

Perfect in Ingrian Finnish*

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Ingrian Finnish, an endangered Finnish variety in contact with several languages, provides a remarkable possibility to observe the ongoing changes in its tense-aspect system. The particular focus of this paper is the use of perfect tense, which is presumed to be an unstable category and which is absent from Russian (a dominant language in this territory). An analysis of all main contexts for perfect in Ingrian Finnish allows to identify relevant sentence features influencing its temporal reference. The perfect forms are being replaced by the general past forms and the tense-aspect system of Ingrian Finnish is undergoing considerable changes apparently due to the contact influence. Further evolutionary ways for Ingrian Finnish perfect are discussed.

Keywords: *Ingrian Finnish, language contact, perfect, tense-aspect system*

1 Introduction

The meaning and development of perfect forms in the languages of the world and the evolution of tense-aspect systems have been subjects of many typologically oriented studies (see Comrie 1976, Nedjalkov 1988, Dahl 2000, Bybee 2004). It has been shown that the main function of perfect forms was to indicate the continuing present (or current) relevance of a past situation. Other meanings of perfect were also identified, such as experiential, when the event is expressed as an experience which happened at least once, without respect to a particular location in time. There can be also a continuous meaning, when the event begun prior to the moment of utterance is relevant because of its continuation until the moment of utterance. In Dahl (2000) perfect was defined as a gram with a current relevance (CR) meaning and at least one of the four following meanings: resultative, experiential, inferential, reportative.

The path of a European perfect, a diachronically very unstable category, can be usually traced from a resultative construction consisting of an auxiliary and a past participle through a full perfect tense to a new category without the CR meaning. After losing its central function the former perfect forms can develop a general past meaning and replace other past tense in the system (French, Russian). Another possibility is to transform into a category with evidential functions (the case of Balkan perfects). The relations between perfect and evidential meanings such as reportative and inferential were discussed by Anderson (1982, 1986) and Wiemer (2010). The latter is a study of grammatical means to express hearsay in a wide range of European languages including Baltic languages and Estonian.

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In this paper, I will discuss the use of perfect forms in contemporary Ingrian Finnish. I will analyze the data collected in-field from the native speakers of Ingrian Finnish. The changes in its tense-aspect system against the typological background will be considered, taking into account also a complex sociolinguistic situation in the region. The evolution of perfect in a language is more dramatic in case of an endangered language in contact with a perfectless language and is generally more rapid and radical than in a “healthy” language. Contact-induced changes in an endangered language also demonstrate the reinforcement of forms and structures already shared with the dominant language (see Groff 2004, Riionheimo 2010, Aikhenvald 2012). In this paper, I will focus on internal language processes rather than on the areal influence of Russian, but I have to recognize the importance of that influence – in the present case, the influence of Russian on Ingrian Finnish – being taken into consideration. More specifically, in morphology it seems likely that most interference will involve either new means of expressing functional categories already present in the receiving language or the loss of previously existing categories. Although Ingrian Finnish and Russian belong to different language groups (Finnic in the Ugro-Finnic family and Slavic in the Indo-European, respectively) and are considerably different typologically, it is fair to say that in case of established language contact of significant duration and intensity, such as the present case, the effects of typological distance on the expected kinds of interference features are limited, if not negligible (see Thomason & Kaufman 1991).

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 contains the data and methods for the study, as well as some facts on the sociolinguistic situation of Ingrian Finnish. In section 3, I will give an overview of three tense-aspect systems in contact: Ingrian Finnish, Standard Finnish and Russian. In section 4, I will analyze all contexts of use for the perfect in Ingrian Finnish and point out possible explanations for the different rates of perfect forms used in each context. As a conclusion, section 5 summarizes the main findings of the paper and discusses possibilities for further development of Ingrian Finnish perfect.

2 Data

The present study considers contemporary Ingrian Finnish, a common term for several endangered Finnish varieties in contact with other languages in the historical Ingria. Ingrian Finnish can be viewed as a group of closely related Southeastern Finnish dialects (see Kettunen 1930) originally spoken in the territory of Ingria (now the main part of the Leningrad region in Russia) since the 17th century. Ingria, or Ingermanland, is the historical province in the area of the Gulf of Finland, between Estonia and Finland, in the vicinity of the present St. Petersburg. The dialect situation in this region is very complex, as several cognate Finnic languages have been here in contact for centuries, Ingrian, Votic, Ingrian Finnish and Estonian. All the data discussed below are collected from the speakers of Eastern or Western Hatsina dialects (by the classification of Ingrian Finnish dialects provided in Muslimov (2009)). For convenience, throughout the paper I will refer to them as Ingrian Finnish.

The study is based on a corpus of 200 elicitation phrases recorded from 12 informants. They were asked to translate different perfect-oriented questionnaires from Russian into

Ingrian Finnish. The interviews were conducted during two expeditions to the Hatsina district of the Leningrad region (Central Ingria) which took place in the summers of 2010 and 2011. All informants were born in Ingria in the 1920s-1930s. There are only a few hundred Ingrian Finnish speakers left in Ingria, all of them bilingual Finnish-Russian and showing signs of first language attrition. The latter include difficulties to retrieve lexical items and restructurization of sentences according to second language patterns.

The language is no longer actively used or transmitted, its use in everyday life is very limited and only possible when speakers have relatives and friends who also speak or understand Ingrian Finnish. Russian is largely preferred in every situation.

3 Tense-aspect systems in contact

The tense-aspect of Ingrian Finnish is in many regards similar to Standard Finnish. The tense-aspect system of Standard Finnish includes 4 grammatical tenses. They are shown in (1), where the present tense is a nonpast which can only express a particular meaning through the context, the use of a time adverbial or nominal aspect (total or partitive case of the object). Generally speaking, there are two possible *aspectual* interpretations for a Finnish nonpast form: present – imperfective and future – perfective. To describe an imperfective continuous situation in the future one must use lexical means.

- (1) Present (nonpast) – *synthetic*
 Past (preterite) – *synthetic*
 Perfect – *periphrastic*
 Pluperfect – *periphrastic*

Before presenting the time-aspect system of Ingrian Finnish I will also briefly describe the one of Russian. Russian has 4 grammatical tenses and 2 aspects with 5 possible combinations, shown in (2):

- (2) 3 tenses:
 Present – *synthetic*
 Past – *synthetic*
 Future – *synthetic (perfective) / periphrastic (imperfective)*
 2 aspects:
 Perfective (only past and future)
 Imperfective

As in Standard Finnish, in Russian the difference between perfective future and present can be reduced to a difference in aspect, the morphological markers for the future form being the same as those that distinguish between perfective and imperfective past tenses. Russian future imperfective, on the other side, is a periphrastic construction consisting of the inflected auxiliary verb *byt'* ‘to be’ and the infinitive.

We move to the tense-aspect system of Ingrian Finnish, shown in (3), and now we can see that it is based on the Standard Finnish system, where the notion of nominal aspect is

also present and can distinguish between imperfective present and perfective future meanings of the same nonpast form:

- (3) Present (nonpast) – *synthetic*
 Past (preterite) – *synthetic*
 Perfect – *periphrastic*
 Pluperfect – *periphrastic*
 Future Imperfective – *periphrastic*

Ingrian Finnish has also developed a special form for future imperfective. This form is a periphrastic construction consisting of the inflected auxiliary verb *käyvä* ‘to walk’ and an infinitive (uninflected supine). It should be noted that in Standard Finnish, as well as in Estonian, there are also some periphrastic constructions with other auxiliaries that can be used to denote future events. The difference with respect to contemporary Ingrian Finnish is that, as my personal findings show, this form has a distribution much more similar to future imperfective in Russian.

4 Perfect in Ingrian Finnish

4.1 Perfect in Standard Finnish

Finnish perfect can be described as the tense of ‘present relevance’, close to English perfect (see Comrie 1976, Karlsson 1999 and Hakulinen et al. 2004). It is used to describe the result of a situation in which the interpretation focuses on the impact or the outcome of the situation, as shown in (4) (state-result) and (5) (experiential). It can be used also to indicate the previously started, but still ongoing situation, so that now there is continuity, as shown in (6) (perfect of persistent situation or continuous perfect), (see Hakulinen et al. 2004, § 1534-7). Examples (4)-(6) are from Hakulinen et al. (2004), glossing is mine:

- (4) *Nyt minä ole-n syö-nyt tarpeeksi.*
 now I be-PRS.1SG eat-PTCP.PST enough
 ‘Now, I have eaten enough.’
- (5) *E-n oo ikinä käy-nyt Tampere-lla.*
 NEG-PRS.1SG be never go-PTCP.PST Tampere-ALL
 ‘I have never been to Tampere’
- (6) *Hän on asu-nut sama-ssa talo-ssa koko ikä-nsä.*
 he be.PRS.3SG live-PTCP.PST same-ILL house-ILL whole life-POSS3
 ‘He has lived in the same house all his life.’

¹ Abbreviations: 1, 2, 3 – person, AD – adessive case, ALL – allative case, GEN – genitive case, ILL – illative case, IN – inessive case, INF – infinitive, NEG – negation, PART – partitive case, PL – plural, POSS – possessive, PRS – present (nonpast) tense, PST – past tense, PTCP – active participle, SG – singular.

4.2 Perfect in Ingrian Finnish

In this section, I will present the analysis of the data starting with a brief discussion of the methods I used and some general remarks on the collected data.

4.2.1 Methodology

To collect the data I presented 12 informants with a questionnaire consisting of 12 Russian stimuli sentences in no particular order. 9 of 12 informants were successful in translating the entire questionnaire into Ingrian Finnish. The others had difficulties in lexicon retrieval or showed clear signs of serious interference with Standard Finnish. The aim was to study the forms used by the speakers in the contexts of unambiguous current relevance of a past situation.

While direct translation implies greater influence from the language in which the stimuli are presented, I chose this particular method over collecting spontaneous speech to study perfect for the following reasons. As my preliminary findings, based on independently collected texts and general questionnaires, show, the perfect forms are quite rarely used by Ingrian Finnish speakers. Another issue with the spontaneous texts is that they are typically narrative sequences which normally do not allow the use of some grammatical forms, perfect included, due to their specific nature.

All examples presented in the paper below are either actual utterances collected from the informants or versions of these utterances. The latter illustrate the case where the informants used general past instead of perfect and were then presented with a version of the same sentence containing perfect form and were asked to evaluate² it (*Can you say it like that? Does that mean the same thing? Is it better to say like that?*).

4.2.2 General remarks on the data

The general features of the Russian stimuli in the questionnaire are summarized in Table 1 below. In the first column, the conventional number of the stimulus in the questionnaire is given. The second column presents the type of perfect context in the stimulus. The third and fourth columns manifest the transitivity of the predicate and the volition of a subject, respectively, in the corresponding Ingrian Finnish sentence. In the last column the aspect meaning used in the Russian stimulus is given. The features in the last three columns are ascribed positive (+) and negative (–) values according to the existent or non-existent expression of the corresponding grammatical meaning so that transitive, volitive and perfective are all positive.

² In this case a sentence is labeled by OK/?/* marks.

Stimulus nr.	Context type	Transitivity (tr / intr)	Volition (vol / invol)	Rus. stim. aspect (perf / imperf)
1	Continuous	–	+	+
2	CR of recent past	+	+	–
3	CR of recent past	+	+	+
4	CR of recent past	+	+	+
5	CR of recent past	+	+	+
6	CR of recent past + state-result	+	+	–
7	CR of recent past + state-result	–	+	–
8	CR of recent past + state-result	–	+	+
9	State-result + CR	–	–	+
10	State-result + CR	–	–	+
11	State-result + CR	–	–	+
12	State-result	–	–	+

Table 1: Features of questionnaire phrases

The results of the study are presented in Diagram 1 below. On the vertical axis, the ratio of perfect forms for each stimulus in the questionnaire is marked. The results clearly show the preference for general past forms in the prototypic perfect CR context. There was a considerably lower ratio for stimuli 7 and 9-11. It can be explained if we compare the sentence features from Table 1 with the ratios of perfect from Diagram 1. We can see that any combination of two negative values in one sentence significantly adds to the use of general past forms. The only exception is the stimulus (12) which is also the only one that got more than 50% of perfect forms. This is a context of pure state-result, where the construction is more resultative than perfect (see 4.2.5. for further discussion).

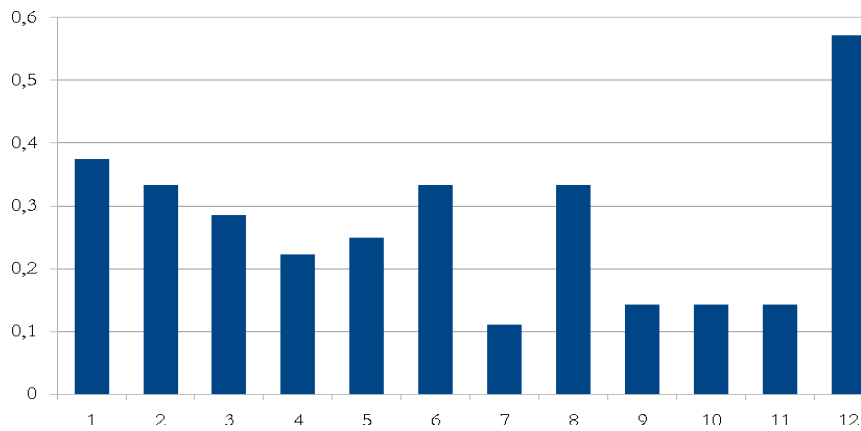


Diagram 1: Ratio of the use of Ingrian Finnish perfect in different contexts

4.2.3. Continuous perfect

The continuous use of the perfect is most common in the collected texts with verbs such as *syntyy* ‘to be born’ or *ellä* ‘to live’ due to the nature of the texts (life stories) where they typically occur at the beginning of the narrative sequence in a manner “launching” it. Examples of spontaneous usage of the perfect are presented in (7)-(8):

- (7) *Siin miä ole-n syntyy-nt.*
 here I be-PRS.1SG be.born-PTCP.PST
 ‘I was born here.’
- (8) *Tiäl ole-n kasvaa-nt ja tiäl ole-n elä-nt*
 here be-PRS.1SG grow.up-PTCP.PST and here be-PRS.1SG live-PTCP.PST
koko elo-n.
 whole life-GEN
 ‘I have grown up here and have lived here all my life.’

In (9), a translation of the first stimulus from the questionnaire is presented. The predicate is intransitive, which is consistent with the continuous context. The aspect used in a Russian stimulus was perfective. This context produced the second highest percentage of perfect forms.

- (9) a. *Hyö tul-i-vat linnaa ja ovat jo kauva*
 they come-PST-3PL city.ILL and be.PRS.1PL already for.a.long.time
mon-ta vuot-ta elä-neet siel.
 many-PART years-PART live-PTCP.PST there
- b. *Hyö tull-ii-t linnaa ja elä-vät jo mon-ta*
 they come-PST-3PL city.ILL and live-PRS.3PL already many-PART
vuot-ta siel.
 years-PART there
 ‘They came to the city and have lived there for many years.’

4.2.4. Current relevance of recent past and experiential perfect

In this section, the use of the perfect in the general context of current relevance is analyzed. The first four sentences (10)–(13) all have the same characteristics with regard to the transitivity of the predicate, the volition of the subject and the aspect used in the Russian stimulus. An exception is the imperfect aspect in (10). It may have prompted some informants to allow the use of the perfect in this context only after changing the time reference from ‘today’ to ‘some time’, which has transformed the general CR of recent past into experiential.

- (10) a. ^{OK}*Miä tänäpäin jo ole-n halkoo-nt pu-i-ta.*
 I today already be-PRS.1SG split-PTCP.PST firewood-PL-PART
- b. *Miä tänäpäin jo halko-i-n pu-i-ta.*
 I today already split-PST-1SG firewood-PL-PART
 ‘I have already split firewood today.’
- (11) a. ^{OK}*Siä jo ole-t halkoo-nt puu-t?*
 you yet be-PRS.2SG split-PTCP.PST firewood-PL
- b. *Siä jo halo-i-t puu-t?*
 you yet split-PST-2SG firewood-PL
 ‘Have you split the firewood yet?’
- (12) a. *Puu-t mi-tä työ ole-tta halko-neet jo*
 firewood-PL what-PART you be.PRS.2PL split-PTCP.PST already
loppuu-t.
 run_short-PRS.3PL
- b. *Puu-t mi-tä työ halo-i-tta jo loppuu-t.*
 firewood-PL what-PART you split-PST-2PL already run_short-PRS.3PL
 ‘The firewood that you have split is running short already.’
- (13) a. ^{OK}*Kirja minkä työ ole-tto luke-net se on oikein*
 book what.GEN you be.PRS.2PL read-PTCP.PST this be.PRS.3SG very
hyvä kirja.
 good book
- b. *Kirja minkä työ luv-i-tto se on oikein*
 book what.GEN you read-PST-2PL this be.PRS.3SG very
hyvä kirja.
 good book
 ‘The book that you have read is a good one.’

The sentences in (14)–(16) present not only the context of general CR, but also a direct impact of a past situation on the current situation, which is explicitly expressed in the second part of the sentence (CR of recent past + state-result). Each of the sentences below has at least one negative value (see Table 1). The context 7 presented in (15) has two negative values: both the predicate is intransitive and the aspect in the Russian stimulus is

imperfective. The combined effect of these two negative values has probably driven the informants to prefer the use of general past forms in this context.

- (14) a. ^{OK}*Poika koko päivä-n on halkoo-nt pu-i-ta*
 boy whole day-GEN be.PRS.3SG split-PTCP.PST firewood-PL-PART
ja on väsy-nyyt
 and be.PRS.3SG tire-PTCP.PST
- b. *Poika koko päivä-n halko pu-i-ta ja väsy-i.*
 boy whole day-GEN split.PRS.3SG firewood-PL-PART and tire-PST.3SG
 ‘The boy has been splitting firewood all day and now he is tired.’
- (15) a. *Miä huonost ole-n nukku-nut nyt miu-l kivistää piä-tä.*
 I badly be.PRS.1SG sleep-PTCP.PST now I-AD ache.PRS.3SG head-PART
- b. *Miä huonost nuku-i-n nyt kivistää piä-tä.*
 I badly sleep-PST-1SG now ache.PRS.3SG head-PART
 ‘I have slept poorly and now I have a headache.’
- (16) a. ^{OK}*Siä ole-t loikoo-nt kylmä-l mua-l ja*
 you be.PRS.2SG lie-PTCP.PST cold-AD ground-AD and
nyt ryvi-t.
 now cough-PRS.2SG
- b. *Siä lojo-i-t kylmä-ssä maa-ssa ja nyt ryvi-t.*
 you lie-PST-2SG cold-IN ground-IN and now cough-PRS.2SG
 ‘You have lain on the cold ground and now you are coughing.’

4.2.5. State-result perfect

Diagram 1 shows that the most typical Ingrian Finnish context for perfect forms seems to be the state-result (context 12). On the contrary, contexts 9 to 11, presented below in (17)-(19), are less likely to provoke the use of the perfect even if they contain a combination of state-result and CR meanings where the state-result is more prominent. I assume that it happens due to the combination of two negative values on relevant characteristics (predicate transitivity of the predicate and volition of the subject, see Table 1). Therefore the situation here is similar to the one with stimulus 7 shown above in (16).

- (17) a. ^{*/?}*Häne-n talo on särke-nyyt ja nyt jä-i-t*
 he-GEN house be.PRS.3SG break-PTCP.PST and now remain-PST-3PL
yhet kive-t.
 only stone-PL
- b. *Häne-n talo särkehys ja nyt jä-i-t yhet kive-t.*
 he-GEN house break.PST.3SG and now remain-PST-3P only stone-PL
 ‘His house has collapsed, now there are only stones left.’

- (18) a. ^{OK}*Maito on happa-nut nyt voi-p tehhä*
 milk be.PRS.3SG sour-PTCP.PST now can-PRS.3SG do.INF
vorokuu.
 cottage_cheese.PART
- b. *Maito hapant' nyt voi-p tehhä rabkaa.*
 Milk sour.PST.3SG now can-PRS.3SG do.INF cottage_cheese.PART
 'Milk has got sour, now we can make cottage cheese.'
- (19) a. *Omena on märkä-nyt nyt mei-l ei ole*
 potatoe be.PRS.3SG rotten-PTCP.PST now we-AD NEG.3SG be
mi-tä syvvä.
 what-PART eat.INF
- b. *Peruna märkän-i nyt ei ole mi-tä syvvä.*
 potatoe rotten-PST.3SG now NEG.3SG be what-PART eat.INF
 'Potatoes have rotten, now we have nothing to eat.'

If we examine the last stimulus from the questionnaire, shown in (20), which is the highest-ranking in relation to the ratio of perfect forms used in translation, we will see that the values of its relevant characteristics are the same as the characteristics of (17)-(19), two minuses in relation to the transitivity of the predicate and the volition of the subject:

- (20) a. *Eilen myö te-i-mmö lumiuko-n nyt hän-tä ei ole.*
 yesterday we do-PST-1PL snowman-GEN now he-PART NEG.3SG be
Tänään se on jo sulannut.
 today this be.PRS.3SG already melt-PTCP.PST
- b. *Naverno sul' pois.*
 probably melt-PST.3SG away
 'Yesterday we made a snowman, now it is gone, it must have melted away.'

Why are the ratios of the use of the perfect for these stimuli so different? Let us look at the event structure and the expression of the state-result meaning. The difference cannot be attributed to the actionality features of predicates, since they are the same for all examples in (17)-(20), the end-point of an involuntary terminative process. What is, however, different in the context in (20) from the others is the absence of a clear CR meaning. This fact allows to consider the form *on sulannut* as a resultative construction rather than a grammaticized perfect form. Examples (17)-(19) describe a situation that is relevant to the present and presupposes some further action on behalf of the speaker/observer. In (20), the whole situation is presented as a result of a previous event (melting) that was rather deduced than directly observed by the speaker. The speaker makes an assumption based on the state of events he observes. All relevant elements of the situation are based in the past and no further development of the situation is expected in the present and/or future, hence there is no CR.

4.2.6. Evidential perfect in adjacent languages and some remarks on evidentiality in Ingrian Finnish

In this section, I consider some commentaries made by informants who allowed the use of perfect forms only under the reportative meaning. In the previous section, we have already

established a link between using a resultative construction and denoting an event in the past that was not directly observed but deduced by the speaker in example (20). Let us consider a sentence in (21). Its Russian stimulus is a transformation of a stimulus 7 (cf. example (15)). The informant who produced (21) allowed to use the perfect only if the 1st person perspective were to change to the 3rd person. According to the informant, the use of the perfect is not allowed when talking about oneself, only about someone else:

- (21) *Hiä on maka-nnut buonost nyt kivistää*
 He be-PRS.1SG sleep-PTCP.PST badly now ache.PRS.3SG
häne-l' piä-tä
 he-AD head-PART
 'They say, he has slept poorly and now he has a headache'

The use of perfect-like forms and past participles to express the reportative meaning is well-known for the Balkan region. However, it is not uncommon in the circum-Baltic languages (see Dahl & Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001 and, more recently, Wiemer 2010). Notably in Estonian, another Finnic language which also has been in contact with Ingrian Finnish, the past participle with or without an auxiliary is used in reportative function (see Kehayov 2002 and Alas and Treikelder 2010 for contrastive studies of Estonian evidentiality):

- (22) *Ta ela-nud.*
 He live-PTCP.PST.
 'He has lived, they say.'

In modern Ingrian Finnish, perfect forms are being widely replaced by the forms of the general past. It happens due to the Russian influence, where there is no perfect tense. However, considering further evolutionary ways for Ingrian Finnish perfects other than their complete loss, they are likely to develop a full-scale reportative function. This seems plausible both from the typological and the areal perspective.

5 Conclusions

This paper considered the inner workings of the influence of a typologically different language on an endangered language based on the data from contemporary Ingrian Finnish. I described the tense-aspect systems of Ingrian Finnish, Standard Finnish and Russian and showed how the Ingrian Finnish system is influenced by the Russian system.

The particular focus of the study was on the changes in the use of Ingrian Finnish perfect. The analysis of the elicitation data showed that the traditionally distinguished perfect contexts of strong current relevance have low influence on the choice of perfect forms over general past forms in the sentence. The relevant sentence characteristics influencing its temporal reference were identified. To get a high rate of perfect forms in perfect contexts the CR meaning should be combined with the positive transitivity of the predicate and the positive volition of the subject. The influence of the perfective or imperfective aspect of the corresponding structure in Russian is also attested. Otherwise, in the case of a strong

resultative-terminative meaning of the situation completed on the whole, the perfect construction should be considered devoid of its CR meaning and therefore, a resultative construction.

To summarize, the perfect forms seem to be widely replaced by the general past forms even in the contexts with the strongest attraction for perfect. The tense-aspect system of Ingrian Finnish is undergoing considerable changes due to the contact influence. If an endangered variety of Ingrian Finnish is to survive into the future, the most probable path of evolution seems to be a complete disappearance of perfect forms. An alternative way might be a transformation of perfect into evidential.

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