Alemannic verb doubling is the overt realization of a head movement chain

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The puzzle: Clause-internal doubling

Verb Doubling in Alemannic (Hodler, 1969; Lötscher, 1993) differs from other verb doubling phenomena in that

- the doubling of verbs takes place within a clause (no fronting/topicalization is involved)
- it is obligatory, in both main clauses (which are verb-second) and subordinate clauses (verb-final)

Four verbs do the doubling:

(1) a. *I gang* **(ga) helfe.* *Obligatory doubler ‹ga›*
I go.pres.1sg help
"I go help"

b. *I chum* **(cho) helfe.* *Obligatory doubler ‹cho›*
I come.pres.1sg help
"I come help"

c. *I la* **(lo) helfe.* *Obligatory doubler ‹lo›*
I let.pres.1sg help
"I let (someone) help"

d. *I fo-n* **(afo) choche.* *Obligatory doubler ‹afo›*
I begin.pres.1sg cook
"I start cooking"

van Riemsdijk (2002) attests a similar phenomenon in West Flemish, and Winford (1990:127) in Caribbean English Creole.
The ‹ga› ("go") doubler can also occur under modals, auxiliaries, and an open class of motion verbs.

(2) a. *I sot* **(ga) helfe.* *modal + ‹ga›*
I should.pres.1sg help
"I should go help"

b. *I bia* **(ga) helfe.* *aux + ‹ga›*
I aux.pres.1sg help
"I went to help"

c. *I renn ahi* **(ga) luaga.* *‹run› + ‹ga›*
I run.pres.1sg there see
"I run there to look"

Analysis as a spelled-out V-to-T(-to-C) chain

By taking the verb double *ga* of (1) to be a spelled-out trace of a V-to-T(-to-C) head-movement chain, the distribution in main clauses ((1), Verb-second) and embedded clauses ((2), Verb-final) is correctly predicted.

(3) a. *[$_{CP}$ [$_{C}$ dass [$_{TP}$ i [$_{v}$ gang$_i$] [$_{VP}$ [$_{V}$ ga$_i$] luaga]]]*
that I go.1sg see

b. *[$_{CP}$ i$_k$ [$_{C}$ gang$_i$] [$_{TP}$ t$_k$ [$_{T}$ ga$_i$] [$_{VP}$ (min Onkl$_m$) [$_{V}$ ga$_i$] bsuache t$_m$]]]*
I go.1sg my uncle visit

Argumentation

Despite the name, many authors take the term descriptively and do not assume actual syntactic doubling (Salzmann & Brandner, 2011). Perhaps for this reason, no full syntactic analysis of such a derivation has been suggested as of yet. Here I show that such an analysis works. The gist is that traces (movement origin and intermediate landing sites) are spelled-out as what is called here a doubler. Benefit over non-productive doubling analyses:

- predicts the distribution of doublers "for free", drawing on the independently motivated V-to-T(-to-C) movement

When there is more than one doubler in a clause ("tripling" and "quadrupling", so to say), the maximal amount differs between subordinate and main clauses, which supports this analysis.

(4) a. *I gang ga dr Mama ga bluama ga koufe.*
b. *dass i gang ga dr Mama (*ga) bluama ga koufe*

Special case 1: Bare doublers without a governing lexical verb

If the full infinitive, parenthesized in 5a, is left out, a silent GO needs to be assumed, as suggested in van Riemsdijk (2002). If, under an auxiliary, the participle, parenthesized in 5b, is left out, an IPP (infinitive-as-participle) plus subsequent silencing of it as in 5a is assumed. These two suggestions potentially salvage the opposition to a productive syntactic doubling analysis brought up in the literature.

(5) a. *I will ga schaffa (goo).* *modal: go-drop*
I want work (go)

b. *I bia ga schaffa (ggange).* *aux: IPP + go-drop*
I AUX work (gone)

Special case 2: Heteromorphic doubling

Not only the verb *goo* "go" can license a doubler, but also more marked motion verbs such as *khoo* "come", *renne* "run" or the causative *schicke* "send". The analysis requires semantic decomposition here, in line of the suggestion in van Riemsdijk (2002).

Deletion

More than one ga in a sentence is dispreferred but grammatical. While the above analysis predicts the landing sites of doublers, the varying deletion of (intermediate) doublers in the V-to-T-to-C chain needs to be explained: This seems to be a matter of lexical variation, and can be formally captured in terms of Late Insertion.

Consequence: Alemannic VO

If the analysis of doublers as verbal heads (thus projecting a VP) is correct, the invariably ‹doubler INF› order means that the phrase is VO. This, under a standardly assumed OV Alemannic VP and TP, is a violation of the Final-over-Final-condition (Sheehan et al., 2017), as pointed out in Salzmann (2010). Given the exceptionless head-initiality of doubler phrases, and given that the FOFC is correct, the verb doubling puzzle at hand is strong evidence that the Alemannic verbal domain (VP, vP, TP) are head-initial, counter to what the majority of the literature assumes.

(6) Complement-to-spec movement to attain a head-initial TP:

a. *das [$_{TP}$ i (sichr/nid) [$_{XP}$ ga [$_{VP}$ schaffa]]$_i$ [$_{T}$ gang] t$_i$*
b. *das [$_{TP}$ i (sichr/nid) [$_{XP}$ ga [$_{VP}$ [$_{DP}$ Häß]$_k$ [$_{V}$ koufe] t$_k$]]$_i$ [$_{T}$ gang] t$_i$*
c. *das [$_{TP}$ i (sicher/nid) [$_{XP}$ [$_{DP}$ Häß]$_k$ ga [$_{VP}$ t$_k$ [$_{V}$ koufe] t$_k$]]$_i$ [$_{T}$ gang] t$_i$*

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