Sluicing the verbal double: a view through Meiteilon[*]

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I.   Introduction

The aim of this study is to explain how the two contrasting issues of sound and meaning mismatch of Ellipsis and Doubling work when both strategies are used simultaneously, using Meiteilon data. It is a well-known fact that doubling is a case of over-pronunciation in the sense that the phenomenon occurs when 'one or more morphosyntactic features of a constituent (i.e., a morpheme, a word or, a phrase) are expressed in two or, more times within a sentence, seemingly without contributing to the semantic interpretation of that sentence' (Barbiers 2008, 2013). That is, an extra pronunciation of a copy (x^i) of an item (x) where the pronunciation of x^i does not add up to the meaning already conveyed by x.

1. (**əy**-gi)   puk-pʰə-bi   **i**-mɑ

    1P–Gen   stomach-good-Nzr (Fem.) **1P**+Gen-mother

    'my benevolent mother'

On the other side, ellipsis is an issue of under-pronunciation which involves 'the omission of elements that are inferable from the context' (Aelbrecht 2010).

2. tombə-nə   **həynəw**   əmunbə   ča-gəni   ədugə

    Tombə-Subj   **mango**   ripe   eat-will   and

    tombi-di _____ əsəŋbə   ča-gəni

    Tombi-Top[1]   green   eat-will

'Tomba will eat ripe mangoes and Tombi will eat green/unripe _____'

However, the paper concentrates more on the formation of verb-doubling constructions in Meiteilon. The reason for concentrating on this phenomenon is that, it will provide a better platform for its comparison with/co-occurrence in a sluiced environment. Through this investigation, the paper further intends to illustrate that sluicing appears to solve the over-pronunciation problem of verb doubling.

II.   Verb doubling in Meiteilon

Verb doubling in predicate-cleft constructions is a well-researched topic (see Koopman 1984, 2000; Abels 2001; Kandybowicz 2007, 2008; Trinh 2011 and others) but a common consensus has not been reached yet on its formation. The idea so far conceived about it is that verb-doubling is resulted by verb-topicalization thereby giving a contrastive interpretation. Nevertheless, the unit of topicalization is always an issue with verb-topicalization resulting to doubling. Studies on different languages like Vata (Koopman 1984, 2000), Spanish (Vicente, 2007), Hebrew and Vietnamese (Trinh, 2011) show that it is only the verb which is fronted; while on the other side, languages like Russian (Abels, 2001) and Hebrew (Landau, 2006) can have the internal arguments along with the fronted verb. In Meiteilon, the verb doubling in predicate cleft construction (PCC) looks even more peculiar as it appears that the whole vP is topicalized. The higher copy is marked by either a Topic or Focus marker attached to its non-Finite form[2] whereas the lower copy is the one that bears the verbal inflections (Achom et al, 2013; Rajkumar, 2014a). An example is given below

3. əy   sɑ   **čɑ**-bə-di   *(**čɑ**)-re[3]   (obligatory doubling)

    I   meat   eat-Nzr-Top   eat-Perf

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[1] Topic marker –*ti* becomes –*di* after a voiced sound.

[2] The higher copy of the verb being non-finite in doubling constructions is not an uncommon occurrence as it has been found to be the case in languages like Russian (Abels, 2001),Spanish and Hungarian (Vicente, 2007), Hebrew and Vietnamese (Trinh, 2011) also.

[3] As it is the case with doubling, an intervener can be inserted in between the doubled items.

əy   sɑ   **čɑ**-bə-di   toynə   **čɑ**-re
I   meat   eat-Nzr-Top   often   eat-Perf
'As for me eating meat, it is often done'

'As for me eating meat, it is eaten' [literally: 'I have started eating meat']

The oddity in the translation is brought by the manner in which the verb is doubled in PCC. That is, as already mentioned above, it appears that in the Meiteilon verb doubling construction it is not just the verb or, the verb along with the internal argument which is fronted for topicalization. It, instead, looks to be the case that the external argument i.e, the Subject is also an important element for verb doubling in the language. An example each of the different types of verb-fronting in different languages are as follows:

4. **Jugar**,   Juan suele jugar   al   futbol los   domingos
    play.INF   Juan HAB play.INF at   soccer the   sundays

    'As for playing, Juan usually plays soccer on Sundays.'

    Spanish (Vicente 2007)

5. Dumat'   čto   Xomskij   genij   on   dumaet   no
    think   that   Chomsky   genius   he   thinks   but

    čitat' ego knigi ne   čitaet
    read   his   book not   reads
    'He does think Chomsky is a genius, but he doesn't read his books'

    Russian (Abels, 2001)

6. **əy**   **sɑ**   **čɑ**-bə-di   *(čɑ)-re
    I   meat   eat-Nzr-Top   eat-Perf

    'As for me eating meat, it is done' [literally: 'I have already eaten meat']

    Meiteilon

Before one jumps to the complexities of verb-doubling constructions, let us first go through the derivation of the verb-undoubled version of (6)
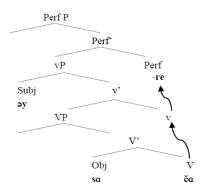
7. əy   sɑ   čɑ-re
    I   meat   eat-Perf

    'I have eaten meat'

Verb doubling of the type in (6) requires topicalization. In Meiteilon, this is achieved for arguments by marking them with the Topic particle *–ti*. So, let us now check whether topicalization is a sufficient step for doubling in case of the arguments.

8. **Subject Topicalization**

a.　　əy-*di*　　　　sɑ　　čɑ-re …

　　　　I –Top　　　　meat　eat-Perf

　　　　'I have eaten meat (…you/s/he might have done something else)'

b.　　*əy-di　　　**əy**　　sɑ　　čɑ-re

　　　　I –Top　　　　I　　meat　eat-Perf

9. **Object Topicalization**

a.　　əy　　sɑ-*di*　　　　čɑ-re …

　　　　I　　meat-Top　　eat-Perf

　　　　'I have eaten meat (…but, not other things)'

b.　　*əy　　sɑ-di　　　**sɑ**　　čɑ-re

　　　　I　　meat-Top　　meat　eat-Perf

Thus, the above examples (8a,b and 9a,b) show that topicalization in itself is not a sufficient condition for doubling. However, for verb doubling to occur, topicalization or, focalization[4] of

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[2] Due to the space limitations, the paper will not discuss the other focalized cases of verb doubling.

the verb is a necessary procedure for the double occurrence[5]. Let us now see how simple V-fronting or, VP-fronting is not enough for topicalization of the verb in Meiteilon.

Verb-fronting

10. *[*ča*-bə]-di   əy   sɑ   *ča*-re

    eat-Nzr-Top   I   meat   eat-Perf

VP-fronting

11. *[sɑ   *ča*-bə]-di   əy   *ča*-re

    meat   eat-Nzr-Top   I   eat-Perf

vP-fronting

12. [əy   sɑ   ***ča***-bə]-*di*   ***ča***-re
    I   meat   eat-Nzr-Top   eat-Perf
    'As for me eating meat, it is done'

It is now clear that verb doubling is licensed by overt vP movement for topicalization[6]. As example numbers (10) and (11) above show that neither just V-topicalization (10) nor VP-topicalization (11) is sufficient to license the verbal double. Rather, as in (12), the vP must topicalize. It is worth noting that Meiteilon has do-support which occurs only in such verb-

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[5] Verb-Topicalization/Focalization, however, does not always result to verb doubling as it can be a case of predicate-cleft construction without verb doubling where the lower copy (from head-movement) is not pronounced. The lower copy's function of supporting the verbal inflection is either done by a do-support (Rajkumar, 2014b) or, by a modal.

əy   sɑ   čɑ-bə-di   yɑ-y

I   meat   eat-Nzr-Top   Possibility-Ind

'As for me eating meat, it is possible' [Literally: 'I may eat meat']

[6] In order to show that vP forms a constituent a proform test using a demonstrative pronoun 'that' is performed on a similar verb-doubling construction. (However, the language lacks simple sentence-initial adverbs but they occur either as reduplicated elements like *itʰa   tʰaǰədənə* 'unbelievably' or, as complex constructions with verb 'say/speak' eg. *seŋnə hayrəbədə* 'honestly speaking'. So, I would not be using examples with such abverbial constructions.)

a.	**tombə**	**tʰəbək-tu**	**təw-bə**-di	təw-re	ədubu	loy-bə-di	loy-d-ri
	Tomba	work-that	do-Nzr-Top	do-Perf	but	finish-Nzr-Top	finish-Neg-Prog

'As for Tomba doing the work, it is done but it is not yet completed'

a'. **mədu**-di	təw-re	loy-bə-di	loy-d-ri
that-Top	do-Perf	finish-Nzr-Top	finish-Neg-Prog

'That is done, but it is not yet completed'

fronting environments without giving any change in the meaning of (12) when the lower copy of the verb is replaced by a 'meaningless-DO' (Rajkumar, 2014b).
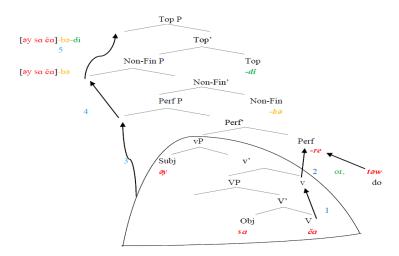
13. [əy sɑ *ča*-bə]-*di*   təw-re

    I meat eat-Nzr-Top   DO-Perf

    'As for me eating meat, it is done'

The derivation of (12) and (13) is combined as (14) in the tree structure below:

14.

Taking into account the undoubled occurrence in example (7), it is evident that the head movements of V-to-v (movement (1)) and then to Perf (movement (2)) take place. The crucial point that I would like to make here is that, at this particular point the verb (V-v attached to the Perf-head) plays a semantically active role[7]. Following the assumption that head movement is a syntactic operation and not a PF-component, it allows us to recover the V-v complex copy which is not yet deleted after movement (2). As the construction requires verbal fronting for

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[7] This line of argument follows the arguments put forward by the likes of Matushansky (2006); Bhatt and Keine (2014) and others who have shown that head-movement should not be pushed off as a PF-operation. Instead, head movement does play a role in the syntax and semantics of certain derivations like the German Verb Incorporation (VI) proposal by Bhatt and Keine (2006) to account for verb clusters in the language. Similarly, the numerous deictic particles of Meiteilon are incorporated into the verb stem through head movements which are semantically non-vacuous.

tombə   ləmpɑk-lom-tə   čen-sil-lu-re

Tomba   playground-towards-Loc   run-inwards-D.Deic-Perf

'Tomba went, ran towards and on the playground'

topicalization and recalling the need to front the whole vP, it is raised to Spec, PerfP while searching for the nearest Spec (movement (3)) which accidentally results in a Spec-Head configuration of vP with its earlier raised head i.e, V-v. It does not look like a typical Spec-Head agreement configuration as the relationship is between a vP with its complex head[8]. Movement (4) deletes the base copy of the vP at Spec, PerfP[9]. Moreover, the vP needs to raise further for topicalization but before that the clause must become a non-finite in order to get topicalized. So, movement (4) is an obligatory step for verb-topicalization in Meiteilon. Interestingly, after the completion of movement (4), the lower V-v copy from head movement becomes semantically redundant. But, in the presence of another verbal element like a modal in its place[10], verb-doubling does not occur as it is in the case of undoubled predicate-cleft constructions[11].

15. əy   sɑ   čɑ-bə   tɑ-re

    I   meat   eat-Nzr   OBL-Perf
    'I have to eat meat'

From the above examples, it is not very clear at this juncture whether such an instance is a case of a doubling chain formation or, something else. However, it is indeed very clear that the verbal copy, which resulted from head movement, has become semantically vacuous after movement (5) for topicalization. Thus, the verbal copy at Perf may remain either as it is or, may be replaced

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[8] This co-occurrence of doubling with a potential configuration for agreement should be researched in a deeper way as Barbiers (2008) has claimed that agreement is a sub-case of syntactic doubling. Moreover, except for movement to Spec, PerfP (which is too local as pointed out by the reviewer), the vP constituent movements are linearized in a Spec, Head configuration which is needed to get the required markings of the Head onto the moved constituent when it lands on its Spec.

[9] The reviewer has suggested for a lower position of the non-finite marker -bə located somewhere below the Perfective projection which was also my initial thoughts but it is not the case as it is also shown in Bhattacharya and Thangjam (2004) as a C^0-projection. Moreover, extending the head movements of the verb to the Topic head via the Perf and Non-Fin heads sequentially give rise to an If… then clause/conditional construction in the language.

[10] But never a full verb like 'sleep'

       *əy   sɑ   čɑ-bə   tum-me
        I   meat   eat-Nzr sleep-Perf

[11] But, it looks more likely the case that because of the presence of a modal head, the lexical verb head cannot cross it following Head Movement Constraint (Travis 1984). Hence the verb in this case is not doubled without the much needed head movement and the vP simply undergoes fronting. Another, interesting fact is that the modals can also be doubled using the same mechanisms as verb-doubling but it is not discussed here due to its divergence from the objective of this paper.

by a meaningless *do* since it is semantically redundant (Rajkumar, 2014b). It should also be noted that the vP at Spec, Non-FinP is also deleted after (5).

Let us now check the strength of our hypothesis on verb doubling in PCC in Meiteilon by adding a NegP into the structure.

II.I   Adding a NegP (illustration of 16a,b,c is given in 17)

16.

a. əy   sɑ   **čɑ**-bə-di   **čɑ**-d-re

I   meat   eat-Nzr-Top   eat-Neg-Perf

'As for me eating meat, it is not done' [or, 'I have stopped eating meat']

b. əy   sɑ   **čɑ**-bə-di   **təw**-d-re

I   meat   eat-Nzr-Top   do-Neg-Perf
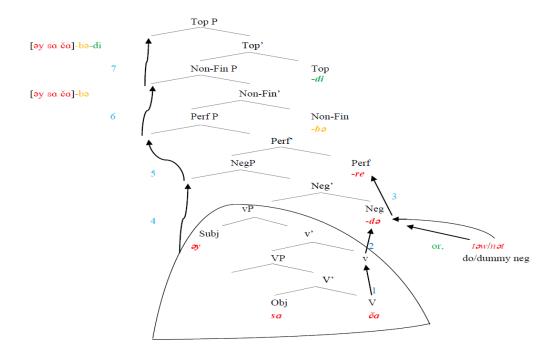
'As for me eating meat, it is not done' [or, 'I have stopped eating meat']

c. əy   sɑ   **čɑ**-bə-di   **nət**-t-re

I   meat   eat-Nzr-Top   Dummy Neg -Neg-Perf

'As for me eating meat, it is not done' [or, 'I have stopped eating meat']

17.

As examples (16a,b,c) are still cases of vP-topicalization, there is not much change in the structure except for the fact that addition of a semantically active Neg introduces another dummy insertion in the form of *nət* which is glossed as a *dummy Neg*. The presence of a dummy version of the negation is possible only when it attaches to a semantic negation because it is just like a negative version of a do-support. Thus, the possibility of these dummy insertions namely, *təw* 'do' and *nət* 'dummy Neg' in place of the lower V after vP-topicalization, without any change in the meaning, confirms the earlier formulation that the lower copy of the verb becomes semantically redundant after the vP has been topicalized.

We can now move forward with a more ambitious step by increasing the size of the unit of topicalization from just a vP[12].

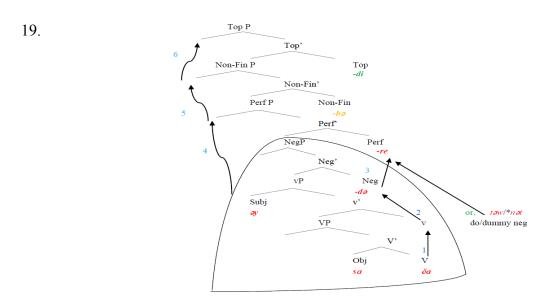## II.II NegP-Topicalization construction

18. əy sα **čα-də-bə-di čα-d/təw/*n**ət-re

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[12] It is to be noted that, whatsoever morpheme which can come in between the verb stem and the nominalizer *-bə* can become the unit of topicalization in Meiteilon verb constructions- for example, the causative morpheme *-hən*, the evidential marker *-ləm*, the deictic particles *–sin*, *-tʰok* etc.

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I   meat   eat-Neg-Nzr-Top eat-Neg/do/Dummy Neg-Perf

'As for not eating meat, it is not done' [or, 'I have stopped eating meat']
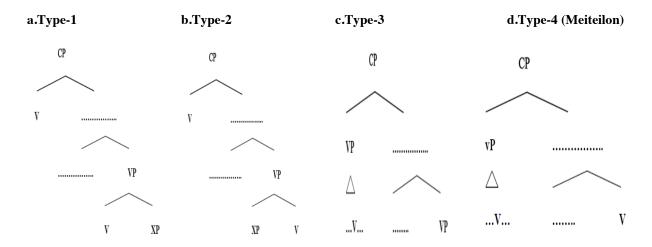
19.

As the unit that we have chosen for topicalization is a NegP and not a vP, it is not a simple case of verb doubling through vP-topicalization but rather, a case of negative doubling which contains verb doubling inside the structure. The movement procedures are almost the same as verb doubling. The V-v-Neg complex, merged as a unit through head movements 1-2-3, has escaped the ellipsis site (which happens after movement (4)). Hence, with similar fronting phenomenon as that of a vP, the NegP undergoes deletions of its lower copies. The different and most interesting part of this NegP-topicalization is that *do*-support is able to substitute the lower V+Neg after movement (6) as both the V and the Neg are meaningless in this position thereby, conforming to the earlier postulation. Hence, the dummy Neg element *nət* cannot be inserted to the Perf head as it has to be always licensed by a semantically active Neg which is not present anymore after the NegP topicalization.

Since the analysis for verb doubling still holds good even with the addition of a NegP both in cases of vP-topicalization and NegP topicalization. Trinh (2011) has proposed three types of predicate-clefting structures, namely- Type-1, Type-2, and Type-3 in order to account for the presence of doubling and non-doubling structures of verb. Due to space limitations, only the diagrammatic representations of Trinh's predicate-clefting types are shown in (20a,b,c). In

addition to these three types of predicate-clefting structures, I propose a fourth type referred as Type-4, structurally illustrated in (20d).

20.

| a.Type-1 | b.Type-2 | c.Type-3 | d.Type-4 (Meiteilon) |

III.   Sluicing the doubled verb

Let us look at the construction which involves the interaction of verb-doubling and sluicing. Following from the earlier section (II), we have seen that topicalization is a motivation required by the verb to undergo doubling. We will now see what happens to the verb-doubling construction (in the *reconstructed* ellipsis-site) when the motivation i.e, topicalization is snatched away by the remnant in the sluice.

21. əy-nə ŋəraŋ   kəri-no əmə **ča-bə-di**   **ča-k^h-re**
    I –Subj yesterday   something   eat-Nzr-Top   eat-?-Perf

    ədubu əy   kəri-no (hɑy-bə)*(**-di**) niŋsiŋ-d-re
    but   I   what-Q   say-Nzr-Top   remember-Neg-Perf

    [*əy-nə ŋəraŋ*   *ča-k^hi-bə*   *pot*   *ədu*]---**RECONSTRUCTED ELLIPSIS SITE**
    I –Subj yesterday   eat-?-Nzr   thing   that

 'As for me eating something, I did yesterday but I don't remember what' [the thing that I ate yesterday]

The above example (20) shows that sluicing requires obligatory topicalization of the remnant. And, it is already shown earlier in section (II) that topicalization plays a major role in verbal doubling construction of Meiteilon. It is then very evident that even if the antecedent has verb doubling in the structure, the ellipsis site will most probably not have it as the remnant is obligatorily topicalized. Therefore, there is no verb doubling at the ellipsis-site, but rather just head movement of the verb. Since, the sluice as one constituent can have only a single topicalized unit which is the remnant here[13], the verb in its ellipsis-site cannot have it anymore.

IV.   Conclusion

Hence, through the investigation of the sound-meaning mismatch problems through Meiteilon data, four proposals have been made in this paper. Firstly, the paper has illustrated that in a verb doubling construction, the higher copy of the verb is in its non-finite form. Secondly, it also demonstrates that NegP-topicalization introduces the possibility of Negative concord-like doubling in the language that lacks subject-verb agreement. Thirdly, the paper proposes for a Type-4 variety of predicate-clefting construction in addition to the earlier three types of predicate-clefting with evidence from Meiteilon. Lastly, it argues that sluicing the verb doubling construction seems to have repaired the sound-meaning mismatch of the later at the ellipsis-site. Apart from the four proposals, this paper also intends to highlight a further issue which is to check for the correlation between topicalization (and/or focalization) and the two sound-meaning mismatch problems (i.e., doubling and ellipsis); an issue which I aim to undertake in my future work.

Abbreviations

1P- First Person; **D.Deic-** Distal Deictic; **Fem-** Feminine; **Gen-** Genetive case; **HAB-** Habitual; **Ind-** Indicative; **INF-** Infinitive; **Loc-** Locative; **Neg-** Negation; **Non-Fin-** Non-Finite; **Nzr-** Nominalizer; **OBL-** Obligation; **Perf-** Perfective; **Top-** Topic

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[13] This is a very weak postulation as the paper has not discussed with instances of topicalized remnant with un-doubled verbs in the antecedent. A preliminary investigation shows that the remnant still needs a topic marker. So, a much more detailed study is required on the interaction of doubling and ellipsis which cannot be covered in the limited space of this paper.

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