Perfect polysemy in Enets
oral/poster

The paper deals with the Enets (Samoyedic, Uralic; North of Siberia) verbal TAM marker
-bi- which shows a cross-linguistically non-typical polysemy.

In the majority of its uses, this marker, that we label Perfect, has a more or less cross-linguistically expected polysemy. It can be used indeed as a perfect (to express a past event with a current relevance, uncluding a remaining result), as an inferential (to express an event inferred by the speaker from its results), or as a mirative (to express an event that the speaker perceives as unpredicted or surprising). Along with actual mirative uses, it also marks mirative clauses in a narrative, mainly foreground events that are pragmatically unpredicted. However, there is also one more narrative use of this marker that is not in lines with the standard perfect-mirative polysemy. *-bi-* is also used in introductory clauses like (1).

(1) ŋoʔ   nɛ   dʲiri-bi
     one   woman   live(ipfv)-PRF.3SG.S
     'There lived a woman'.

We aim to present the data on this phenomenon in order to discuss it in the cross-linguistic context looking for any parallels in genetically or areally related and unrelated languages. Through such context we will also answer the following questions. First, are the uses like (1) really exceptional for a perfect-mirative or do they represent one of cross-linguistically valid possibilities? Second, are the uses like (1) recently acquired by a perfect-mirative or are they relics of a gram that the perfect-mirative comes from?