

Centering in Ossetic – The various functions of particle *i*

In my presentation I want to discuss a first attempt to project the Centering Theory onto the Ossetic particle *i*. Previous research (H. W. Bailey 1945, 1946; V. I. Abaev 1949, 1964; M. I. Isaev 1966; D. Testen 1997; F. Thordarson 2009) states that particle *i* is used to express definiteness in Digor-Ossetic to emphasize the noun. However, when looking into the different occurrences of the particle it becomes clear that definiteness is not the only function of this particle at all. In many cases it seems to function as a topic particle to secure an anaphorically mentioned entity. Since “centering provides a framework to analyze anaphoric relationships” (Turan 1998: 139) in a discourse, the presentation will show what role the centers play for the occurrence of particle *i*.

I will argue that it might be false to assume a single function for particle *i*. Hence I will propose different approaches to analyze its other functions that cannot be described by the Centering Theory.

Definition of terms:

Center = Discourse entity that connects utterance-relevant entities with anaphoric utterances

Forward-looking Center (C_f) = referential utterance

Backward-looking Center (C_b) = referring utterance in the following sentence (one C_b per utterance; "theme")

Preferred Center (C_p) = C_f, highest in the hierarchy

(Walker et al. 1994)