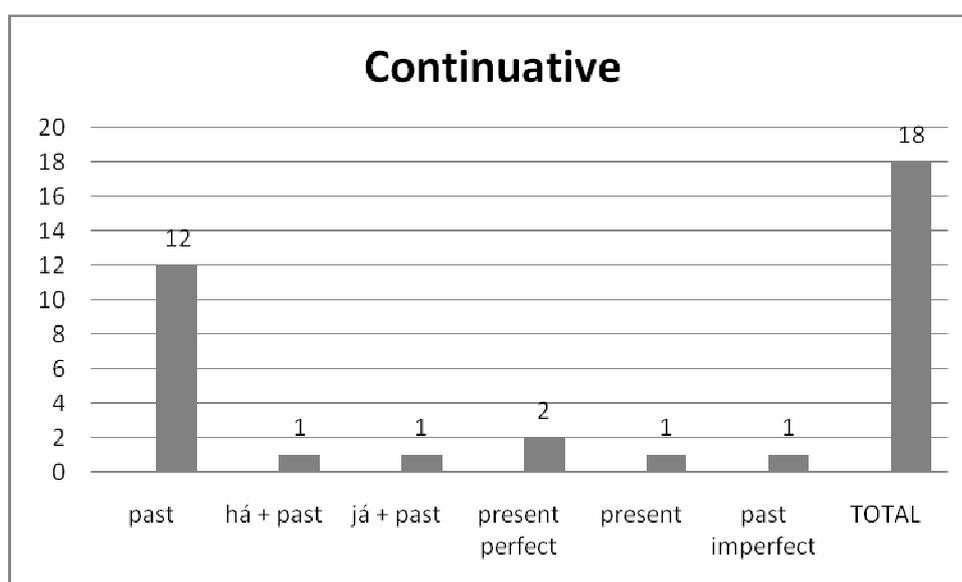


Figure 5. Portuguese tenses used to translate the continuative present perfect in English

Even though there were only two occurrences of the present perfect in Portuguese (see Figure 5), it occurred with a higher frequency than the other categories except for the past. In line with Molsing (2006) the explanation for this could be that despite the fact that the present perfect in Portuguese is characteristically iterative, it can also assume a durative meaning making it equivalent to the continuative message of the English present perfect. In the example below (Table 7), the sentence taken from a book written by the Brazilian author Machado de Assis, the state of being ‘confidante’ has a durative and continuous reading; therefore, the present perfect is used in both Portuguese and English sentences.

Table 7. Example of continuative present perfect in English translated with present perfect in Portuguese.

Dona Carmo <i>has been</i> her young friend's confidante, and, out of discretion, does not repeat what she is told; she mentions only what she thinks she should, with words of approval and admiration.	C	D. Carmo <i>tem sido</i> confidente da amiga, e não repete o que lhe ouve por discreta, resume só o que pode, com palavras de afirmação e de admiração.	present perfect
--	---	---	-----------------

The example in Table 8 illustrates the case in which the simple past is used in Portuguese when the present perfect would fit perfectly. This occurs because some scholars ignore the fact that the present perfect in Portuguese can also express a single durative event, not only an iterative one. In this case the use of present perfect in Portuguese *Bebel tem estado doente* (...) does not convey an iterative meaning, but rather a continuative meaning just as the English version.

Table 8. Example of continuative present perfect in English translated with simple past in Portuguese

Bebel <i>has been</i> sick and when Bebel gets sick she's so clutchy she won't let me out of her sight, and you know her father is exactly no help at all, he has only two things on his mind: politics and money.	C	Bebel <i>ficou</i> doente e quando isso acontece ela se agarra a mim, não me deixa ir a lugar algum e o pai dela, você sabe que é um imprestável, só pensa em duas coisas, política e dinheiro.	past
--	---	---	------

4.1.2 Experiential perfect

The experiential perfect refers to an event experienced one or more times within a given time span. In Portuguese the English present perfect conveying an experiential message is more frequently expressed with the past tense (see Figure 6). As can be seen in Figure 6, in 13 out of 27 sentences the experiential perfect was translated by the simple past and six by *já* + past. Although *ainda* + past occurred only once, *ainda* is an important adverb since it is equivalent to *yet* in English, one of the adverbs frequently used to express experiential messages. The adverbial *já* is a near equivalent of *already*, *ever*, and *yet* (Bond, 2001) and it was not only found preceding the verb in the past, but also the present perfect and the past perfect.

In total, the adverbial *já* ('already') occurred in eight sentences in Brazilian Portuguese; however, in English, *already* appeared in only four sentences. This means that even though in English the adverbial was not explicit, the present perfect was still conveying an experiential message while in Portuguese, because the verbal tense is not able to carry the semantic value

similar to the English present perfect by itself, the adverb *já* is required (see example c) in Table 9).

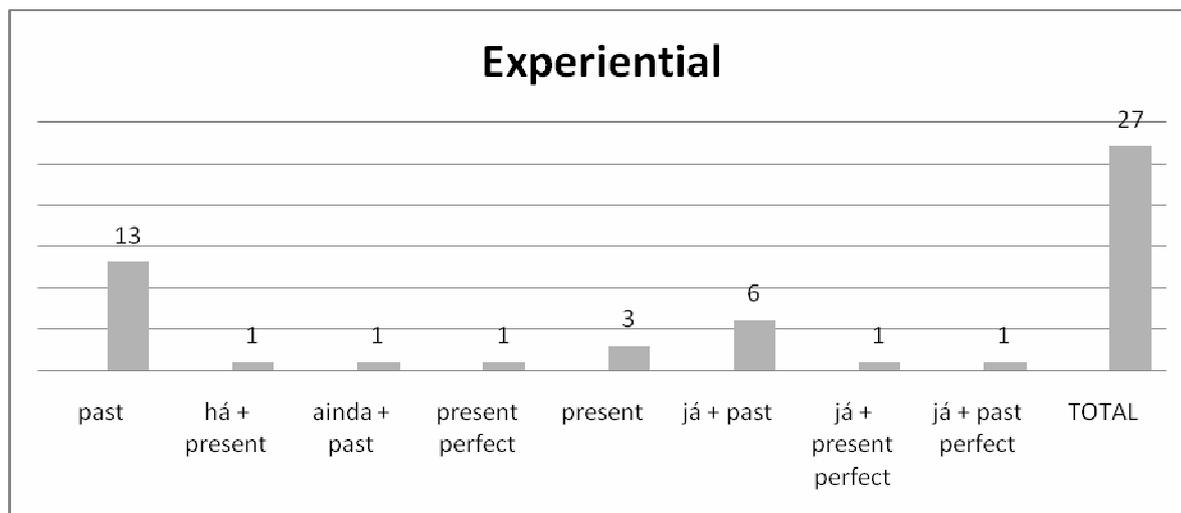


Figure 6. Portuguese tenses used to translate the experiential present perfect in English

In a) in the example below (Table 9) we can see clearly an example of experiential perfect; the adverbial *second time* indicates that the event of seeing the girl happened twice within the time span. This is different from the continuative perfect where the speaker would have been seeing the girl uninterrupted throughout the time span and the adverbials *first* or *second time* would not be possible. In this sentence the time span is the same afternoon, and the present perfect is used because the afternoon is not over yet and there is a possibility of the event happening again.

As can be seen in Table 9, the difference between the examples b) and c) is that in example b) we see the adverb *already* whereas in example c), it does not occur. On the other hand, both examples in Brazilian Portuguese include the combination *já + past*. These examples illustrate what was mentioned before, i.e., that the Brazilian Portuguese more frequently requires the adverb to express certain messages due to the lack of a tense able to carry the exact same meaning conveyed by the present perfect.

Downing and Locke (2006) included in the experiential perfect the ‘first-time experience’ use, for which certain languages use present tense. Sentence d), *This is the first time he has taken my hand in his* is an example of this use and, as claimed by Downing and Locke, this message is expressed by the present tense in Brazilian Portuguese.

Table 9. Examples of English experiential present perfect and the corresponding Brazilian Portuguese form.

a)	He <i>has seen</i> the girl for the second time in the same afternoon, this time from a magnificent angle, and he plans to arrive home with that image intact, still warm.	E	<i>Viu</i> a moça pela segunda vez na mesma tarde, desta vez de um ângulo magnífico, e pretende chegar em casa com a imagem intacta, ainda quente.	Past
b)	I <i>have already called</i> on them twice, and the husband has called on me.	E	<i>Já os visitei</i> duas vezes e o marido a mim.	<i>já + past</i>
c)	But <i>have you seen</i> what freezers cost?	E	Mas você <i>já viu</i> preço de freezer?	<i>já + past</i>
d)	This is the first time he <i>has taken</i> my hand in his.	E	É a primeira vez que ele <i>toma</i> , entre as suas, minha mão.	present

4.1.3 Resultative perfect

The resultative perfect refers to an event completed in the past which has a present relevance. According to my analysis, the 26 samples of resultative perfect in English frequently matched the past tense in Brazilian Portuguese; in Figure 7 we can see that in 21 out of 26 sentences the Brazilian Portuguese simple past is used corresponding to the English resultative present perfect. The remaining Brazilian Portuguese tenses found in the analysis occurred much less often than the simple past; in Figure 7 we see that the simple present tense appears twice while the pluperfect, past imperfect subjunctive and future, the less frequent cases, each appear once.

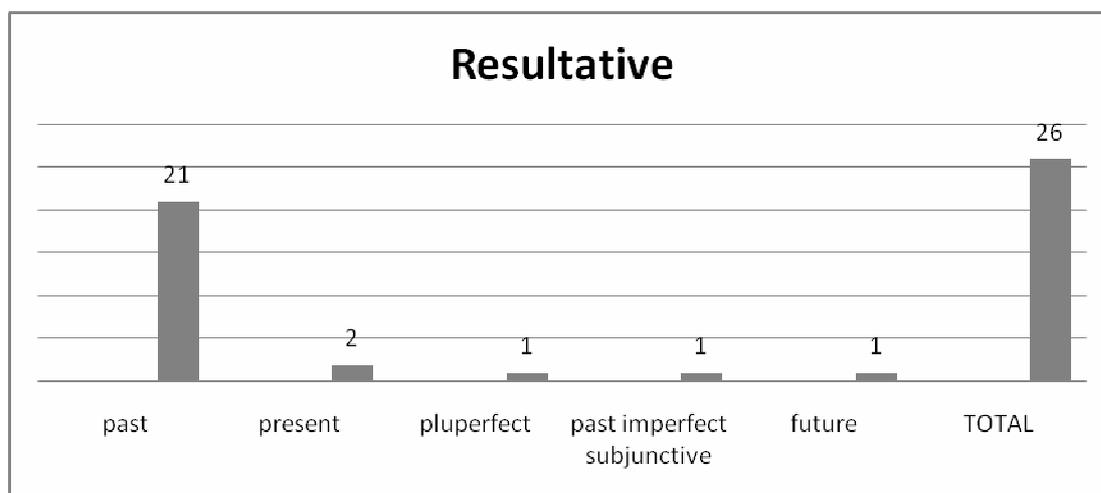


Figure 7. Portuguese tenses used to translate the resultative present perfect in English

In example a) (see Table 10 below) the fact that Boon has changed has present relevance in that now he is different; the author David Lodge used the present perfect to convey the resultative message in English. The Brazilian Portuguese form chosen by the translator Lídia Luther-Cavalcante to correspond to the English resultative perfect was the simple past due to the fact that it is a finished event; Boon is no longer changing. In example b) the reversed translation was made, a Brazilian book written by Osmar Lins translated into English by Adria Frizzi. Sentence b) in Portuguese is in the simple past and could be easily classified as an experiential message due to the adverb *já* (already) conveying the meaning that the speaker has already had the experience of reading the book about Eleonora Duse's life. Nevertheless both the English and the Portuguese versions suggest the resultative message expressing that the speaker has read the book. In example c) we can see the connection with the present moment by the use of the adverbial *now*; which is not indicated in the Portuguese sentence.

Table 10. Examples of English resultative present perfect and the corresponding Brazilian Portuguese form.

a)	Boon <i>has</i> certainly <i>changed</i> -- not only in appearance and dress: his manner is more confident, more relaxed, his speech has lost some of its Cockney vowels and glottal stops, he sounds not unlike David Frost.	R	Boon <i>mudou</i> muito, com certeza -- não apenas na aparência e no jeito de se vestir: está mais seguro, mais relaxado, seu sotaque perdeu um pouco do cockney e agora soa não muito diferente de David Frost.	past
b)	I <i>have read</i> Eleonora Duse's life.	R	<i>Já li</i> a vida de Eleonora Duse.	past
c)	One day, quite a few years ago, I had the notion of building in Engenho Novo a replica of the house I had been brought up in on the old Rua de Matacavalos, and giving it the same aspect and layout as the other one, which <i>has now disappeared</i> .	R	Um dia, há bastantes anos, lembrou-me reproduzir no Engenho Novo a casa em que me criei na antiga rua de Matacavalos, dando-lhe o mesmo aspecto e economia daquela outra, que <i>desapareceu</i> .	past

4.1.4 Perfect of recent past

The perfect of recent past indicates an event which happened a short time before the moment of speech. As mentioned previously, the perfect of recent past was the most frequent message (31 occurrences) found in the 120 sentences analyzed. As can be seen in Figure 8, 13 perfect

of recent past sentences in English were translated into the simple past in Brazilian Portuguese.

The adverb *just* denotes recency in English and was found in 14 out of 31 instances. In Portuguese this recency is marked by the verbal phrase (locução verbal) ‘*acabar (to end; to finish) + de (preposition of) + verb in the infinitive*’. Of the 14 perfect of recent past sentences in English with the adverbial *just*, nine were translated into Brazilian Portuguese with the phrasal verb ‘*acabar + de + verb in the infinitive*’; four sentences were translated into the simple past tense and five into the present. This means that the total number of hits for ‘*acabar (five in the present and four in the past) + de + infinitive*’ found in this study occurred in the Portuguese translations of English sentences where the adverbial *just* was used to signal the perfect of the recent past. Even though the simple past tense was found to be used most frequently to translate the perfect of the recent past in the present study, Bond (2001) points out in her study that in Portuguese *acabar (past) + de + infinitive* is prototypically used to describe events that finished a short while ago.

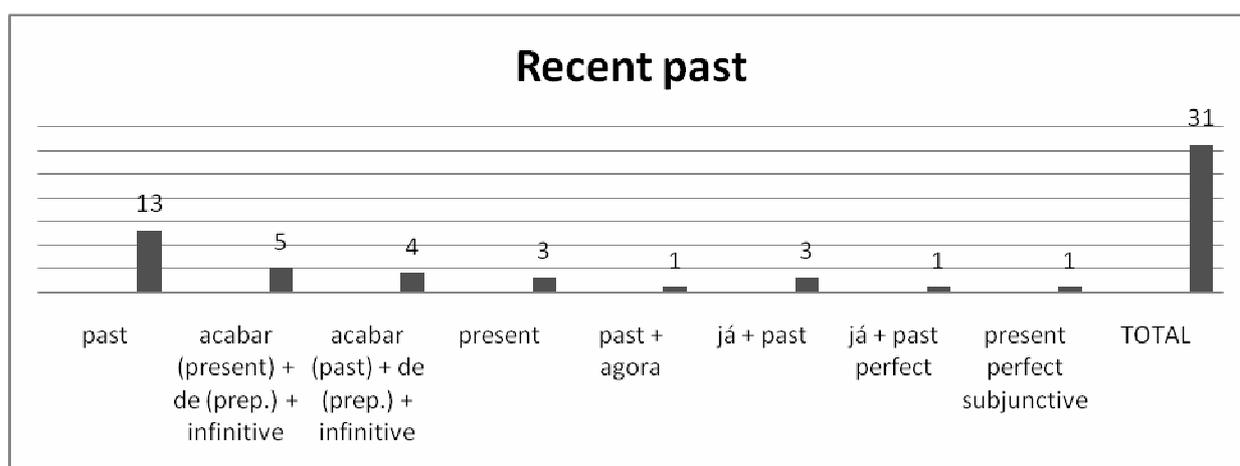


Figure 8. Portuguese tenses used to translate the present perfect of recent past in English

Example a) in Table 11 below illustrates the English perfect of recent past with the adverbial *just* and the Brazilian Portuguese version with the verbal phrase *acabou (past) + de (prep) + infinitive*. The sentence expresses that Amy has left a short while ago and conveys the recency meaning of the perfect of recent past. Although sentence b) has the same form in English as a), b) is not the same as a) in Portuguese. In sentence b) in Brazilian Portuguese, the simple present tense is used rather than the past for the auxiliary verb *acabar*; this indicates even more recency than the same phrasal verb in the past. In c) we see an example

classified as perfect of recent past due to the context in which the recency is clear despite the lack of the adverbial *just*; here we can conclude that *he* has just invited G. Gâmbolo for a drink and is waiting outside thanks to the verb *prefers* which is in the present tense. The fact the he prefers waiting outside in the present moment suggests that the action of inviting Gambolo for a drink took place shortly before that; the same holds in the Portuguese.

Table 11. Examples of English present perfect of recent past and the corresponding Brazilian Portuguese form.

a)	Amy <i>has just left</i> .	RP	Amy <i>acabou de sair</i> .	acabou (past) + de (prep) + infinitive
b)	Don't tell anyone what I <i>have just entrusted</i> to you if you don't want to lose your ears.	RP	Não contes a ninguém o que te <i>acabo de confiar</i> , se não queres perder as orelhas.	acabo (present) + de (prep) + infinitive - Bond suggests the use of acabou (past) instead
c)	But he <i>has invited</i> G. Gâmbolo for a drink and prefers to wait outside.	RP	Mas ele <i>convidou</i> G. Gâmbolo para um drinque e <i>prefere esperá-lo</i> na varanda.	past

4.1.5 Others

As mentioned previously, the sentences which could be placed in more than one category or had different interpretations were classified as *others*. Below I will discuss these subcategories and give examples showing how they are rendered in Portuguese.

4.1.5.1 Resultative + Recent past perfect

These two different messages can easily overlap due to their close connection with *now*. Depending on the context and the interpretation it is frequently difficult to set apart the two meanings. The connection with the present in the resultative use is that the resultant state has an influence on the present event, while the recent past perfect may be connected with 'now' in that a past situation is close in time to the present.

Of the five possible combinations found in this study, resultative + recent past perfect was the most frequent with nine instances (see Table 12). Five out of the nine hits were rendered to be in the simple past in Portuguese in order to match the English form. Each of the remaining tenses occurred only once.

Table 12. Number of tenses used in Brazilian Portuguese equivalent to the combination of resultative + recent past perfect.

Resultative + Recent Past	
past	5
present	1
present perfect	1
pluperfect	1
já + past	1
TOTAL	9

In example a) (Table 13), the resultative perfect is possible if we interpret it as the actors not being in the place where they have gone off from and as recent past perfect owing to the proximity to the present of what the actors have done. In the second example the fact that the speaker has received the orders results in the fact that now he/she has the information and knows what to do; if the sentence is interpreted from the context it is possible to notice the recency with which the orders seem to have been given; the adverb *today* connotes that the event was recent and connected with the present moment.

Table 13. Examples of English resultative perfect + perfect of recent past and the corresponding Brazilian Portuguese form.

a)	The actors <i>have gone</i> off to Make-Up for repairs, or are resting in their dressing-rooms.	R + RP	Os atores <i>foram</i> para a sala de maquilagem para retoques, ou estão nos camarotes descansando.	past
b)	It must be today, I <i>have already received</i> orders, said the jailer, when he told him the plan for his escape that had been agreed with his father.	R + RP	Tem de ser hoje, <i>já recebi</i> ordem, disse o carcereiro quando lhe contou o plano para a fuga, conforme o combinado com o pai.	já + past

4.1.5.2. Experiential + Recent past perfect

Taking into account the context, it is possible to find sentences which combine the messages of experiential and recent past. Only two out of 120 samples were classified as examples of this combination (see Table 14).

Table 14. Number of tenses used in Brazilian Portuguese equivalent to the combination of experiential + recent past perfect

Experiential + Recent past	
past	1
já + past	1
TOTAL	2

In the sentence below it is possible to construe an experiential message in that the people have experienced passing through the village. Moreover, from the greater context of the dialogue (not given), we understand that the experience has been recent.

Table 15. Examples of English experiential perfect + perfect of recent past and the corresponding Brazilian Portuguese form.

«People from all over the world <i>have passed</i> through this village, son,» said his father.	E + RP	-- Homens de todo o mundo <i>já passaram</i> por esta aldeia, filho -- disse o pai.	já + past
---	---------------	--	-----------

4.1.5.3. Continuative + Resultative perfect

There were four occurrences of the combination continuative + resultative perfect (see Table 16). It is possible to construe two distinct messages at the same time due to the fact that an action or event that started in the past and remains in the present certainly has strong influence and results at the time of speaking.

Table 16. Number of tenses used in Brazilian Portuguese equivalent to the combination of continuative + resultative perfect.

Continuative + Resultative	
past	2
já + past	1
já + present	1
TOTAL	4

In example a) (Table 17), the present perfect *has invested* can be interpreted as continuative; he has invested time and money through the entire time span and is still investing it in the present moment, or possibly, he has invested it in the past and it refers to the present result. In example b) we can assume either that the paint is still darkening, a continuative message or

that the process of darkening is complete, or has at least reached a certain stage of completion, a resultative message.

Table 17. Examples of English continuative + resultative present perfect and the corresponding Brazilian Portuguese form.

a)	By now he <i>has invested</i> so much time and money in the process that any career other than an academic one has become unthinkable, and anything less than success in it unbearable.	C + R	A essa altura, ele já investiu tanto tempo e dinheiro que qualquer carreira que não seja a acadêmica se torna impensável, e qualquer coisa que não o sucesso é insuportável.	já + past
b)	The paint <i>has darkened</i> with time, but it still gives a good idea of both.	C + R	A pintura escureceu muito, mas ainda dá idéia de ambos.	past

4.1.5.4. Experiential + Resultative perfect

In accordance with the sentences analysed in the previous subsection, the experiential and the resultative perfect also have a narrow relation with the present moment, but they do not overlap; it is possible to interpret these samples as either of these two messages but one at a time. The simple past in Brazilian Portuguese was also more frequent in this case with two instances; *já* + past perfect was found only once (see Table 18).

Table 18. Number of tenses used in Brazilian Portuguese equivalent to the combination of experiential + resultative perfect

Experiential + Resultative	
past	2
<i>já</i> + past perfect	1
TOTAL	3

In the example in Table 19, we understand that he has had the experience of having breakfast and that this experience has been completed before the moment of speaking. The Brazilian Portuguese past perfect was used in this sample to translate the English version; this happened because its use is to refer to a past event in relation to another; in this sentence the action of having breakfast is in relation to an already past action of not wanting to have another one (*não estava* – was not). It is not a correct translation of the English verb tenses, since the Portuguese says ‘he already *had had* his breakfast and that he *didn’t* particularly *want* to have another’. The use of the present perfect in the first verb (*tinha tomado* – *has had*) and of the

adverbial *that day* – *naquele dia* block the use of simple present in this Portuguese sentence. The sentence could be interpreted as some kind of historical present, or it may be the case that the English sentence is not correct and *has* should be *had*. The sentence below was extracted from the original English book *Changing Places* from 1975 written by David Lodge.

Table 19. Examples of English experiential + resultative present perfect and the corresponding Brazilian Portuguese form.

He <i>has had</i> one breakfast already that day and doesn't particularly want another one, but of course it's a matter of the time change.	E + R	Ele <i>já tinha tomado</i> o café da manhã naquele dia e não estava com vontade de tomar mais um, mas é claro que era por causa do fuso horário.	já + past perfect
---	--------------	--	-------------------------

In summary, for the English present perfect 70 out of 120 sentences were found to be equivalent to the Brazilian Portuguese simple past, without taking into account the use of simple past in combination with adverbs or phrasal verbs. 31% of the samples analyzed from COMPARA were classified as perfect of recent past, which means that the perfect of recent past can be considered the most frequent message among the four types in this present study.

4.2 Textbook analysis

In this section I will analyze eight textbooks used in English classes by Brazilian teachers and students.³ At first I will point out general aspects and show how the textbooks were developed. I will take into account which language the textbooks use and how they deal with the various linguistic uses, meanings, and functions as well as the types of exercises they provide and whether or not they give examples. Secondly I will look at each textbook independently, focusing on how they introduce the present perfect tense and also how they draw attention to information which is relevant to Brazilian students learning the English present perfect.

³ A list of the textbooks used in the study can be found in the list of references (primary sources).

Table 20. Survey of results of textbooks analysis.

TOPICS BOOKS	Explanation in Portuguese	Explanation in English	Comparison with simple past	Translation of examples into Portuguese	Interpretation of examples	Exercises using simple past vs. present perfect
Advanced grammar in use	-	X	X	-	-	X
Compact English	X	-	X	X	X	X
Commercial English	-	X	X	-	X	-
Get to the Point	X	-	X ⁴	-	-	-
Graded English	X	-	X ⁵	-	-	X
Graded exercises in English	-	X	X	-	X	X
Inglês Doorway	X	-	X	X	X	X
New Dynamic	X	-	X	X	-	X

As can be seen in Table 20, only three out of eight textbooks presented an explanation in English; the rest of the books were developed for beginners and intermediate students and are written completely in Portuguese with the exception of some examples that were in English. The books on the beginner and intermediate levels are used in Brazilian Elementary and High School respectively. The advanced books and grammars were developed for language course students or English teachers.

⁴ It only compares the simple past with present perfect by pointing out that one is definite time and the other indefinite with one example of each.

⁵ It only compares the simple past with present perfect by pointing out that one is definite time and the other indefinite.

The fact that even books developed for high school level are not written in English illustrate the low level of English knowledge, since at this level the students should be able to read explanations in the target language. Furthermore, the fact that the English books are in Portuguese rather than in English and that the classes are mostly carried out in the students' mother language does not instigate and challenge them to know and learn more.

All the textbooks analyzed contrasted the present perfect with simple past when discussing the present perfect in English. Although this comparison is relevant for all learners independently of what language they have as a first language, it is especially important for Brazilian Portuguese speakers who, owing to first language interference, tend to use the simple past when the present perfect would be expected in English. Six of the textbooks analyzed compare the present perfect with the simple past by explaining the different uses and showing the different interpretations the listener/speaker can give to the sentence according to which tense is used. Two textbooks only compare the simple past with present perfect by pointing out that one is definite and the other indefinite time. *Get to the point* illustrates this with one example of each tense while *Graded English* does not provide any examples.

Three textbooks translated the English examples into Brazilian Portuguese. Two textbooks (see below) use the Brazilian Portuguese present perfect to translate the English present perfect examples in sentences like *I have slept late* 'Eu tenho dormido tarde', where the sentence in Portuguese indicates that I have been sleeping late lately which is not the same meaning expressed by the English version. *Inglês Doorway* is the only textbook which presents the Portuguese translation using the simple past rather than the Brazilian Portuguese present perfect.

Two of the textbooks, *Compact English* and *New Dynamic*, translate the English present perfect into Brazilian Portuguese present perfect instead of past. Four out of eight textbooks included an explanation of possible interpretations of the examples. As can be seen in Table 20, *Compact English*, *Commercial English*, *Graded exercises in English* and *Inglês Doorway* provide an interpretation of the examples and also compare the present perfect and simple past. The following examples are from *Graded exercises in English* (1987: 82):

He has worked here for two years. (He is still working here)

He worked here for two years. (...but he doesn't work here anymore)

Besides the information presented in Table 20, it is interesting to note that three textbooks mention the iterative use of the English present perfect: *Commercial English*, *New Dynamic English* and *Advanced grammar in use*. Since it is not usually mentioned in any English grammar and is not a prototypical use of the present perfect in English, it seems that it is unnecessary to refer to it in a book developed for Brazilian learners whose difficulties are exactly those concerning the encoded iterative meaning conveyed by the present perfect in Portuguese. Referring to an iterative message of the English present perfect confuses the students who already are forcing an iterative meaning on every sentence they translate from Portuguese into English by using the same morphological construction for both English and Portuguese present perfect.

4.2.1. Advanced Grammar in Use

As the title says, *Advanced Grammar in Use* (first published in 1999) is a grammar; though it is used for teaching. It is pertinent to Brazilian students for the reason that it explains the present perfect by comparing it with the simple past; nevertheless its many divisions are complex and confusing. The present perfect is explained in units 3, 4, 5 and 8; in 3, 4 and 5 it is compared with simple past and in 8 (not described below) with present perfect continuous. After each unit the book includes a page of exercises where the students have to choose the verb, complete the sentences, correct the sentences, etc. It is the most complex and comprehensive of the eight textbooks analyzed in this study.

In unit 3 where the present perfect is first mentioned, four different uses of the present perfect, including examples for each use, are listed:

A – when something happened in the past within an indefinite time.

B – when we are interested in the way that something that happened in the past affects the situation that exists now.

C – when we talk about how long an existing situation has lasted.

D – to say that an action or event has been repeated a number of times up to now: *They have been to Chile three times.*

In item **B**, the author brings up that the connection with the present may also refer to something that happened recently. In the examples no adverbs are used and recency can only

be inferred from the context. Unit 4 goes on to explain the uses of the present perfect. It also points out differences between present perfect and simple past usage:⁶

1) ‘we use the present perfect when we talk about something that happened in a period of time up to the present. We use simple past to talk about something that happened at a particular, finished time in the past.’

The text illustrates the use of the present perfect by comparing it with that of the simple past in the same “context” and with the same verb, instead of using real data extracted from corpora which would allow the student to compare the present perfect with the simple past in a real situation.

2) ‘we use present perfect when we report that someone has recently invented, produced, discovered or written something. When we talk about something that was invented, etc in the more distant past we use simple past.’

Here there is no mention of the verb form to be used when the student is talking about something discovered long ago but which has a present relevance.

3) ‘sometimes it makes little difference to the main sense of the sentence if we think of something happening in a period up to now or at a particular finished time in the past.’

I'm sure I read (have read) somewhere that he died in a plane crash.

Even though the textbook is quite comprehensive, the student might be confused with all the different functions and uses listed throughout the four units in which it is presented. Instead of learning, the student may well not be able to distinguish the uses or recognize when the present perfect should be used due to the excess of information.

4.2.2. Compact English

Published in 1998, *Compact English* refers to the present perfect as describing an action initiated in the past that extends up to the present or, at least, whose effects are still observable in the present.

The text gives examples of sentences translated from the English past into Brazilian Portuguese past and the English present perfect into the Portuguese present perfect without

⁶ Items 1), 2) and 3) were extracted from the textbook *Advanced Grammar in Use*, page 8.

taking into account the distinct meanings. On the other hand, it says that in *She traveled to London last year* the meaning is that she traveled last year and not again, whereas in *she has traveled to London* the meaning is that she traveled to London, keeps traveling (even though no adverb is used to express this and no larger context is given) to London, or that she is still there.

It also presents adverbs used with the present perfect and gives examples. Here the Portuguese past is used to translate the English present perfect. Students in general probably will not be able to understand why, and it is not explained why in the previous examples the Portuguese present perfect was used. There is also a lack of examples to illustrate the rules presented; the student at times may not understand the use of the present perfect without seeing an example of it being actually used.

4.2.3. Commercial English

Commercial English was developed in 1973 by professors from Unisinos University in South Brazil for an English course focused on business English. Therefore it is completely in English and presumes that the student already knows the basics. It presents a section entitled “Special difficulties” which starts by reviewing the simple past and observing that it is used when the exact time is mentioned or implied and events are completed in the past. It then describes the present perfect as:

1- Action in an indefinite time in the past. (Single or repeated)

It is noted that the present perfect describes a past action connected to the present by focusing on the results of the action at the present moment rather than on the time of action as with the simple past.

2- Continuative

The uses/meanings expressed by the two adverbs *for* and *since* are explained and a comparison with the past is also drawn.

3- Recent past

In the textbooks there are no translations of the English examples into Portuguese, so it is not possible to know if it will be clear to the students that the English present perfect describes a

past situation that is connected to the present. However, according to the notes of the student who used to own the book used in the analysis, it is possible to see that he/she translated the English present perfect sentences into Brazilian Portuguese present perfect; for example: *I have read this book* – ‘Eu tenho lido esse livro’. This form cannot, however, be used in this case, since the Brazilian Portuguese sentence carries an iterative meaning which is absent from the English. On the other hand, the textbook compares examples in the simple past and the present perfect by describing the difference in meaning between the two tenses. Adverbs such as *yet, already, just and recently* are mentioned as typical for perfect of recent past sentences.

4.2.4. Get to the point

Get to the point is a third edition from 1996 and it was developed for beginners. It starts by giving the basic information as to how the present perfect is built and the affirmative, negative and interrogative formed. Even though the book was created for beginners, it is written in English.

The present perfect is described as expressing an action that happened in the past (indefinite time) but which is relevant to the present. The authors also discuss the use of the adverbs *already, ever, yet, never* and the constructions in which they are most commonly used.

4.2.5. Graded English

Graded English is a one-volume book from 1997, used by high school students for three years. The chapter dedicated to the present perfect is divided into several parts in which, after some information has been presented, a memorization exercise is given. It starts by showing how the present perfect is formed (*have/has + past participle*) and explaining the regular and irregular past participle. This is followed by an exercise where the student is asked to give the simple past and past participle of the listed verbs. The next chunk of explanation presents sentences in the affirmative, negative and interrogative forms which are also followed by an exercise in which the students are to put the sentences into the interrogative and negative form.

The book indicates the following uses for the present perfect in English: a) it is used to express action in an indefinite time in the past; b) the present perfect is also used with *since/for* to express actions that started in the past and extend till the present; c) It is also used with some adverbs: *just (acaba de)* indicates that the action just happened, *already (já)* and *yet (já* when used in interrogative and *ainda* when used in the negative).

4.2.6. Graded exercises in English

As the title *Graded exercises in English* suggests, this old book from 1987 (1st edition from 1981) is focused on exercises but also includes a brief description of the tenses and their uses. After each explanation there is an exercise. In the case of the present perfect case, the information is divided into three parts, each followed by an exercise.

The book is written in English even though some of the data is in fact basic. After showing how the present perfect is formed, the author states that it is used to “describe an action that happened at an indefinite time in the past”: *I have read that book*, and to “describe an action that was repeated several times in the past”: *I have read that book several times*.

Furthermore, it is mentioned that the present perfect also describes an action that began in the past and continues up to the present. The author draws attention to the difference in meaning from the simple past as illustrated by these two sentences: *He has worked here for two years* (he is still working here) and *He worked here* (but doesn't work here anymore).

4.2.7. Inglês Doorway

Inglês Doorway is a one-volume book from 2004 created for Brazilian students to use during the three years of high school. It starts out with short examples of the present perfect in the affirmative, interrogative, negative and interrogative-negative. Despite its having been developed for high school students, it is written in Portuguese; only the examples are presented in English.

The book lists two uses for the present perfect in English:

- 1) It describes an action initiated in the past which continues up to the present or, at least, has results which can still be observed.

I have talked to him about this lately.

Tenho conversado com ele sobre isto ultimamente. – (conversei e vou continuar conversando com ele – I talked and I am going to keep talking to him)

2) It describes an action that happened in the past at an unspecified time.

I have seen that movie a lot of times.

Vi esse filme muitas vezes.

It is pointed out in the textbook that students often confuse the present perfect with the simple past; therefore the past tense is described and explained separately.

She wrote to him last week.

Ela escreveu para ele na semana passada. (Ela escreveu para ele e, desde então, não escreveu mais – She wrote him and, since then, didn't write anymore).

Even though this textbook does not mention the iterative as one of the perfect messages in English as some of the other textbooks, we can observe it through the example in 1) where the author uses *lately* and explains the interpretation of the sentence in Portuguese as 'I have talked and I keep talking to him'. The use of *lately* in this sentence implies that the event of talking to him has happened repeatedly throughout the time span rather than continuously.

4.2.8. New Dynamic English

New Dynamics English was developed for students in the eighth grade in elementary school (average age 14 years), is written in Portuguese and includes a few English examples which are also translated into Portuguese. Before introducing what the present perfect is, the example below is given. The Portuguese translation means that man has been building modern bridges (*lately* or in the last few years) and cannot mean that man built modern bridges in the past, which would be a perfectly acceptable interpretation of the English example.

Man has built modern bridges

O homem tem construído pontes modernas.

Four uses of the present perfect tense are given in the textbook:

- 1) To refer to an action that happened in the past but without specifying when it happened: *I have slept late* (Eu tenho dormido tarde).
- 2) To refer to an action (or fact) that began in the past but still persists until the present: *I have worked here since 1990*. (Eu tenho trabalhado aqui desde 1990).
- 3) To refer to an action (or fact) that repeats itself many times in the past, without mentioning an exact time: *I have visited my parents many times*.
- 4) To refer to an action that has just occurred: *He has just arrived*. (Ele acabou de chegar).

The textbook compares the present perfect with the simple past by saying that if the moment in which the event happened is given, the sentence is to be considered simple past; an example is given: *I slept late yesterday*. The only correct translations of the examples from the English present perfect into Brazilian Portuguese are those of the perfect of recent past, where the author uses the phrasal verb ‘*acabar* (past) + *de* + infinitive’. Item 3) could be considered experiential perfect, if not for the example given; the sentence conveys an iterative meaning and causes confusion to the student. Mentioning that the English present perfect can express a repeated action throughout the time-span only increases the chance of the student applying (and thinking it is the correct choice) the Brazilian present perfect instead of other tenses, such as, for example, the simple past.

5. Discussion

The teaching/learning process of the English present perfect is one of the most problematic areas of EFL in Brazil. One of the problems students face when studying the English present perfect is that when comparing the two languages the Brazilian Portuguese present perfect presents an analogue form but with a distinct semantic value. Due to L1 transfer Brazilian students tend to translate the English present perfect literally into Brazilian Portuguese present perfect when other tenses and even adverbs would be required. Most teachers and textbooks fail to present the major uses and messages of the English present perfect and do not explore the appropriate Brazilian Portuguese tense which would express the same meaning. This should be done in order to call the student’s attention to the semantics involved in the use of the English present perfect.

A total of 31% of the samples analyzed from COMPARA were classified as perfect of recent past, which means that the perfect of recent past can be considered the most frequent message among the four types in this present study. Even though in Bond's study it is mentioned that only the Brazilian Portuguese phrasal verb *acabar + de + infinitive* is the equivalent to the English perfect of recent past, according to the data from COMPARA, thirteen English sentences out of 31 were equivalent to Brazilian Portuguese simple past. Only nine sentences contained the phrasal verb mentioned above; in five sentences the verb *acabar* was in the present and four in the simple past.

The majority of the rest of the messages (continuative, experiential and resultative) were also most often translated by the simple past. For the English continuative perfect twelve out of 18 sentences were found to be equivalent to the Brazilian Portuguese simple past, as well as 21 of 26 sentences for the resultative perfect. For the experiential perfect, even though the simple past in Brazilian Portuguese was also the most frequent equivalent, there were also six occurrences of the combination of *já + past* (*já* = 'already') which was mentioned by Bond as being the Portuguese equivalent to the English experiential perfect.

The translation data from COMPARA show that 58% of the sentences matched English present perfect with Brazilian Portuguese simple past; which means that 70 out of 120 sentences of English present perfect were translated from or into Brazilian Portuguese simple past. This high rate makes evident what all Brazilian students should be aware of: the English present perfect cannot be translated from/into Brazilian Portuguese present perfect despite the similar forms, except in very few cases (only 3% in the present study).

Analyzing the textbooks was a means of assessing the approaches used and the manner in which the present perfect is usually presented to Brazilian students. It is obvious that the teachers can complement and even introduce new content and explanations that are not described in the textbooks. But taking into account that the textbooks generally reflect the level of instruction and knowledge of the teachers who choose to use a certain book, I assume that by analyzing the textbooks used, it is possible to get a general picture of what is studied in the classroom. According to my analysis of the selected textbooks used in Brazil to teach English, it is evident that the students will not have enough background to be able to distinguish which Brazilian Portuguese tense translates the English present perfect in different situations and contexts.

Most textbooks do not even mention the four major possible messages which can be conveyed by the English present perfect and do not point out the different tenses used in Portuguese to translate this tense. Moreover, some textbooks translate the English present perfect into Portuguese present perfect and ignore the different messages conveyed by these tenses in the respective languages. Even the textbooks that translate the English present perfect examples correctly into simple past do not explain the reason why they do so.

In order to be more effective, the textbooks could present examples and exercises in which the student is encouraged to discover for him/herself that the English present perfect expresses a past situation (even though in some cases there is a relevance in the present) and that the Brazilian Portuguese present perfect cannot, except in a very limited number of cases, be used as an equivalent to it. At the same time the uses of the present perfect in English become evident; the student will become better able to perceive how it differs from the simple past. When the problem of distinguishing between present perfect and simple past persists, students can be asked to compare real samples from corpora containing the same verb in both tenses, analyze their meanings and give the reasons why one tense was chosen instead of the other.

Through Sample Exercise A (see Appendix for exercises) the student will be aware of the fact that even though the name is present perfect, this tense describes a past situation. This is the first step for the student to realize that the English present perfect is not analogous to the Brazilian Portuguese present perfect; instead, it is mostly equivalent to the simple past. Exercises which require that the student analyze the semantic value of the sentences allowing him/her to realize the different possible messages conveyed by the English present perfect are necessary. Sample exercise C exposes the student to the translation of sentences both of which can be translated from English present perfect and simple past into Brazilian Portuguese simple past. Here the student is asked to hypothesize as to why the same tense is used in Portuguese and what is the real meaning of the present perfect in English.

All the sentences included in the sample exercises were taken from the corpus COMPARA. The suggested drills are corpus based and reflect actual usage in context, which provides a background for the student to be able to hypothesize about the meaning expressed in the sentence and which message is being conveyed. Made-up sentences out of context do not provide enough information for students to make informed choices.

Another suggested exercise based on the corpora consists of English examples of sentences in the present perfect, some of which have been translated by the Portuguese present perfect and some which have been translated by the Portuguese simple past and also some examples of sentences in which the English past tense occurs. In this exercise the student has to choose between the English present perfect and past; therefore the context given has to be enough for them to be able to hypothesize, based on what they know, which of the two is the more appropriate (see Appendix D).

Although it is important that the learner acquire the target language without comparing and translating into the L1 during the learning process, in certain situations where L1 transfer is seen to be interfering with the learning of the L2, it is essential to point out the different uses of structures in both languages, even when the structures are similar. For example, the teacher must call the attention of Brazilian learners to the fact that the Brazilian Portuguese present perfect should not be used to translate English present perfect unless the sentence conveys an iterative meaning.⁷

Summing up, what makes the English present perfect so difficult for Brazilian students to learn is a mix of L1 transfer, misleading information and lack of support from the textbooks used in class. The textbooks as much as the teachers should call the students' attention to the semantic value of the present perfect in both languages by pointing out the differences in use and meaning. After that, the teachers should explain and illustrate with examples the major readings of the English present perfect so the learner will be aware of the different messages it can express. The context and message have to be emphasized so the student will be able to distinguish what the sentence is expressing and translate it accordingly. It is also important to stress that although the Brazilian Portuguese present perfect looks more similar to the English present perfect, the Portuguese simple past frequently corresponds better.

As mentioned previously, the students should be made aware of the important role of context when looking at the semantic value of a sentence. Exercises in which the context is not given, where the student only has to write down the verb in the correct form of the present perfect are not of much value. The exercises have to require an analysis of the context to be effective. Most of the textbooks evaluated in this study only present exercises where the context given is minimal. But on the other hand, most of the books offered exercises where the student has to

⁷ Except a few cases as brought up by Molsing (2006) in which the Brazilian Portuguese can express single and durative situations: *A Maria tem estado doente. Mary has been sick.*

compare the use of the English present perfect with the English simple past. This comparison is extremely relevant since Brazilian students tend to get confused as to when to use the one or the other. The ideal exercise will demand of the student to take the context into account and analyze which message is being conveyed (for that they have to be aware of what the possible readings of the English present perfect are). The student has to realize that even though a certain sentence is in the simple past tense in Portuguese, in English, the present perfect is more suitable than the English past when translating.

Therefore, presenting the major messages conveyed by and the uses of the English present perfect is a good first step in teaching this difficult tense. The teacher can call the student's attention to the fact that the present perfect in English can convey different meanings according to the context in which it appears. In order for Brazilian students to be able to distinguish the semantic relations between both English and Brazilian Portuguese present perfect, teachers and textbooks have to provide real examples in context instead of short made-up sentences which are much less complex than examples from real utterances. In a limited number of cases, exercises in which the context is not needed and the student has only to complete drills in an automatic way just by filling in the correct verb form are helpful to learn the present perfect structure and also the past participle form of the verbs.

Finally, the students could be asked to identify the messages and meanings conveyed by an example in order to establish which verbal tenses are appropriate for expressing the same in Brazilian Portuguese. The students should be encouraged to look for the semantic value of the English sentence/text in the light of the context given. After they have brainstormed and come to the conclusion that different structures are used to translate the English present perfect into Brazilian Portuguese, the teacher can point out that to convey English present perfect message the Brazilian Portuguese simple past is mostly used.

6. Conclusion

The English present perfect currently represents one of the main barriers to learning and teaching English for Brazilian students and teachers. Unfortunately, there have been no notable efforts by educators and scholars to change this picture. In order to change the current situation, the textbooks should be reviewed and the teachers better instructed on how to deal with those special cases in which the conventional approach does not work. Further studies

based on actual usage would be useful in providing feedback as to whether the new approach is effective or not. So as to investigate it, a revised textbook and a teacher instructed to provide the information discussed and recommended in the present study could be assessed. It would be interesting to determine the effectiveness of this approach on the students' performance and make appropriate adjustments in view of their response.

References

Primary sources

Aun, Eliana & de Moraes, Maria Clara Prete & Sansamovics, Neuza Bilia. 1996. *Get to the Point*. São Paulo: Saraiva

Bertolin, Rafael & Siqueira Silva, Antonio. 1981?⁸. *New Dynamic vol. 4*. São Paulo: IBEP.

Dixson, Robert J. 1987. *Graded Exercises in English*. New York: Regents Pu.

Heckler, Evaldo & Wendling, José L. Tarcísio. 1973. *Commercial English*. São Leopoldo: UNISINOS.

Hewings, Martin. 1999. *Advanced Grammar in Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Liberato, Wilson Antonio. 1998. *Compact English*. São Paulo: FDT.

Liberato, Wilson Antonio. 2004. *Inglês doorway*. São Paulo: FDT.

Martins, Elisabeth Prescher, Pasqualin, Ernesto & Amos, Eduardo. 1993. *Graded English*. São Paulo: Editora Moderna.

Secondary sources

Biber, Douglas, Johansson, Stig, Leech, Geoffrey, Conrad, Susan & Reppen, Randi. 1999. *Longman grammar of spoken and written English*. Harlow: Longman.

Bond, Karen. 2001. *An investigation into the equivalents of the present perfect in Brazilian Portuguese and the challenges the students face*. Available at: [<http://www3.telus.net/linguisticsissues/presperfect.html>]. (Accessed 02/28/2011)

Celce-Murcia, Marianne, Larsen-Freeman, Diane & Williams, Howard Alan. 1999. *The grammar book: An ELS/EFL teacher's course*. 2nd edn. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Collins, Peter & Hollo, Carmella. 2000. *English grammar: An introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Comrie, Bernard. 1976. *Aspect*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Costa, Sônia Bastos Borba. 2002. *O aspecto em português*. São Paulo: Contexto.

⁸ No year is given in the book; this date is from the catalogue of the national library in Rio de Janeiro.

- Cunha, Celso & Cunha, Lindley. 2001. *Nova Gramática do Português Contemporâneo*. 3rd edn. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira.
- Downing, Angela & Locke, Philip. 2006. *English grammar: A university course*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge.
- Giorgi, Alessandra & Pianesi, Fabio. 1997. *Tense and aspect: From semantics to morphosyntax*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Graver, B. D. 1986. *Advanced English practice*. 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available at: [<http://www.scribd.com/doc/6905038/B-D-Graver-Advanced-English-Practice>]. (Accessed 02/28/2011)
- Huddleston, Rodney & Pullum, Geoffrey K. 2002. *The Cambridge grammar of the English language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Huddleston, Rodney & Pullum, Geoffrey K. 2005. *Student's introduction to English Grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ilari, Rodolfo. 2001. Notas para uma semântica do passado composto em português. *Revista Letras*, 25: 129-152.
- Klein, Wolfgang. 1994. *Time in Language*. London: Routledge.
- Leech, Geoffrey & Svartvik, Jan. 1994. *A communicative grammar of English*. 2nd edn. London: Longman.
- Michaelis, Laura A. 1994. The ambiguity of the English present perfect. *J. Linguistics*. 30: 111- 157.
- Molsing, Karina Veronica. 2006. The Present Perfect at the Semantics/Pragmatics Interface: American English and Brazilian Portuguese. In: Christian Ebert & Cornelia Endriss (eds.), *Proceedings of the Sinn und Bedeutung 10. ZASPIL - ZAS Papers in Linguistics*, 44: 239-250. Berlin: ZAS.
- Pancheva, Roumyana. 2003. The aspectual makeup of perfect participles and the interpretations of the perfect. In A. Alexiadou, M. Rathert, & A. von Stechow (eds), *Perfect Explorations*. The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 277–306.
- Pancheva, Roumyana & von Stechow, Arnin. 2004. On the present perfect puzzle. In K. Moulton and M. Wolf (eds.). *Proceedings of NELS*, 34(2), 469-484.
- Portner, Paul. 2003. The (temporal) semantics and (modal) pragmatics of the perfect. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 26: 459 – 510.

- Reichenbach, Hans. 1947. *Elements of Symbolic Logic*. New York: The Free Press.
- Santos, Diana Maria de Sousa Marques Pinto dos. 1996. Tense and aspect in English and Portuguese: a contrastive semantical study. Available at: [\[http://www.linguateca.pt/Diana/download/ResumoAlargadoTese.pdf\]](http://www.linguateca.pt/Diana/download/ResumoAlargadoTese.pdf) (Accessed 02/28/2011).
- Schaden, Gerhard. 2009. Present perfect compete. *Linguist and Philos*, 32, 115 – 141.
- Schmitt, Cristina. 2001. Cross-linguistic variation and the Present Perfect: The case of Portuguese. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, 19 (2): 403-453.
- Schütz, Ricardo. 2000. *O perfect e seus equivalentes em Português*. Available at: [\[http://www.english.sk.com.br/sk-perf.html\]](http://www.english.sk.com.br/sk-perf.html). (Accessed 02/28/2011)
- Thomson, Audrey Jean & Martinet, Agnes V. 1986. *A practical English grammar*. 4th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Travaglia, Luiz Carlos. 1981. *O aspecto verbal no Português: a categoria e sua expressão*. Uberlândia: Universidade Federal de Uberlândia.
- Zagona, Karen. 2008. Perfective aspect and ‘‘Contained Perfectivity’’. *Lingua*, 118(11): 1766-1789.

Appendix

Sample exercises

A- Read and check the correct choice. The sentences below present situations in the _____.

Present Past Future

- 1- Amy has just left.
- 2- Further, I have always been quite interested in the works of Leonardo da Vinci.
- 3- This is the first time he has taken my hand in his.
- 4- The salty pizza has made my mouth dry.

B- Number the boxes according to the message conveyed in each example.

- . Refers to an event which started in the past and continues up to the present moment.
- . Refers to an event experienced one or more times within in a given time span.
- . Refers to an event completed in the past which has a present relevance.
- . Refers to an event which happened a short time before the moment of speech.

C- What is the difference between the sentences below? Translate them into Brazilian Portuguese and explain why different tenses were used according to the meaning of each.

- 1- I *finished* it only a week ago.
- 2- But everybody else is delighted, with the exception of Rodney Wainwright, who still *has not finished* his paper.

D- Put the verb into the correct form, present perfect or simple past.

- a) She is very docile, she talks, plays, and draws delightfully well, she _____ (make) sketches of several local scenes, and I go out with her to show her the worthwhile views.
- b) When she _____ (arrive) she had already published several articles and reviews in academic journals, and shortly afterwards her much-revised thesis appeared under the imprint of Lecky, Windrush and Bernstein.
- c) Further, I _____ (always + be) quite interested in the works of Leonardo da Vinci.
- d) That man says he _____ (be) here three days and nobody has taken any notice of him.
- e) She says Mummy _____ (be) so lonely, she doesn't even want a servant, she only has a cleaner who goes every Tuesday and Thursday, but Mummy doesn't think a cleaner is company.
- f) That book you sent me so fascinated me that I _____ (forget) how the time was going.
- g) Everybody _____ (ignore) my charms until now.
- h) It was a typical twist in the life of a freelance writer: after struggling for years to get my work produced, suddenly I was in demand from two different channels at once, I _____ (decide) that I couldn't do both jobs in tandem.
- i) Perhaps I _____ (see) that face before without a beard, but the beard's so solid and exact as if it came before the face.
- j) On his table he finds a saucer with lifeless olives and a glass of beer whose foam _____ (expire) and looks as if it were left over from an earlier customer.
- k) "As I understand it", said Alexandra, "the Labour Party proposed to the electorate a rise in income tax, the electorate rejected it, and now the Labour Party _____ (drop) it."
- l) I suppose the nearest I came to trying it in recent memory _____ (be) with Louise, in L.A., three or four years ago, when I went out for a month to advise on the American version of *The People Next Door* .