



University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics

Volume 8

Issue 3 *Selected Papers from NWAV 30*

Article 10

1-1-2002

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1 Introduction

One of the most interesting changes to have taken place in the English language is in the use of *do*, not as a main verb, but as an auxiliary.

Periphrastic auxiliary *do* plays a central role in contemporary Standard English verbal structure. It acts as an operator (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik, 1985: §3.21-8), and is required in any finite clause showing negation, inversion, post-verbal ellipsis or emphatic polarity, as in (1).

- (1) a. The aeroplane *didn't* go up across the sky.
b. *Did* the aeroplane go up across the sky?
c. So quickly *did* the aeroplane go across the sky (that)...
d. (The bird flew across the sky) and the aeroplane *did* too.
e. (The bird didn't fly far) nor *did* the aeroplane.
f. (I didn't see the aeroplane) The aeroplane *did* go across the sky.

The origins of *do*-periphrasis and the consequent restriction of use, in most varieties of English, to those contexts having NICE properties (Huddleston, 1976:333) are the result of a long series of linguistic changes much debated in the historical literature. In this paper, I seek to examine the survival of one context of use, which becomes obsolescent in mainstream varieties of English by 1700. That is periphrastic *do*, as an unstressed tense marker in affirmative declarative statements (2), still found in the speech of the oldest generation from a rural community in Somerset¹ (UK).

- (2) a. I *do* go up town and it *do* really grieve me, you-know. (ib/e/109)²
b. And he had to go 'round and 'round and all the rest of 'em *did* pee on 'un and all that. (kb/g/2469)

¹ I gratefully acknowledge the support of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) of Great Britain, award no. R42200034220.

² Codes in parentheses represent the speaker initials, code, and coordinates of the token in the token file.

2 A Brief History of *do*

Periphrastic *do* in general, and in affirmative declaratives contexts in particular, is first found in rhyming verse from the Southwest of Britain, dating from the end of the 13th century (Denison, 1993:264), as in (3).

(3)a. c1300 King Horn : a Middle English Romance 1057

Manuscript in Hall, J. (ed.) (1901) Clarendon, Oxford

His sclauyn he dude dun legge

His pilgrim's cloak he did down lay

'He laid down his pilgrim's cloak'

b. c1300 The Early South-English Legendary 45.380 (EETS 87)

Horstmann, C. (ed.)

His membres þat he carf off euer-eft he dude misse,

His members that he cut off ever afterwards he did miss,

Bote a luytel wise 3ware-þoru3 he mi3hte 3wane he

apart-from a little amount through which he might when he

wolde pisse

wished piss

Examples taken from Denison (1993:264).

The reasons for this development, however, are much debated in the historical literature. A number of different hypotheses have been put forward (e.g. Denison 1985, 1993; Ellegård 1953; Engblom 1938; Garrett 1998; Kroch 1989; Poussa 1990; Visser 1963-73). Whatever the mechanism that produced the periphrastic *do* construction, it is generally accepted that it spread outwards from the south-western regions of Britain.

Periphrastic auxiliary *do* has a long history of differentiation according to context. It developed rapidly in negative constructions (questions, declaratives) and affirmative questions, going to near-completion between 1400 and 1700. However, affirmative declarative constructions followed an entirely different path. Figure 1, abstracted from Ellegård (1953:162), illustrates this development. The construction was introduced in about 1400, "gained ground slowly" in the fifteenth century, then more rapidly in the sixteenth, reaching a peak around 1575, from which point it declined. This unusual path of development has been described as "a perfectly good change that did not quite make it" (Ihalainen, 1982:3).

It is important to note that affirmative declarative *do* never exceeded 10%, even at the most frequent point of its development (Figure 1). Despite this low frequency, *do* endured in the West and Southwest regions of Britain. The survival of *do* in Somerset English is somewhat intriguing, especially

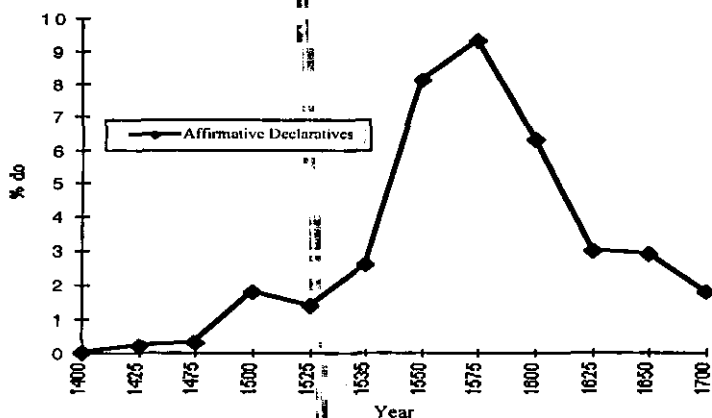


Figure 1: Percentage frequency of *do* in affirmative declarative constructions in Ellegård's materials (1953:162)

considering the trajectory of change for this construction in Standard English. Not only must affirmative periphrastic *do* still be functional in the grammar, but it is (perhaps) subject to internal linguistic and external constraints. In the light of Wolfram and Schilling-Estes' (1995:712) proposal that obsolescing features do not "recede in an orderly linear fashion", what will be most interesting is to understand the mechanisms which trigger the variability.

In what remains I seek to explore this question through a systematic quantitative analysis of the occurrence of periphrastic *do* and *did* in affirmative declaratives in Somerset English.

3 Data and Method

3.1 Data

The data on which this study is based come from a community in Somerset on the Southwestern peninsula of Great Britain, approximately 120 miles from London. The data were collected in and around Wincanton, a small town with a population of approximately 4600. The fieldwork involved sociolinguistic interviews with the oldest members of the community, all of whom were born or raised in the area and had remained there. The speakers have what Milroy (1980) has termed "dense networks". Their social circles

were for the most part confined to the community in question. The majority of informants were (or had been) involved in agriculture and all had left school by the age of 14.³ The data were collected using standard sociolinguistic techniques involving participant observation in the community (Jones, 2000). The speaker sample is displayed in Table 1. The materials are highly informal and as far as possible represent the typical discourse found in the community.

Age	Female	Male	TOTAL
65+	4	8	12

Table 1: Distribution of sample members

3.2 Method

The context of variability in this study was highly circumscribed. In Somerset English, periphrastic *do* is used in present temporal reference (4a), where it is variable with inflected present tense verb forms (4b). It can co-occur with both stative verbs (5a) and dynamic verbs (5b).

- (4) a. I *do* go up town and it *do* really grieve me, you know. (e/109)
 b. In autumn, cider *becomes* too strong and that *do* wake 'ee up a bit. (c/78)
- (5) a. 'Tis surprising what it *do* cost. (d/148)
 b. 'Course women *do* go out whether they *go* out with their husbands or whatever. (e/159)

Therefore, all structures containing a present tense verb were extracted, yielding a total of 573 tokens.

Consistent with reports from the historical and dialectological literature (e.g. Ihalainen, 1976), initial examination of periphrastic *did* revealed that it overwhelmingly encoded a habitual past function, as in (6).

- (6) Yes, we had the evacuees. You couldn't understand them. What amused us the first year was, always remember they *did* say, when if you ate an apple, they would say "Give us the kuwa [sc. Core]." And they'd want the core. They wouldn't want the apple because they wouldn't know what a blinkin' apple were. And they *did* ask for the 'kuwa'. After the

³ This was the minimum school leaving age when these informants were attending school.

first year when they were here they knew what an apple were. 'Cos they could go and pinch 'em theirselves like we used to.

- (7) a. I *did* only fall off me bike once going to school. (g/2407)
 b. Well, I might have seen it [film] a hundred times, but I still wanted to see it, and then her *did* walk up the path. (a/310)

In the light of discussion about the precise function of *did* in Somerset English in the literature (e.g. Klemola, 1996), I needed to situate the form, not only in the contexts where it appeared, but also in those where it could have appeared, but did not (Labov, 1972:72). Thus, I first tabulated every instance of periphrastic *did* regardless of its aspectual meaning. The incidence of non-habitual *did* tokens was extremely rare. There were just eight in the Somerset data (out of approximately 220, 000 words), as in (7).

Since non-habitual tokens were so rare I do not treat them quantitatively.⁴ Instead, I restrict the variable context for periphrastic *did* to those which encode the habitual past. A total of 3388 tokens were extracted.

A number of exceptional contexts were excluded. These include all tokens involving the verb *to be* since neither *do* nor *did* occur with *to be* in this variety. Similarly, as *do* and *did* do not occur in structures containing modal verbs, these were excluded. All negative and interrogative constructions, emphatic clauses and imperatives were excluded as well. Ambiguous tokens, false starts, fixed expressions, discourse markers and structures containing reported speech which may have been imitated were all excluded from the analysis, as were examples of ellipsis.

Each token retained for analysis was coded for the internal grammatical factors reported to have an effect on the use of *do* and *did*, all of which were extrapolated from historical and synchronic research. From this information I was able to statistically model the simultaneous contribution of these factors on the choice of periphrastic *do* and *did* using the logistic regression package GOLDVARB 2.0 (Rand and Sankoff, 1990) for the Macintosh computer.

⁴ Overall, 2.4% of all past temporal reference contexts in these data are represented by *did*. This figure is based on an estimate made up of three pages of transcription for five speakers where all the past temporal reference contexts were noted. The HABITUAL PAST makes up 34% of these past temporal reference contexts. When they are treated separately the proportion of *did* rises to 7%.

4 Results

4.1 Overall distribution of *do* and *did* in Somerset English

Table 2 displays the overall frequencies for periphrastic *do* and *did*. As is clear from the figures on the table, this variable is still evident in both the present and the past temporal reference grammars of Somerset English. It is not robust, however. *Do* occurs 10% of the time – and *did* makes up 7% of habitual past contexts, varying with the preterit, *used to* and forms of *would*. So, neither periphrastic *do* or *did* are the predominant choice for marking in this dialect.

	Present		HABITUAL PAST reference			
	<i>do</i>	Other Verb	Preterite	<i>used to</i>	<i>would</i> 'd	<i>did</i>
%	10	90	49	39	5	7
N	58	515	1659	1328	180	234

Table 2: Overall distributions of variables

4.2 Multivariate Analysis

4.2.1 Periphrastic *did*

I begin with periphrastic *did*. Table 3 shows the results of a variable rule analysis of the main linguistic constraints reported to condition the use of *did* in the history of English.

The table shows the results for factors that were selected as statistically significant as well as those that were not (indicated in square brackets). In the case of the latter I provide the results of the iteration of the step-down analysis, in which all factors are included in the regression. I also include the percentages and the number of tokens per cell.

In the historical literature the particular lexical verb used with *do* has often been cited as a factor conditioning its use (Ellegård, 1953; Engblom, 1938; Ihalainen, 1976; Nurmi, forthcoming; Ogura, 1993; Rissanen, 1985; Tiekens-Boon van Ostade, 1987; Traugott, 1972; Visser, 1963-72). The reports can be separated into two distinct claims: i) ambiguous verbs of the type *put/put/put*, as in (8a) are said to show a preference for *do*. ii) strong verbs in general are said to favor *do*, as in (8b). I tested them both in the same factor group; hypothesising that both categories should favor *did* over regular or weak verbs, as in (8c). I also separated the verb *say* which has been shown in other studies to behave idiosyncratically (8d).

Verb class is the strongest effect in Somerset. *Say* highly favors *did* at .82, showing the idiosyncratic behaviour that it is famous for. The remainder of the constraint ranking shows that use of *did* is favored with ambiguous verbs at .74 and with strong verbs somewhat less so at .55, a pattern consistent with the reports in the historical record.

- (8) a. There were all tents and different sorts of huts where they *did put* all their food. (a/217)
 b. Oh you had to make the rick properly, otherwise he *did fall* down. (c/571)
 c. We were all friendly in a village, and you *did visit* one another. (d/1054)
 d. And the landlord *did say* to somebody behind the ear "Get out" 'er said; "that's John Moore's chair." (j/831)

	Input: .056	Total N: 3388
	FW	%
VERB CLASS		N
<i>say</i>	.82	23
Ambiguous – Type X/X/X	.74	18
Other Strong verbs	.55	8
Regular / weak	.47	6
Range	35	
ADVERB POSITION		
Preverbal	.82	23
Other/None	.49	7
Range	33	
CLAUSE TYPE		
Relative	.65	11
Subordinate	.58	9
other	.48	6
Range	17	
SPEAKER SEX		
Male	.56	8
Female	.43	5
Range	13	
TRANSITIVE EFFECT		
Both	[.58]	10
Transitive	[.51]	8
Intransitive	[.50]	6
Verb with direct object	[.49]	6

Table 3: Variable rule analysis of internal factors contributing to the probability of *did* in past habitual contexts in Somerset English

Periphrastic *do* has long been connected with the use of adverbs (Ellegård, 1953; Engblom, 1938; Neväläinen, 1991; Rissanen, 1985, 1991).

Indeed the propensity for *do* to appear with a preverbal adverb, as in (9), is perhaps the best known constraint from the historical record. Table 3 shows that this constraint is fully operative in Somerset. *Did* is highly favored in constructions with a preverbal adverb.

Another factor which the historical record makes clear had an effect on *do* is the type of clause. Subordinate clauses, as in (10a) were said to favor *do*, and particularly relative clauses like (10b) (e.g. Nevalainen, 1991:310-11; Rissanen, 1985:173; Samuels, 1972). The results show a clear confirmation of this with relative clauses favoring *did* at .65, and subordinates at .58.

- (9) Well, hay-making, you *did* always keep a jar cider 'round the back of the rick. (m/3967)
- (10) a. It was always what everyone used to do when you *did* hear the air-raid sirens. (e/935)
- b. And then you had to put another ferret up with a string tied to 'un, who *did* dig it out to find your ferret. (g/2295)

The last effect found to be significant in Somerset English is speaker sex, where men favor *did* and women disfavor it. This result exhibits classic sociolinguistic patterning. The trend for women to disfavor non-standard variants has been a consistent feature of empirical sociolinguistic research (e.g. Labov, 1972).

Only one constraint was not significant. It relates to verb type and can be discovered in the historical dialect literature for Somerset in which transitive and intransitive verbs are said to behave differently with respect to *do*.

Elworthy (1877) observes that transitive verbs may have two different forms. When they are used without a direct object they take *do* as well as the suffix '*ee*', as in (11a). But when the object is present they take the suffixal inflection *-ed*, as in (11b). The suffix '*ee*' is now obsolescent. I hypothesised, however, that despite the obsolescence of the Old English suffix, the remnants of this effect might still be observable if periphrastic *did* showed a tendency to be used more with transitive verbs without a direct object following. My attempt to test this required me to classify verbs according to whether they were transitive, as in (12a), intransitive, as in (12b), or could be both, as in (12c) and whether a direct object was present, as in (12d).

⁵ The '*ee*' suffix that appears on this main verb was once commonly used in Southwest dialects for verbs not followed by a direct object. It derives from the suffix *-ian* of the Old English second class of weak verbs (Gachelin, 1991:224).

- (11) a. aay dúd dig'ee 'I did digee'
 b. aay, ee, etc. dig'd (aúl dhu laut) 'I digged all the lot'
 (Elworthy, 1877:50)
- (12) a. Oh! The amount that he *did break*. (a/288)
 b. I did go up to Sudden Grange where Dad worked to help out some times. (h/2753)
 c. The milk used to pour between the rollers and the knives did peel it off as powder. (i/3189)
 d. I think we used to be afraid of our teachers, so you did have more respect. (d/1285)

Whilst the effect is not statistically significant in this variety, the historical pattern is still visible in the constraint ranking. Transitive verbs (.51), and verbs which can be transitive or intransitive (.58) are more favorable to periphrastic *did*, while verbs with a direct object are less favorable (.49). Thus the data pattern along with the predictions laid out in the historical record.

In sum, what we see in this variable rule analysis is a remarkable maintenance of the historical constraints reported in the literature.

4.2.2 Periphrastic *do*

Table 4 present the results of the multivariate analysis for *do*. The only significant factor is that of verb class, which as we have seen was also important for *did*. Moreover, the constraint hierarchy is exactly the same. Ambiguous verbs, as in (13a) strongly favor *do*, then other strong verbs (13b), with regular verbs (13c) least likely to surface with *do*.

- (13) a. 'Cos I *do put* our papers in with our rubbish. (c/91)
 b. I *do see* Bruce now, you know. (d/142)
 c. If your dad *do listen* to any he'll say she's a wicked woman. (e/188)

The first question to ask here is: why should this factor group have any effect for present temporal reference? In the case of the ambiguous verbs it may be precisely because they are ambiguous, and the effect is functional. Yet this does not explain the result for the other strong verbs. Notice that strong verbs are very frequent—339 tokens—and form the largest proportion of the data. Bybee et al. (1994) have suggested that due to their frequency strong verbs retain old forms. Given that this use of periphrastic *do* is a relic feature, then this finding may well be a reflex of a situation which pertains to languages more generally.

An alternative explanation is that periphrastic *do* surfaces with frequently occurring verbs. Table 5 tabulates all the lexical verbs which occur 20 times or more in the data. *Do* frequencies are higher for these verbs. However, a GOLDVARB run (not shown here) revealed the effect of frequent verbs versus non-frequent verbs to be non-significant. In fact, in that analysis nothing was selected. Thus, we are forced to accept either that the first explanation holds, or that this is simply a lexical-collocation effect.

Input: .096	Total N: 573	FW	%	N
VERB CLASS				
Ambiguous - Type X/X/X		.63	15	39
Other Strong verbs		.57	12	339
Regular / weak		.36	6	195
	<i>Range</i>		27	
TRANSITIVE EFFECT				
Transitive		[.65]	17	95
Both		[.51]	10	77
Verb with direct object		[.46]	9	255
Intransitive		[.46]	8	146
CLAUSE TYPE				
Subordinate		[.59]	14	100
Conjoined		[.52]	11	82
Other		[.47]	9	391
SPEAKER SEX				
Female		[.55]	12	224
Male		[.47]	9	349

Table 4: Variable rule analysis of internal factors contributing to the probability of *do* in present temporal reference in Somerset English

None of the other factors were found to have a significant effect on the probability for periphrastic *do*. This is mainly due to the sample size: the disparity in the amount of data available for this feature means that the step-wise regression procedure incorporated in GOLDVARB may not always be meaningful in establishing statistical significance. Following Poplack and Tagliamonte (2000:326) I focus on the direction of effect, or the constraint hierarchy governing each factor group.

As with *did*, we can still see in these constraint hierarchies evidence of the maintenance of historical patterns. *Do* is favored with verbs which are *transitive* (14a) or *both* (14b) when there is no direct object. Subordinate clauses (15a), and conjoined clauses (15b) favor *do*, bearing out observations in the historical literature.

	%	N
<i>Have</i>	17	30
<i>Take</i>	16	20
<i>Get</i>	12	50
<i>Go</i>	11	66
<i>Come</i>	11	20
<i>Put</i>	10	29
Other	9	358

Table 5: Overall distribution of *do* with frequently occurring verbs.

The position of the adverb could not be tested due to small Ns, but you can see in (16) the two examples of periphrastic *do* where it occurs with a preverbal adverb.

- (14) a. I take one tablet, then I got two more I *do take*. (j/564)
 b. Your voice *do* sound different on tapè, I know. (d/148)
 c. It isn't like Safeways, they *do* breed mice in there. (f/308)
 d. I remember that, you see, the old brain *do* tick now and again. (e/216)
- (15) a. But 'tis a pigeon that *do* strip the green stuff. (a/50)
 b. But now I put it in a black bag and it *do* go on with the rubbish. (c/97)
- (16) a. It *do* really grieve me, you-know. (d/109)
 b. If I get any [rabbits] now I *do* just go and see a lady down the road and take the rabbit's jacket off. (j/550)

Speaker sex is not found to be significant. The patterning we saw for *did* is reversed, however. Here, women favor *do*, men disfavor it. This reflects the historical pattern observed by Nurmi (1998) in which early 17th century women had higher frequencies of *do* in affirmative statements than men. As well as reflecting a historical trend, this finding acts as convincing evidence for an argument that periphrastic *do* and *did* are not stigmatised variables, just non-standard. In the case of periphrastic *did* men use more, for *do*, women use more. I suggest that the reversal of sociolinguistic patterning for the two constructions shows that it may not always be possible to talk about obsolescing features in terms of standard sociolinguistic indicators like speaker sex.

5 Discussion

In the case of periphrastic *did*, we can see that the structure of this dialect feature has remained intact, over a long period of time and into obsoles-

cence. This provides some counter-evidence to Labov's (1994) suggestion that variables at the end point of change in language display unusual or 'unnatural' patterning. In fact, this finding poses a challenge to Wolfram and Schilling-Estes' conclusion that obsolescing features are subject to upheaval in the "natural ordering of constraint effects" (1995:711). In Somerset English, periphrastic *do* continues to maintain constraint hierarchies which can be traced in the history of *do*.

The case of present tense *do* is perhaps not so clear cut—it could almost be called queer. Recall that only one factor was significant, and that was verb class, a factor which, it could be argued, has no place in the structure of a present temporal reference phenomenon. Where the internal factors were testable, however, the constraint hierarchies revealed that there was evidence of maintenance of linguistic constraints reported in the literature. But—none of them were significant.

This might mean that *do* is obsolescing more quickly than *did*, and has reached a point of no return, hanging on in a few contexts, but not operating according to any rules. Scholars of language death (e.g. Campbell and Muntzell, 1989) recognise that languages can die through loss of speakers, while the structure of the language remains intact. Extrapolating this theoretical viewpoint to apply to the death of a particular feature, in a particular variety, we can perhaps get closer to an explanation: Figure 2 shows the distribution of periphrastic *do* according to the individual speakers in the dataset. They vary quite markedly in their frequency of use of periphrastic *do*. Some speakers (e.g. c) use the construction a great deal more than others do. So the results, perhaps, reflect the consequences of this loss of speakers. In the case of periphrastic *do* obsolescence proceeds, not through loss of structure, but loss of frequency and loss of speakers.

The non-significance of factors in Table 4 may indicate that the structure has eroded yet it is intact: speakers who use *do* more frequently are maintaining the historical linguistic constraint hierarchies. However, there is not enough data to tip the balance into significance.

This correlates with Cukor-Avila's (1997) findings for the use of verbal *-s* over time in African American Vernacular English. In this variety, verbal *-s* is subject to breakdown and weakening of historical constraints due to the loss of *-s* for speakers with strong urban connections. In Somerset English loss of speakers has had the same effect: the constraints are still there, but not significant.

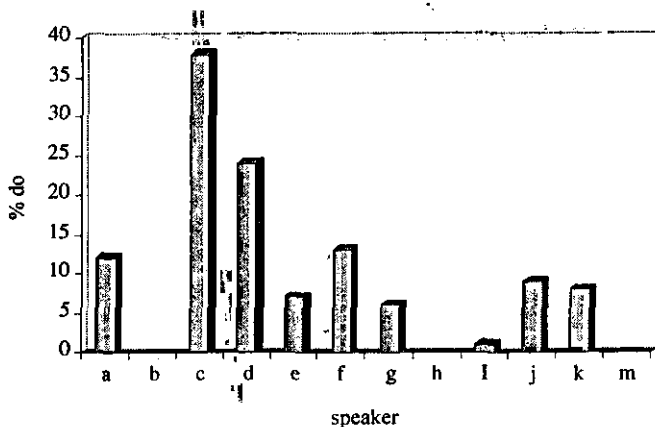


Figure 2: Individual speakers' use of periphrastic *do*

In conclusion, I have shown that, in Somerset English, affirmative declarative periphrastic *do* is subject to internal linguistic constraints which condition its behaviour. Linguistic features even when on the verge of extinction, and especially relic forms will continue to retain diachronic patterns and systematic linguistic conditioning.

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