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## **A PRAGMATIC ACCOUNT OF THE REMOTE DEFINITE ARTICLE IN SOMALI**

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### **1. Introduction**

This study is concerned with the role of a particular determiner in Somali: the remote definite article *-kii* (M) / *-tii* (F). We will attempt to characterize more accurately than in previous accounts the range of meanings this determiner conveys. More generally, although this might seem a very small area of the grammar, it is interesting because it raises general questions about the balance between the information coded in the grammatical system and the inferential processes hearers have to use to construct their version of the speaker's intended meaning. Our proposed analysis will reveal how much interpreted meaning is underspecified by the linguistic form in this area of Somali grammar. This particular determiner has become quite well known in the wider linguistics literature, especially generative grammar, because of an analysis by Jacqueline Lecarme (1996, 1999, 2003, and 2004). This account analyses the determiner as a formal marker of tense. Her proposal is that noun phrases, or determiner phrases in her approach, have their own tense system in Somali, independently of the verbal or clausal tense system. This naturally has raised general questions about the possible marking of this semantic system in language. We will argue that though there are tense effects associated with this determiner, these are not grammatically coded but are part of a group of interpretations that fall out from the inferential process that it motivates in the hearer. In short we will argue that the tense effects are a pragmatic rather than semantic feature.

We will assume as background the so-called *relevance theory* (Sperber & Wilson 1995; Carston 2002; Wilson & Sperber 2004). This is one of the post-Gricean family of pragmatic theories and is distinguished by its interest in discourse-based inferential processes. In the next section we provide a brief overview of this theory's approach to definite articles.

## 2. Relevance theory and definite articles

Relevance theory (RT) is an approach to communication which builds on the view that people are predisposed to pay attention to phenomena in their environment when doing so is likely to bring about improvements in their belief system. The notion of relevance is the key to explaining what this is. In this view a phenomenon is relevant to an individual as in (1):

- (1)  
 (a) to the extent that the cognitive effects achieved when it is processed in context are large, and  
 (b) to the extent that the processing effort required for achieving the effects is small.  
 (adapted from Sperber & Wilson 1995: 153)

This definition of relevance provides the basis for two principles of human cognition and communication, the cognitive and the communicative principles of relevance:

- (2)  
 The Cognitive Principle of Relevance  
 Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance.  
 (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 260)
- (3)  
 The Communicative Principle of Relevance  
 Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance. (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 260)

And the presumption can be described as in (4):

- (4)  
 Presumption of Optimal Relevance  
 (a) The ostensive stimulus is relevant enough for it to be worth the addressee's while to process it.  
 (b) The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences. (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 270)

Consequently, in this account, there are certain assumptions about economy, as in (5):

- (5)  
 Relevance-theoretic Comprehension Strategy  
 (a) Construct interpretations in order of accessibility (i.e. follow a path of least effort);  
 (b) Stop when your expectation of relevance is satisfied.  
 (Carston 2002: 380)

Of course expectations of relevance may vary across different situations of utterance and in practice adult speakers have developed strategies to account for speakers' fallibility or deceptiveness; and other type of communicative noise. Giving a schematic view of the sub-tasks in the comprehension process, Wilson & Sperber summarize these in (6):

- (6)  
 SUB-TASKS IN THE COMPREHENSION PROCESS (Wilson & Sperber 2004: 615).  
 a. Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about explicit content (in relevance-theoretic terms, explicatures) via decoding, disambiguation, reference resolution, and other pragmatic enrichment processes.  
 b. Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about the intended contextual assumptions (in relevance-theoretic terms, implicated premises).  
 c. Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about the intended contextual implications (in relevance-theoretic terms, implicated conclusions).

From a relevance theory point of view, the processes of recovery of explicatures and implicatures are both equally inferential and interact freely. Though the information from linguistic form is included in (6a), it is not the case in this view that all procedures leading to a truth-bearing proposition take place before pragmatic inferences. As we can see from (6) the tasks in constructing a proposition involve context-dependent



inference. In this way RT reflects the influence of context in the most basic of what has sometimes been seen as coded semantic meaning.

A definite article, such as English 'the', is an example of procedural encoding. It encodes a semantic constraint on explicit content. Definite articles indicate to the hearer that the proposition the speaker wants to explicate contains an individual concept that is accessible in a pragmatically retrievable or constructible context. An individual concept is a mental representation of an individual consisting of a dossier of information taken to relate to that individual. On this account, definite articles or determiners contribute to utterance comprehension by indicating that the individual (in a simple case) denoted by content of the nominal is available in a context accessible to the hearer. Consider English examples (7) and (8):

(7)  
*I'm going to buy a car*

(8)  
*I'm going to buy the car*

The indefinite NP 'a car' in (7) may in one reading be taken to refer to a particular car – so the speaker has an individual concept in mind – but there is no linguistic indication that this concept is available in the hearer's immediate context. In other words, the speaker may or may not have a particular car in mind, but there is no linguistic indication that forming an individuating conceptual representation would lead the hearer to derive cognitive effects that the speaker considers worth conveying. By contrast, the NP 'the car' in (8) indicates that the speaker's intended representation of an individual concept is available in the immediate context of the hearer. Note that a speaker aiming at optimal relevance would not be justified in using the definite article unless she intended to communicate that the utterance is optimally relevant when the hearer forms an individuating conceptual representation of 'car'. This is presented in relevance-theoretic terms as in (9):

(9)

Determiners impose constraints on explicatures (explicitly communicated propositions): they guide the search for the intended referent, thus constraining the inferential phase of comprehension (adapted from Wilson & Sperber 1993: 21).

In other words, they encode a set of mental processing instructions. This procedural content establishes the role that the conceptual content, or descriptive content, of the noun and its modifiers may have in the interpretation of the NP. Informally a definite article, like English 'the', is used when the speaker wishes to indicate that it is sufficiently clear from the situation which particular thing (animal, person) or group of things (animals, people) the speaker has in mind. Note that the hearer may actually have very little information, as we shall see later, about the exact thing (animal, person) that the speaker has in mind. What matters is that the speaker has indicated that the little information that is available to the hearer in the immediate situation is all that the hearer needs to know.

### 3. Definite articles in Somali

Somali has a rich set of suffixed determiners, including the definite articles discussed here, demonstratives, possessives and interrogatives.<sup>1</sup> Within these, descriptive grammars, for example Bell (1953), Puglielli (1981) and Saeed (1999), have tended to identify a distinction between a remote suffixed article *-kii* (M) *-tii* (F) 'the' and a non-remote suffix *-ka* (M) *-ta* (F) 'the'. These works identify two parameters of remoteness: temporal and situational. There is a strong association with time: simple reports of events in the past will occur with remote articles; non-remotes in these are treated as unacceptable by speakers:<sup>2</sup>

(10)

a. <i>Ninkii</i>	<i>ayaa</i>	<i>tegay</i> <sup>3</sup>
man-the.R	FOC	went
'The man went'		

b. \*/?/#Ninka      ayaa      tegay  
 man-the.NR      FOC      went  
 'The man went'

As shown by the multiple diacritics in (10b) a crucial question is whether the source of the unacceptability is grammatical, semantic or pragmatic. I will argue here that it is the last. In contrast, as we shall see in later examples, events in the non-past, for example present or future, can occur with either form. Here we can show the situational distinction with a couple of examples. Remote forms used in present tense sentences mark a shift of context away from the default context of the here and now of the conversation. So for example they can mean that the referent is not present or visible, as in (11) and (12):

(11)  
 Ninkii      mée?  
 man-the.R      where  
 'Where is the man?'

(12)  
 Oo      dadkaagii      meeye?  
 and      people-your-the.NR      where  
 'But where are your relatives?' (Xaange 1988: 62)

Example (13) below is from the story *Dhaghar Dawaco* 'Cunning Jackal' where a sick lion is within a cave and the clever jackal refuses to go in but converses with the lion from safety outside:

(13)  
 Haa!      Ma      adigii      baa      dawacoy?  
 INTERJ      QM      you-the.R      FOC      jackal.VOC  
 'Hah, is it you, Jackal?' (Xaange 1988: 83)

Compare this with (14):

(14)  
 Ma      adigaa (= adi-ga.baa)?  
 QM      you-the.R.FOC  
 'Is it you?', 'Is that you? (in front of somebody)'

Staying for the moment with stories of lions and jackals, (15) is a further example.

(15)  
 War      dawacadii      ku      dheh:  
 VOC      jackal-the.R      to      say.IMP  
 libaaxa      iyo      aniga      na      sii      lo'da      inteeda      badan  
 lion-the.NR      and I-the.NR      us(CL)      give      cattle-the.NR      portion-their      much  
 'Hey, say to the jackal:  
 Give the lion and me the greater part of the cattle' (Xaange 1988: 86)

Here the speaker in the story is a lion, who is telling the hyenas to go off to talk to a jackal in another place. While they're away he eats all the cattle himself, as Somali lions tend to do in stories. So the absence of the jackal is important to the plot of the tale.

This context shifting function means that the distinction between these articles can be employed as a form of discourse anaphora. (16) below is an example from the play *Shabeelnagood* 'Leopard Among the Women' (Mumin 1979: 54):

(16)  
 SHALLAAYO:  
 Aabbo, naga      daa      ye,      aabbo,      hee      dheh.  
 Father      us(CL).from      leave      and      father      hee      say  
 Anigu      waxaan      rabaa      Xajkii      wax      inaan  
 I      what.I      want      pilgrimage-the.R      thing      that.I  
 kaaga      dirsado.      Aabbo, waa inaad      iga  
 from.you(CL).in      ask.for      father      DM      that.you      me(CL).for  
 ballan      qaaddo      inaad      ii      keenaysid.  
 promise      take      that.you      me(CL).for      bring  
 GUULEED:  
 Xajkaa?  
 Pilgrimage-the.NR.FOC  
 SHALLAAYO:  
 Haa.  
 yes  
 GUULEED:  
 Maandhay, weesaq      iyo      murriyad      laga      ma  
 Dear      earrings      and      gold.necklace      one.from      not



helo Xajka.  
find pilgrimage-the.NR

SHALLAAYO:

Aabbo, waxaas aad u malaynaysid ma

Father thing.that you in think not

aha ee wax laga helo Xajka iga

is and thing one.from find pilgrimage-the.NR me(CL).to

ballan qaad inaad adigu, aabbo ii keenaysid!

promise make that.you you-the.NR father me(CL).for are.bringing

SHALLAAYO:

'Father, stop now; father, listen. I want you to bring me back something from the pilgrimage. Father, you must promise to bring it back for me.'

GUULEED:

'The pilgrimage?'

SHALLAAYO:

'Yes.'

GUULEED:

'Dear, one doesn't find earrings and gold necklaces on the pilgrimage.'

SHALLAAYO:

'Father, it's not what you think. It is something that one does get from the pilgrimage. Promise me that you, Father, will bring it for me.'

In this extract, the nominal *Xaj* 'the Hajj pilgrimage' is underlined. This referent is introduced as distal from the current context, signifying a new topic. As we can see from the articles in bold, thereafter it is referred to using the non-remote definite, marking it as part of the current contextual assumptions. Having briefly reviewed the function of these articles in the next section we provide a brief sketch of Lecarme's DP tense theory approach.

#### 4. Lecarme's DP tense theory

Because of the use of remote definite articles with past tense events, Jacqueline Lecarme (1996, 1999, 2003, and 2004) has argued that tense is formally marked on noun phrases in Somali. She proposed that the remote definite be viewed as carrying a grammatical feature [+PAST] and the non-remote [-PAST]. This tense marking is, she claims, potentially independent of the clausal tense marking on verbs, and is marked

formally by the opposition between the article suffix *-kii* (M) / *-tii* (F) 'the' which she regards as [+PAST] and *-ka* (M) / *-ta* (F) 'the', which she regards as [-PAST]. Subsequently she has argued that other interpretations of this opposition, in terms of remoteness, are derivative of this primary semantic distinction. So in this view tense is a grammatical feature, like gender, marked by the definite articles on nominals:

(17)

*-kii* (M) / *-tii* (F) 'the': [+PAST]

*-ka* (M) / *-ta* (F) 'the': [-PAST]

In the generative syntactic theory used in these arguments, this involves positing a tense position in the phrase structure of the DP/NP analogous both to the tense architecture of the verb phrase and of other nominal inflectional categories. We are not concerned with the syntactic proposal here, but with the assumption that a tense distinction is formally coded on nominals by the use of definite articles.

Additionally, and consistently with this position, Lecarme (2004) has claimed that the grammatical feature [past] on the article means that the definite nominal must agree with time words, as follows:

(18)

a. *Sánnadka*/\*-*kii* *dambe*

year-DET.M[-PAST]/ \* [+PAST] next

'Next year'

b. *Sánnadkii*/\*-*ka* *hore*

year-DET.M[+PAST]/ \* [-PAST] before

'Last year' (adapted from Lecarme 2004)

We may begin our disagreement with this position by noting that in fact the starred forms are not ungrammatical, merely inappropriate for an assumed present tense utterance context. In other words these apparently decontextualised examples carry with them an assumed context that produces the acceptability judgments starred. If we shift the context to a past tense narrative then *sánnadkii dambe* (starred in (18a)) would be

appropriate and mean ‘the following year’, as in (19):

- (19)  
*Waxa uu yidhi: “Sannadkii dambe, waxa dhacday*  
 what he(CL) said year-the.R next what happened  
*in ciyaartoydii aanu sannadkii hore wada ciyaaraynay*  
 that players-the.R we.CL year-the.R before RECIP played  
*ay iskuulkii ka baxeen oo ay dhamaysteen*  
 they(CL) school-the.R from went and they(CL) finished  
 ‘What he said was: “The following year what happened was that the players  
 we had played with the previous year had left school and finished...”’  
 (Haatuf News, August 18<sup>th</sup> 2003 at: <http://www.haatuf.net/Archive2003/00039900.htm>)

In this example we have what we can define as ‘a future within a past, within a past’. Similarly the phrase *sannadka hore* marked as ungrammatical in (18b) is appropriate in the right context. Used in a present tense context, it may mean ‘the first year’, as in:

- (20)  
*Ardeyda cusub ee sannadka hore ee jaamacadda*  
 students-the.NR new and year-the.NR first and university-the.NR  
 Minnesota  
 Minnesota  
 ‘The new first year students of the University of Minnesota’

We would argue that this behaviour is possible because there is no tense agreement between the defined nominals and these adjectives. The latter simply encode a deictic relationship in space or time to a reference point, next before/ forward, next after/back; the nature of the relation being clear from related lexical items like the noun *hor* (F) ‘front’ from which *hore* ADJ is derived.

## 5. Functions of the remote/non-remote distinction

We will argue that the functions of the articles reflect a procedural and inferential context-dependent process. We begin by identifying a number of functions that are not consistent with the analysis of the remote definite article as a formal

grammatical marker of tense. Subsequently we will suggest a pragmatic approach that will account both for these and the time effects. The pragmatic nature of these becomes clear from the balancing that speakers may make between the temporal and situation remoteness parameters. We can start with a relatively simple example, involving the following pair, where the articles on the relative clause heads are shown in bold:

- (21)  
*Wiilka dhintay reerkiisu waa kan*  
 boy-the.NR died family.his.the.NR DM this  
 ‘The boy who died his family are here/this is his family’  
 ‘This is the family of the boy who died’  
 (22)  
*Wiilkii dhintay reerkiisu waa kan*  
 boy-the.R died family.his.the.NR DM this  
 ‘The boy who died his family are here/this is his family’  
 ‘This is the family of the boy who died’

Both sentences are acceptable but are appropriate in different contexts. The first, with the relative clause in the past but the non-remote article could be said at the boy’s funeral for example. The second with the remote definite article would be appropriate if the boy had died at sometime in the past before the meeting. The situational immediacy may overrule the temporal association. A simple example like this is not in itself destructive of the temporal theory. We will try to show however that only an inferential pragmatic account can cope with the range of functions that we find.

### 5.1. Non-referential nominals

The first type of example is non-referential readings i.e. non-specific or predicative readings, where only the non-remote definite article is found. We can discuss some examples of these. The first is in non-specific uses, including general and universal statements, for example:



(23)

Waxa kale oo duurka ama baadiyaha  
 thing-the other and forest-the.NR or countryside-the.NR  
 Soomaaliya, gaar ahaan dhanka koonfurta  
 Somalia special being part-the.NR south-the.NR  
 ku nool xayawaano fara badan. Waxaana ka mid ah:  
 in live animals fingers many what.and in one be:  
 dhurwaaga, dawacada, libaaxa, haramcadka,  
 hyena-the.NR jackal-the.NR lion-the.NR cheetah-the.NR  
 doofaarka, gorayada, cawsha, biciidka  
 warthog-the.NR ostrich-the.NR Soemmering's gazelle-the.NR, oryx-the.NR...  
 'Also many animals live in the forest and countryside, especially in the  
 southern region. These include: the hyena, the jackal, the lion, the cheetah,  
 the warthog, the ostrich, the Soemmering's gazelle, the oryx...'  
 (Somalitalk website: <http://www.somalitalk.com/somalia/beauty/dhulka/index.html>)

Here each generic use of the nominal occurs with the non-remote article. If for example the writer were to switch the account into the past by replacing *ku nool* 'live in' by *ku nooli jiray* 'used to live in' the most appropriate use of article would still be the non-remote *-ka/-ta*.

A second non-referential use is with predicate nominals, for example in relative clauses. Here a process of syntactic agreement ensures that Somali predicate nominals in relative clauses agree in definiteness with the head noun:

(24)

Nin Carab ah  
 man Arab is  
 'An Arab' (lit. 'a man who is an Arab')

(25)

Nin-ka Carabka ah  
 man-the Arab-the is  
 'The Arab' (lit. 'the man who is an Arab')

If the head noun is definite the predicate nominal must also be definite. However the remote article is never marked on predicate nominals: the nominal in (26) is appropriate in a past tense sentence but while the head noun is marked with the remote article, the predicate nominal occurs with the non-remote article:

(26)

Ninkii Carabka ahaa  
 man-the.R Arab-the.NR was  
 'The Arab (past), the man who was an Arab'

The same pattern is shown in the following examples:

(27)

Nimankii askarta ahaa  
 men-the.R soldiers-the.NR were  
 'The men who were soldiers', 'The soldiers'

(28)

Nimankii macalimiinta ahaa  
 men-the.R teachers.the.NR were  
 'The men who were teachers', 'The teachers'

The generalization is that the remote article is not used for non-referential nominals. We discuss this feature in section 6 below and relate it to the behavior of demonstratives. A second context where the remote is not used, contrary to the tense theory prediction, is in a function that we could call the first mention or 'hot news' use.

## 5.2. First mention or 'hot news' use

In the examples (29-31) below of headlines and first lines of news stories, the relevant verbs are in the simple past but the nominals occur with the non-remote definite article, marked in bold. This we can call, following McCawley (1971), a *hot news* function of the definite article. That is, though necessarily these referents have not been mentioned previously the hearer/reader is are invited to treat them as if they are accessible. While one might argue that for a Somali audience Mogadishu might always be salient or background context, it far less likely that the Ugandan Parliament is so.

(29)

Weeraro ka dhacay magaalada Muqdisho  
 attacks in happened town-the.NR Mogadishu  
 'Attacks occurred in the city of Mogadishu'  
 (BBC Somali Service news headline 12 February 2007)



(30)

*Meydka 60 qof oo Baqdaad laga heley*  
 bodies-the.NR 60 persons and Baghdad one.in found  
 'The bodies of sixty people discovered in Baghdad' (lit. 'The bodies of 60  
 people which one found in Baghdad')  
 (BBC Somali Service news headline 12 February 2007)

(31)

*Baarlamaanka dalka Uganda, ayaa ansaxiyay ciidamo*  
 Parliament-the.NR country-the.NR Uganda FOC approved soldiers  
*nabad ilaalin ah oo la geeyo dalka Soomaaliya.*  
 peace search be and one sends.to country-the.NR Somalia  
 'The Parliament of the country of Uganda approved peace keeping soldiers  
 to be sent to the country of Somalia'  
 (Article first line, BBC Somali Service webpage 13 February 2007)

The point is of course that although the action is marked as bounded and in the past, and Uganda is physically remote to most of the audience, the non-remote article is used. We will assume that this use of a non-remote definite article with new information is a reflection of the high topicality of the new information. In relevance theory terms this can be seen as an invitation to the hearers/readers to create a context in which the referent will be grounded. The high cost of accommodating a new entity as if it were known, carries in this use a guarantee from the speaker/writer that the contextual effects of a highly topical element will be great enough to offset the effort involved. The principle effect is of updating the cognitive environment of the hearer.

Since we are arguing that the selection of the articles is a pragmatic process we would not expect this usage to be exceptionless, but it is interesting to note that in Issa & Murphy's (1984) newspaper reader, there are fifty one Somali newspaper articles. Of these thirty seven have headlines including a definite article; and of these 36 occur with the non-remote form. We can now move to another important function of the non-remote article that sheds light on the pragmatic nature of the distinction. This is when it is used in past tense narratives to indicate a shift in perspective or viewpoint.

### 5.3. Non-remote in past as perspective shift

An example of this use is in (32) below from a story about giants in Somalia from Xaange's (1988) collection. We will suggest that the shift in the use of articles here marks a shift between the viewpoint of the narrator and audience versus that of the characters.

(32)

*Waxaa la wariyey in waa hore ay dalka ku noolayeen*  
 What one told.PAST that time former they(CL) land-the.NR in lived  
*labo tiirriyaal Midkoodba wuxuu talin jiray dalka*  
 two giants each.one FOC.he(CL) rule used.to country-the.NR  
*qaybtiisa Xabbaad waa la necbaa oo ceelasha lagu*  
 part-his-the.NR Habbad DM one hated and wells-the.NR one.from  
*cabbo buu dhardhaar weyn oo isaga mooyee aan cid*  
 drinks FOC.he(CL) stone big and him-the.NR except not person  
*kale qaadi karin ku gufeyn jirey. Wuxuu qabsan jirey*  
 another lift can.NEG up plug used.to FOC.he(CL) seize used.to  
*hasha ama ratiga ugu buran geela*  
 female.camel-the.NR or male.camel-the.NR most fat camels-the.NR  
*u soo aroora ceelasha ku yaal dalka uu xukumo.*  
 to VEN water wells-the.NR in are country-the.NR he(CL) rules  
 'It was said that in a former time there lived in the land two giants... Each one  
 used to rule his own part of the country. ... Habbad was hated and he used to  
 block up the wells which one drinks from with a large stone that nobody but  
 him could lift. He used to seize the fattest female or male camel of the herds  
 which water at the wells which are in the country he rules.' (Xaange 1988: 42)

This episode is introduced by a past tense verb 'one said' and a time adverbial that locates it in the past of the time of narration: *waa hore* 'a former time'. Thereafter, however, the tense used is not the simple past, which is perfective and bounded but instead we find a combination of two unbounded aspects, the habitual past (e.g. *ku gufeyn jirey* 'used to plug up') and past statives (e.g. *waa la necbaa* literally 'one was hating him' where *neceb* is formally an adjective). As has been noted for many languages, including French and English (Caenepeel 1995; Toolan 1990) this shift is of tense while aspect is often used to signal a shift of viewpoint. As noted by Toolan (1990)



the English progressive may be used to indicate the viewpoint or perceptions of characters in a narrative, as distinct from the narrator's viewpoint. We can see this as what Dowty (1986: 56), discussing the English progressive's ability to sequence a narrative, calls 'a psychological effect on the protagonist'.

At the end of this habitual/stative part of the narrative (which we have shortened) we find a summing up of the whole episode, switching back to the narrator's viewpoint:

(33)

*Sidaas awgeed bayna uga qaxeen dalkii.*  
 way.that cause.its FOC.they(CL).and in.from fled country-the.R  
 'For this reason they fled from the country' (Xaange 1988: 42)

The sentence has the simple past bounded/perfective, marking the switch back and closure of the mini-episode or section of the narrative. What is interesting for our present discussion is the use of definite articles in example (32), which are marked in bold. Although the episode has been signalled as being in the past of the narration, we find the non-remote article *-ka/-ta* being used throughout the main part of this episode of the story. This we would argue is a further mechanism for marking the shift of narrative perspective. As we might predict, the summing up sentence in (33), which switches back to the narrator's viewpoint, has the instead remote definite article *-kii* on the nominal *dal* 'country'. We would argue that the choice of article reflects the perspective shift, alongside the aspectual change.

Another example of this use of the non-remote in the past to indicate perspective shift is in (34) below. This is taken from the story *Geeridii Dhegdheer* 'The Death of Dhegdheer' (Xaange 1988: 27-29). The story is a narrative, again in the past, and marked by the combination of past simple/perfective and use of remote articles we have already seen. An interesting and gruesome example is the following where the cannibal Dhegdheer's daughter colludes with two fugitive girls to kill her monster mother, who keeps her daughter tied up every day

while she hunts people. This part of the story is where the girls figure out a way to kill the monster and then do it. The first sentence is (34):

(34)

*Fuudkii kululaa baa durba ka gubey maskaxdii*  
 broth-the.R hot.PAST FOC immediately from burned brain-the.R  
*Dhegdheer, aleeshiina xiidmaheedii bay*  
 Dhegdheer shells-the.R-and intestines-her-the.R FOC.they(CL)  
*cadcad u jarjartay.*  
 small.pieces in cut.up  
 'The hot broth immediately burned Dhegdheer's brain out and the small shells cut her intestines into small pieces.' (Xaange 1988: 28)

In this sentence the definite articles, marked in bold, are all remote. In the next sentence, at this cataclysmic moment in the story, the perspective switches to that of Dhegdheer herself, signaled by the use of *iyadu* the nominal pronoun 'she, her' as topic in (37):

(35)

*Iyadu waxba iskama dhicin karin oo*  
 she-the.NR nothing self.for.NEG do can.PAST.NEG. and  
*gacmaha iyo lugaha bay ka xirnayd*  
 hands-the.NR and feet-the.NR FOC.they(CL) from tied.up  
 'She could do nothing for herself because (lit. 'and') her (lit. 'the') hands and feet were tied up.'

In this sentence we find the articles switching to the non-remote set, marked in bold, and once again signaling the shift of perspective to the non-canonical third person: the protagonist Dhegdheer. The articles are an important part of the mechanisms the narrator uses to draw the reader psychologically into the context of the protagonist. Subsequently when the narrator 'pulls back', so to speak, to the external perspective the articles switch back to the remote series. Having seen these examples of the use of the non-remote in the past, which counters the account of them as formal non-past tense markers, we can turn our attention to some quite sophisticated uses of the remote in the present which only emerge in discourse.



#### 5.4. Remote in present as perspective shift

We mentioned earlier that one of the basic uses of the remote in present tense contexts is to signal distance from the currently constructed context, or what might be called in mental spaces theory the base space or space of speaker reality (Fauconnier 1997). This main function has a number of more subtle effects, related to the perspective shifting we have just seen. One interesting use of the remote in a present situation relates to identity, but specifically identity perceived from the point of view of the protagonists. Example (36) is from another story about a giant, Gannaje, from *Xaange* (1988: 45). The giant's in-laws attack him in the guise of a hostile band. When the giant has killed some of them, the rest, speaking in the present tense of direct speech say:

(36)  
*Gannaje, war Gannaje! Noo arxan, waa annagii, xididkaaye*  
 Gannaje VOC Gannaje us(CL).to spare DM us-the.R relatives-your.and  
 'Gannaje, O Gannaje! Spare us, it is us, your relatives' (Xaange 1988: 45)

The first pronoun 'us' is the clitic or verbal pronoun *na*. The second pronoun 'us' is the independent or nominal pronoun *annagii* 'we/us' EXCL, which combines with the definite article. The important point to notice is that though the characters are talking to each other in a narrative present (shown by the use of the imperative forms), and in the scene are located physically together (close enough for Gannaje potentially to lay hands on them) the pronoun occurs with the remote definite article *-kii*. This, we would suggest, signals a perspective shift, from the point of view of the characters as they change identity: they reveal themselves to be (bad) relatives.

We can find extended and subtle examples of this use of the distal article to express identity shift from the non-canonical perspective of a third person character. A further example is in (37), again from the play *Shabeelnagood* (Mumin 1979: 54-55), where two of the characters are an older married couple,

Guleed and his wife Shammado. In the scene (p47-55), Guleed's amorous advances have been rejected by his wife, who is hinting that he is too old. The dialogue is in direct speech in the present tense and the articles used are non-remote. For example, Guleed says:

(37)  
 GUULEED:  
 ... *ina keen aqalka!*  
 ... us(CL) bring.IMP house-the.NR  
 'Let's go into the house!' (Mumin 1979: 54)

The next two lines are:

(38)  
 SHAMMADO:  
*Waar waxba ka dooni maayo aqalka*  
 VOC.M nothing from want am.NEG house-the.NR  
*ee i daa!*  
 and me(CL) leave.NR  
 'I don't want anything from the house; leave me alone!'  
 GULEED:  
*naa adigu xaaskaygii baad tahay,*  
 VOC.F you-the.NR wife-my-the.R FOC.you are  
*sow kula ma ballami karo?*  
 Q you(CL).with not meet can  
 'You are my wife. Can't I arrange a meeting with you? (Mumin 1979: 54-55)

Here the interesting point is the use of the remote article on 'wife' where the speaker is facing and talking to his wife and firstly in the same sentence uses the non-remote article on *adigu* 'you' but where his use of the remote article on wife comes as part of his implication that she is not behaving properly in the role of a wife. In other words we can see this as a metaphorical use of distance, based on the more conventional uses we have seen.



## 6. A pragmatic account

We have seen a number of uses of these definite articles that could be described as marking shifts of context, and derivatively, of shifts in perspective or viewpoint. Essentially our proposal will be that the remote article *-kii/-tii* bridges the distinction made for languages like English between definite articles and demonstratives. Recall that in relevance theory terms a definite article is an example of procedural encoding. It encodes a constraint on explicit content. Definite articles indicate to the hearer that the proposition the speaker wants to explicate contains an individual concept that is accessible (at perhaps a lower level than say pronouns) in the pragmatically retrievable or constructible context. The content of the nominal of course helps the addressee in forming an individuating conceptual representation. This account can be applied in a straightforward way to the use of the non-remote definite article *-ka/-ta* in Somali.

The remote article on the other hand indicates that the context to be constructed is non-immediate to what we could call the ground of the act of speaking, to borrow another use of the term ground, this time as used by Langacker (1991), who defines the notion contextual ground as the "speech event, its participants, and its immediate circumstances (such as the time and place of speaking)" (Langacker 1991: 318). This non-immediacy to the current context of communication can be interpreted in a number of ways, appropriate to the other cues in the utterance. This may be, as we have seen, temporally (non-immediate to the time of speaking) or situationally (non-immediate to the place of speaking). This function differs from demonstratives, whose function is to direct the addressee's attention to entities within the current context. Informally we can distinguish the function of *-kii/-tii* as in (39) below from the function of demonstratives given in (40):

(39)

The remote definite article switches from this-context-of-situation to that-context-of-situation

(40)

Demonstratives distinguish between this-referent-in-the-current-context-of-situation and that-referent-in-the-current-context-of-situation.

In this view the remote article restricts the set of contexts that are called up and established, relative to an established context, the current ground. This, as we have seen, does not necessarily correspond to the hear-and-now of the act of speaking or writing.

We mentioned that the remote definite article in some sense bridges the distinction between definite articles and demonstratives: the remote article shows some features associated in the literature with demonstratives. As (39) and (40) try to reflect, it has the article's feature of deixis. It also has a requirement of specificity, common to demonstratives, which explains why it is not appropriate with generic and predicative nominals, as discussed earlier. This feature of demonstratives was noted by Hawkins (1978) and has been commented on in various writers such as Gundel, Hedberg & Zacharski (1993) and de Mulder (1997). Leonetti (2000: 2) makes a similar point:

... a demonstrative requires the hearer to search for the intended referent relying on some link to the deictic centre, and this is enough to distinguish demonstratives from definite articles, given that articles do not encode any deictic feature. This implies that the constraints imposed by demonstratives on referent identification are stronger, or more specific, than those imposed by the definite article.

We assume that it is the indexical nature of this article that is identified by Gebert (1981) in her adoption of the label *anaphoric* for this morpheme: *il determinante anaforico*. However, the Somali remote definite article retains features of definite articles within the shifted context created. For example, demonstratives are generally assumed to be distinct from definite articles in being unavailable for both indirect anaphora or bridging reference; and similarly unavailable for refer-



ence to situationally unique entities, for example the sun. Both of these are possible with the remote article: for example the first mentions underlined in examples (41) and (42) below:

(41)

Markay gorraxdii ku kululaatay meeshii ka tageen  
time-the-she(CL)<sup>4</sup> sun-the.R in heated place-the.R from went  
'When the sun heated the place that they left'

(42)

Neef baa loo qalay... hilbihii oo weli kulul  
animals FOC one.for slaughtered... meats-the.R and still hot  
loo keenay gabdhihi...  
one.to brought girls-the.R  
'Animals were slaughtered for them... and the meats still hot were brought to the girls...' (Xaange 1988: 51)

Our brief discussion has sought to highlight indicative examples of the discourse uses of this remote article. They are, we hope, sufficient to reveal the important role of pragmatic interpretation in its use. The variety and context dependence of its use are characteristic of pragmatic processing. From a core procedural meaning roughly characterised in (39) above, which routinely signals temporal and spatial relations, speakers and hearers may manipulate a wide range of context shifting effects. We would suggest that the attempt to characterise this in terms of a formal tense marking rule is inadequate in both descriptive and explanatory terms.

## 7. Further semantic and syntactic issues

There are a number of related issues on the distinction between the remote and non-remote articles that for reasons of space are not discussed here but which merit further investigation. We mention two here: the first concerns habitual aspect.

### 7.1. Habitual aspect

Time words in habitual sentences in the present occur with the remote article. See for example (43):

(43)

Habeen-kii laamaha geed-ka ugu dheer baan fulaa...  
night-the.R branches-the.NR tree-the.NR SUPERL long FOC.I.CL sleep  
subax-ii waxaan ku quraacada miid-da ubaxa...  
morning-the.R what.I.CL on breakfast dew-the.NR flowers-the.NR  
'At night I sleep in the tallest branches of the tree...in the morning I break-fast on the dew of the flowers...' (Xaange 1988: 78)

This use consistent within our proposed account if we accept the suggestion that has been made in the literature on aspect that habitual aspect, though sometimes coded with present tense forms as in English and Somali, is conceptualized as external to the current context of communication. Danaher (2001, 2003) for example identifies a strong association of habitual aspect with conceptual distancing in Czech. Similarly Langacker (1991: 104-7), writing in a cognitive grammar framework, argues that habitual aspect creates a mental space that is distinguished from the current space of the context of communication. Essentially we suggest that the remote articles signal the habitual in the present as a shift away from the current specific context of communication.

## 7.2. Complex nominals

Grammatically it makes sense to view the non-remote as the unmarked or default form of definite article. For example the remote article is marked only once on complex noun phrases, where it occurs attached to the head; all other definite nominals will be marked with the non-remote article. We can see this behavior in the relative clause bracketed in (44); the possessive construction in (45), where the NP *naagtii* 'the woman' is the head of the construction and is marked with the remote article while the dependent *ninka* 'the man' the man is not; and the genitive constructions in (46):

(44)

Abwaankii saddexdii wiil iyo [dadkii  
wise.man-the.R three-the.R boy and people-the.R



beesha degganaa] isugu yeeray  
community-the.NR settled.were REC.to.in called

'The wise man called together the three boys and the people who were settled in the community' (Siyaad 1985: 55)

(45)

... [Nin-ka naag-tiis-ii] waxay aragtay nin-kii...  
man-the.NR woman-his-the.R waxa.she(CL) saw man-the.R

'The man's wife what she saw was the man...' (Xaange 1988: 52)

(46)

Warqaddii odayaasha  
letter-the.R elders-the.NR

'The elders' letter'

The general rule is that the remote article is only marked on the head of the complex NP and not on dependent nominals. In this behavior it is unlike the non-remote definite article, as the examples show, but it is like the demonstrative determiners, providing another indication, this time grammatical, of its distinction from the non-remote definite article.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> There is no indefinite article, nor as exist in some Cushitic languages, paucal or individuating suffixes. However Maay Somali dialects, which are quite distinct from the Standard Somali varieties described here, do have as described in Saeed (1982: 89-90) a singulative suffix *-ko/-to* which belongs to this set of determiners, e.g. *nāḡ* 'man' *nāḡko* 'a (single) man'

<sup>2</sup> Examples are in the Somali standard orthography; see Saeed (1999) for details. The articles, like all suffixed determiners, undergo phonological adjustment when attached to nominal stems. This is not explicated here; see Saeed (1999: 28-29) for details.

<sup>3</sup> Abbreviations: ART: article; CL: clitic (pronoun); DET: determiner; DM: declarative marker; EXCL: exclusive; EXPL: expletive; F: feminine; FOC: Focus marker; IMP: imperative; INTERJ: interjection; M: masculine; NEG: negative verb form or nominal suffix; NR: non-remote; QM: question marker; R: remote; VEN: venitive; VOC: vocative;?: semantically anomalous; #: pragmatically inappropriate, \*:ungrammatical.

<sup>4</sup> This clitic pronoun is co-referent with the feminine noun *qorraxdii* 'the sun'.

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