

The Kildin Saami (evidential) Perfect

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My study is concerned with the Kildin Saami analytical verb form traditionally referred to as the (Present) Perfect (1). The data were elicited from 6 consultants (translation and grammatical judgement tasks) in the village of Lovozero (Murmansk Oblast, Russia) in 2022-2024.

- (1) *sijj* *veenns-et'* *l'ee-v* *lihk-ma*
3PL.NOM boat-ACC.PL be-NPST.3PL make-PTCP.PST

‘They have made boats.’ (Rießler 2022: 230)

The Perfect is mentioned in most grammars of Kildin Saami. However, in most cases, the description of the verb form boils down to the way it is formed and a few words about its meaning. Moreover, researchers drastically disagree on its alleged nature. Kert (1971: 197-198) describes the Perfect as a past perfective form whereas Rießler (2022) presumably views it as resultative.

The aim of the present study is to describe the diverse behaviour of the Kildin Saami Perfect with the focus on its evidential reading. I will show that the Perfect encompasses several distinctive meanings: resultative, experiential, past perfective, and inferentive evidential in terms of (Aikhenvald 2018) (cf. the inferentive evidential reading in (2)). From the Uralic perspective, evidential extensions of perfects are quite common in the language family as a whole (Bradley, Klumpp, & Metslang 2022). However, Saami languages have not been previously considered to use this strategy.

- (2) *suull* *jaxxta* *l'ii* *čvvvŋ-ma* *peer'ŋ't-e*
thief.NOM.SG yesterday be.NPST.3SG get.into-PTCP.PST house-DAT.SG

OK {Inspector is looking at footprints on the carpet. It seems that the footprints were left yesterday. The footprints lead only one way – into the house.} ‘The burglar got into the house yesterday.’

*{Yesterday, the speaker saw a man breaking a window of their neighbour’s house and getting into it.} ‘The burglar got into the house yesterday.’

Basically, the Kildin Saami Perfect encompasses all the meanings (to a certain extent) found on the path of grammaticalization of perfects from resultatives to past perfectives and evidentiality (Bybee, Perkins, & Pagliuca 1994). However, the Kildin Saami Perfect is quite unusual in combining both past perfective and evidential readings which are usually deemed

to be mutually exclusive. In my talk, I will discuss some restrictions and peculiar properties of the inferentive evidential reading of the Kildin Saami Perfect such as, for instance, the requirement of the existence of the lexically determined result and anchoring to the speaker in both polar and wh-questions.

In addition, I will compare the conditions of the use of the Perfect with those of the Preterite, since the differences between them have not been previously investigated. Among other things, I will show that the Kildin Saami Perfect contrasts with the Preterite as inferentive vs neutral.

References

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