

Control in Meiteilon: a case of recoverable PRO

‘Control’ in generative linguistics is a vastly researched topic even though with opposite claims of its similarity with and difference from ‘movement’. On one side Chomsky (1981), Bresnan (1982) and others treat them as different phenomena, while on the other side, control is considered to be non-distinct from raising (Hornstein 1999, Boeckx & Hornstein 2006). The standard assumption of control is that it is “a relation of referential dependence between an unexpressed subject (the *controlled* element) and an expressed or unexpressed constituent (the *controller*)” (Bresnan 1982). Boeckx & Hornstein’s (2006) movement theory of control (MTC) treats control as another kind of raising into an additional θ -position. Such a consideration of control would then leave PRO as an ordinary copy of the raised argument following the copy theory of movement (CTM). Further, the two steps – Form Chain and Copy Deletion – in CTM (Chomsky 1993, 1995; Corver & Nunes 2007; Trinh 2011) can be applied to support the ability to recover the PRO as a pronounceable copy after it is raised higher than its ‘controller’. Thus, in line of this discussion, the present paper uses novel data from Meiteilon to demonstrate the possibility of pronouncing the PRO when it is contained in a topicalized clause. Based on the observation made in the study, the paper argues that PRO is just another copy of the so-called controller. Inadvertently, the paper also detects an asymmetry between specifier and head in terms of their c-command capability.

Meiteilon has obligatory control constructions both with respect to subject-control and object-control constructions which are shown in (1) and (2) respectively.

1. Tomba_i-nə [PRO_i sən ča-nə-bə] hotnə-i
 Tomba-Subj beef eat-in order to-Nzr try-Ind
 ‘Tomba_i tries [PRO_i to eat beef]’
- 1’. *Tomba_i-nə Chaoba_j-bu [PRO_j sən ča-nə-bə] hotnə-i
 Tomba-Subj Chaoba-Obj beef eat-in order to-Nzr try-Ind
 *‘Tomba_i tries Chaoba_j [PRO_j to eat beef]’
2. Tomba_i-nə John_j-bu [PRO_j sən ča-nə-bə] tək-i
 Tomba-Subj John-Obj beef eat-in order to-Nzr persuade-Ind
 ‘Tomba_i persuades John_j [PRO_j to eat beef]’
- 2’. *Tomba_i-nə [PRO_i sən ča-nə-bə] tək-i
 Tomba-Subj beef eat- in order to -Nzr persuade-Ind
 *‘Tomba_i persuades [PRO_j to eat beef]’

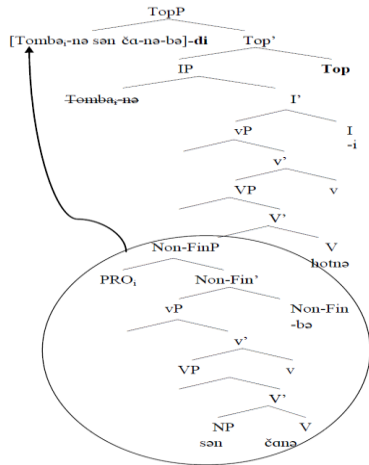
Topicalizing the embedded non-finite clauses¹ in (1) and (2), we get the former PROs pronounced in (3) and (4) respectively. The topicalization instead results in the silencing/deletion of their former corresponding controllers, being lower in the new hierarchy.

3. [Tombə_i-nə sən ča-nə-bə]-di ~~Tombə_i-nə~~ [] hotnə-y
 PRO_i-Subj ↑ -Top Tomba_i-Subj
4. [John_j-nə sən ča-nə-bə]-di Tombə_i-nə ~~John_j-bu~~ [] tək-i
 PRO_j-Subj ↑ -Top Tomba_i-Subj

Thus, (3) and (4) clearly show the recovery of their corresponding PROs for pronunciation after the clause containing it is raised higher to its controller. It should now be assumed without any doubt that in case if the embedded clause containing the controlled PRO is left un-topicalized, it would not be recovered or pronounced as it is hierarchically lower than its controller. However, there is a problem with pronouncing the former PRO after it is raised higher to its controller. That will be to investigate if there is a case of asymmetric c-command relationship between the two. In order to expedite the issue at hand, I take the help of diagrammatic representation (5) to show the derivations which take place resulting (3) from (1).

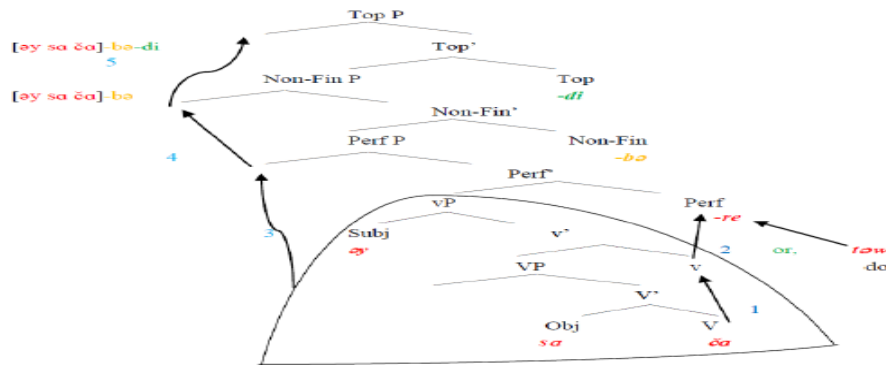
¹ Raising of the whole clause for topicalization is not an uncommon thing in Meiteilon as it is also observed to be the case in verb doubling occurrences in the language (Rajkumar 2014b, 2015, 2016).

5.



Following topicalization of the embedded clause (EC), it is found that it c-commands the controller. It is also observed that the controller is deleted which somehow gives an indication that the ‘PRO’ (which is at the Specifier position of the EC i.e. Non-FinP) seems to c-command its controller thereby resulting to its deletion as a c-commanded copy. Interestingly, this issue of c-command by the PRO to its former controller after topicalization is also present in vP-topicalization of verb doubling cases (Rajkumar 2016). The difference in the latter case being that the head in the topicalized vP cannot c-command its own lower copy (i.e. of the verb-head) which is why both the copies of the verb have to be pronounced resulting to verb-doubling.

6. [əy sa ča-bə]-di ča-re
 I meat eat-Nzr-Top eat-Perf
 ‘As for me eating meat, it is done’



Rajkumar (2016)

From the above observations, we can claim that there is some asymmetry between heads and specifiers in terms of their c-command capability. That is, the head of the raised phrase cannot c-command its lower copy thus resulting to double pronunciation (verb-doubling) whereas the specifier of the raised phrase (PRO) can c-command its lower copy (here, the controller) resulting to its deletion.

Conclusion: The paper, using novel data from Meiteilon, claims to demonstrate the possibility of pronouncing the PRO when it is raised higher to its controller for topicalization. This present study also shows an asymmetry between specifier and head in terms of their c-command capability which in turn affect the corresponding lower copy’s deletion or pronunciation.

Selected References: Bresnan, J. 1982. Control and complementation. *Linguistic Inquiry* 13, 343-434. Rajkumar, L. 2016. “Sluicing the verbal double: a view through Meiteilon”. In Proceedings of FASAL-5, Balusu, R. and Sundaresan, S (Eds.) p50-63. Hornstein, N. 1999. Movement and control. *Linguistic Inquiry* 30: 69-96.