Sluicing the verbal double: a view through Meiteilon

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Doubling and Ellipsis both involve a mismatch between sound and meaning. Syntactic doubling is defined as a phenomenon where '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'[1] (Barbiers 2008, 2013). Lexical verb root doubling occurs abundantly in Meiteilon when the verb is topicalized; the higher copy has to get either a Topic or, a Focus marker attached to its non-Finite form whereas the lower copy is the one which gets all the verbal inflections attached to it (Achom et al, 2013; Rajkumar, 2014a)[2].

1. əy   yu   **tʰək**-pə-**di**   *(**tʰək**)-e   (*obligatory* verbal doubling)
   I   liquor   **drink**-Nzr-**Top drink**-Perf
   'Drinking liquor, I have done'

This difference in the nature of the two copies of the same root is not an out of the ordinary occurrence as Barbiers (2009) also notes that 'in a doubling chain, the features of the higher copy are a subset of the features of the lower copy'. The set-subset relationship between the lower and higher copies upholds the understanding of doubling construction as a result of *trace*-pronunciation after movement (Uriagereka (1995), Kayne (1994), Belletti (2005), Poletto (2006)). So doubling seems to violate the "least effort" condition of economy. Poletto (2006) instead gives an impression that the double pronunciation of the copies is actually an economical step in itself as it involves pronouncing the t_v position as both the copies do two different things- the higher copy gets the Top/Foc element attached to it while the lower copy gets the verbal morpheme(s) attached to it. The question that I shall explore is whether, both the copies of the verb are truly lexical in nature which is unlikely given the existence of do-support in the language, as shown by (2) and (3). Therefore, terming it as 'lexical verb root doubling' is a misnomer, as doubling constructions simply involves pronunciation of the trace position by a meaningless copy of the verb or, a DO-insertion in its place (obligatorily when the higher copy is attached by a negative suffix).

2. əy   yu   **tʰək**-pə-**di**   **tʰək**-e/ **təw**-re
   I   liquor   **drink**-Nzr-**Top drink**-Perf/**DO**-Perf
   'Drinking liquor, I have done'

3. əy   yu   **tʰək**-tə-bə-**di**   (***tʰək**)/ **təw**-re
   I   liquor   **drink**-Neg-Nzr-**Top**   **drink**/**DO**-Perf
   'Not drinking liquor, I have done'

Doubling interacts with sluicing in interesting ways. As example (4) shows

4. əy-nə   ŋəraŋ   kəri-no əmə   **tʰək**-pə-**di**   **tʰək**/**təw**-(r)əm-mi
   I –Subj   yesterday   something   drink-Nzr-Top   drink/DO-Evid-Ind

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[1] The 'seemingly without semantic contribution' part of the definition is very important as this part distinguishes the phenomenon from 'reduplication' as the latter stands for repetition of all or part of a lexical item carrying a semantic modification (Abbi 1990, 1992). In reduplication, the reduplicated items have to be local i.e., no other element(s) can intervene in between them; but, in syntactic doubling, the doubles can either be local or, distant.

Doubling of the verb 'eat'				Possible Position 1		Possible Position 2
i)	əy	čak	**ča**-bə-bu-di	(ŋəsay-nə)	**ča**-rək-e	(ŋəsay-nə)
	I	rice	eat-Nzr-Foc-Top	earlier	eat-Deic-Perf	earlier

'Eating rice, I have already done (earlier)'

Reduplication of the verb 'sit' giving a 'while sitting' reading, *pʰəm-nə pʰəm-nə*

ii)	əy-nə	nəŋ	**pʰəm**-nə (*kəw-rək-kəni)	**pʰəm**-nə	*(kəw-rək-kəni)
	I	you	sit-Adv call-deic-Fut	sit-Adv	call-deic-Fut

'I will call you while (I am) sitting'

[2] This observation has helped in disposing off an earlier thought instance of verbal doubling where both the 'supposedly' copies of the same verb root have verbal inflections attached to them.

əy-nə   kʰət-nə-bə   **həw**-ge-nə   **həw**-ri-ne
I-Subj   fight-Adv.M-Nzr   start-Vol-Adv.M   start-PROG-CONF
'I am intentionally trying to start a fight.'

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

[əy-nə	ŋərɑŋ	**tʰək**-pə	pot	ədu]
I –Subj	yesterday	drink-Nzr	thing	that

'**Drinking** something, I **did** yesterday but I don't remember what [(the thing that) I *drank* yesterday]'

It is evidently seen from the above example that sluicing the sentence containing a verbal double deletes one copy of the double in the ellipsis site when it is reconstructed. Does this solve the major theoretical issues in Syntactic Doubling or, rather raises new questions? One would therefore need to go deeper in order to understand what is really going on. When sluicing is done on the sentence with the verbal double construction (4), the remnant is obligatorily topicalized and hence, there is no need to double the verb again in the (reconstructed) ellipsis site, as verbal topicalization does not happen here. Therefore, we need to question about the nature of the ellipsis site and the relationship it has with the remnant. This kind of constructions invariably supports the syntactic and semantic presence of the elided elements. It is worth noting that in Meiteilon sluicing construction (Achom et al, 2014), the remnant has to be topicalized no matter where the topic marker is attached in the antecedent or, not attached at all in the antecedent.

5.
John-nə(-**di**)	car	əmə(-**di**)	(ləy-bə-**di**)	ləy-rəm-mi
John-Subj-Top	car	one-Top	buy-Nzr-Top	buy-Evid-Ind

ədubu	əy(-**di**)	kərəmbə-no	(hɑy-bə)(-**di**)	(kʰəŋ-bə-**di**)	kʰəŋ-de
but	I-Top	which-Q	say-Nzr-Top	know-Nzr-Top	know-Neg

'John bought a car, but I don't know which one'

The need to topicalize before eliding an element goes in line with Johnson (2001) and Ntelitheos's (2004) assumption that nominal ellipsis proceeds through NP-topicalization. Although, the verbal copies are the one elided in (4), after reconstruction one copy is recovered in the ellipsis site; but, before sluicing happens, topicalization of the verb is a must to get 'doubled'. However, how far true this assumption of the relation between ellipsis and topicalization is, will be known only after a detailed study is done on the issue. Thus, this leads us to the objective of the paper, that is, to make an attempt to understand the two contrasting issues of sound and meaning mismatch in Ellipsis and Doubling.

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