

Who moves, and why? Somali deictic particles

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Our paper deals with the Somali particles soo and sii that are regarded as deictic elements since their basic function is to express a spatial orientation of a verbal action either towards (soo) or away from (sii) a deictic center, most typically the speaker.

Depending on verb semantics as well as situational contexts, these particles may imply that the performer of an action is moving. In a somewhat unexpected way, however, the particle sii may also indicate that the action is performed during the (temporary) absence of another individual, i.e. it is not the performer of the action but somebody else who is imagined to be moving.

The interplay of verb semantics and situational context opens the floor for a highly creative usage of the two deictic particles, leading to a multitude of senses, or rather possible implications of a given sentence. In our paper, we try to show how the various meanings of the basically ventive/itive particles may be derived from their basic functions by means of context-induced reinterpretation, metaphorical extension as well as analogy.