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ARTICLE ONE

Movement Operations: Do- Auxiliary and ESL learners' usage

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Abstract

The paper explicates the auxiliary 'do' according to the views of some renowned proponents of generative grammar by way of definition and uses and adopts Chomsky's Standard Theory Model, which discusses 'do' in terms of deep and surface structures in tree diagrams. The study hazards the generalization that subject/ auxiliary inversion and 'do' insertion are alien to some of the first languages of ESL learners on the Plateau due to the disparity in the syntactic realization of polar questions and negative sentences. The study also brings to the fore the connection that does exist between simple declarative sentences, emphatic expressions, negative sentences and yes/no questions with 'do' support that many secondary school English texts in Nigeria failed to address which informed, among other factors, ESL Learners' wrong usage. Also, the paper illuminates how ESL Learners may properly internalize rules via subject/verb agreement for correct usage of 'do' support in emphases, negative sentences and polar questions.

Structured Practitioner Note

- Most existing texts on Transformational Generative Grammar now known as Movement Operations discuss *do* support in terms of mapping declarative sentences into negative sentences and yes/no questions.
- The paper uses tree diagrams to further explain how the mapping is done.
- However, these texts do not adequately address how ESL Learners could grasp the rules in writing and speaking.
- The paper analyses the structure of declarative, yes/no and negative sentences in Taroh and Mwaghavul and finds out that structures need only question and negation markers to map them from deep structure (declarative) to surface structure (yes/no and negative forms).
- The paper hazards the generalization that most ESL Learners' languages on the Plateau have similar structure in declarative, yes/no and negative sentences.
- This paper seeks to evolve simple but practical way with which ESL Learners can use subject/verb agreement to map simple declarative sentences into negative sentences and yes/no questions using *do* support.
- The paper finds out that some ESL Learners do not know that negative sentences and polar questions are direct representation and products of their declarative forms. The learners' use of double tense marker shows their ignorance in that regard.
- Writers in this field of study should extend the content of instruction on do support beyond mere identification of auxiliary verbs and their forms for ESL Learners to attain desired level of fluency.
- Texts for ESL Learners should be geared towards addressing usage in speaking and writing with copious practical exercises.
- Teachers should ensure that emphases using do support should precede subject/aux inversion in yes/no questions for easy assimilation by ESL Learners.

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Introduction

Generally, an auxiliary verb is a subordinate of the main lexical verb that prototypically marks tense, aspect, mood or voice. English auxiliaries can

invert with the subject in interrogatives (Did she go?) and have special primary negation forms (He doesn't eat). Examples of auxiliary verbs include: do, does, did, has, have, had, is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been, may, must, might, should, could, would, shall, will, can–classified into primary and modal auxiliaries.

In this paper, we shall see whether or not ESL learners' first languages have such feature as subject/verb inversion, auxiliary *do*, affix hopping, among others.

Auxiliary Do

Crystal explains the concept as a set of rules in generative syntax which determines the use of empty auxiliary verb *do* and inserts the verb *do* into a place in a structure, as part of the deviation of a sentence. An example is in some types of tag questions, where to form a tag from the sentence *He wants kicking* a*do* needs to be introduced, viz… doesn't he. He emphasizes that it is primarily used where a tense marker has no verb formation to attach to, as with tense variation in question forms (e.g. Did x happen?) (111-112).

Aarts confirms that ***do*** *support* is a term which refers to the insertion of the dummy auxiliary *do* to add emphasis, to form interrogative sentence (296) E.g: He does come (emphasis), Does he come? (interrogative).

The paper considers auxiliary *do*, *do*-support and **do**-insertion as referring to the same concept.

Do as Dummy Auxiliary

Crystal asserts that a dummy is a term used in linguistics to refer to a formal grammatical element introduced into a structure or analysis to ensure that a grammatical sentence is produced. He says that apart from their formal role, dummy elements 'have no meaning – they are semantically empty. For example, *do* in question forms is a 'dummy auxiliary' which covers the tense/number contrast for the verb phrase: /do/ you know, do/does he know/ (114).

Barr argues that the use of *do* support questions and negations was recorded beginning of the 14th Century (2). But according to Biberauer and Roberts (23) in Barr (2), 'the modern system of *do* support (only) emerged [in the 17th Century]'. However, the contemporary usages of negation without supportive *do* include; *I kid you not* and the famous line from John F. Kennedy's Presidential Speech: 'Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country' (Celce-Murcia 204 quoted in Barr 2-3).

Chomsky's Standard Theory Model

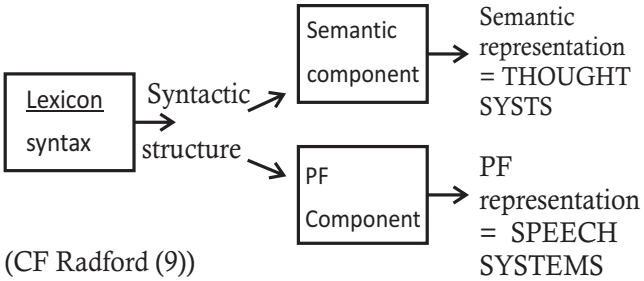
Avram Noam Chomsky is a Professor of Modern Languages and Linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In his book, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, he discusses how the model works: The syntactic component consists of a base that generates deep structures and transformational part that maps them into surface structures. The deep structure enters the phonological component and undergoes phonetic interpretation. That is to state how sentence is interpreted. This relationship is mediated by the syntactic component of the grammar which constitutes its sole 'creative' part (135,136). This implies that negative sentences, yes/no questions and other constituent questions are derived from the deep structure of simple declaratives or affirmatives. Therefore, T/**Do**-insertion or *Do*-support is discussed via this model:
When the element of *be* or *have* is nonexistent as an element of the auxiliary but there is a lexical verb directly reflecting the tense element, to get a T-yes/no question, the transformational rule inserts a '**do'**; as the first element of the aux.

Eg: 1 (a.) He comes.

SD (Deep Structure): He does come.

SS (Surface Structure): Does he come? (Olatunde)

However, Crystal argues that in some generative studies, the role of deep structure has been called into question; it is being suggested that a separate level of underlying syntactic organization between surface structure and meaning is unnecessary and misleading (95). This perhaps informed Radford's simplified version as shown in diagrammatic form below:



(CF Radford (9))

Uses of Auxiliary Do

It is argued that auxiliary *do* is often called periphrastic *do* because it has no meaning independent of the meaning of the construction concerned (Hudson 1). However, some historical linguists theorize that the use of the periphrastic *do* reduced grammatical complexity and increased comprehensibility by helping the hearer distinguish between the subject and the object (Barr 4)

Barr argues that negation and question-formation without *do- support* sound almost incomprehensible to modern ears, especially when a sentence includes direct and/or indirect object, adverb and/or prepositional phrase (3). He demonstrates this with the following two declarative sentences, both of which are equally comprehensible with adverbs in either positions:

1. He put out the fire at the church single-handedly.
2. He single-handedly put out the fire at the church.

If, however, the modern listener hears negative versions without supportive *do*,

3. *He put out not the fire at the church single-handedly.
4. *He put out not single-handedly the fire at the church,

these constructions sound archaic, ambiguous and/or ungrammatical. In addition, incomprehensibility results with respect to the negative interrogative versions:

5. *Put out he not the fire at the church single-handedly?
6. *Put out he not single-handedly the fire at the church?

The use of supportive *do* seems to enhance the comprehensibility of negative and interrogative sentences- especially with negative interrogatives that include an adverb and/or prepositional phrase. For example:

7. He did not put out the fire at the church single-handedly.

It would also be acceptable to say:

8. He did not single-handedly put out the fire at the church.

With contraction:

9. He didn't put out the fire at the church single-handedly.

It would be acceptable to say:

10. He didn't single-handedly put out the fire at the church.

With negative interrogative plus contraction:

11. Didn't he put out the fire at the church single-handedly?
12. Didn't he single-handedly put out the fire at the church?

Both sentences are equally comprehensible.

Bruening explains the uses of ***do*** *support* in terms of Special Purpose (SP) context. He opines that the insertion takes place in a number of contexts- with negation, in subject-auxiliary inversion, in emphatic (or verum focus) contexts, and when the main verb is missing because of ellipsis or displacement of the VP (44).

From the discussion made so far, it is glaring that auxiliary *do* has a number of uses: emphasis, interrogative sentence (Aarts 296) and negation (Radford 174; Burton-Roberts 129), negative contraction and negative interrogative contraction (Connie 3), tag questions (Hudson 1). However, such uses are only brought to bear through the following operations: movement operation (subject-auxiliary inversion) and affix hopping.

Subject/Auxilary Inversion

One of the characteristics of auxiliary verbs (be, the modals, aspectuals, passive be or dummy **do**) is that they invert with the subject in interrogative sentences. This process of subject-auxiliary inversion is illustrated in the following sentences:

13. Saul can play the piano.
14. Can Saul play the piano?
15. Neil is playing squash.
16. Is Neil playing squash?
17. Simon hates game shows.
18. Does Simon hate game shows?

If a sentence already contains an auxiliary verb, then this verb inverts with the subject, as in (14) and (16). If the original sentence does not contain an auxiliary, then *do*is added, as in (18), a process we

have been calling do-support (Aarts 153).

In defense of subject/verb inversion (also known as head movement) in *do auxiliary*, Radford asserts: auxiliaries can also precede subjects in yes-no questions such as *Do you feel like a coke?* (151). Crystal confirms it when he says movement (reordering or permutation) transformations modify an input structure by reordering the elements it contains (358).

In English, declaratives that do not contain a helping verb such as:

SD: Kate bought a book
cannot simply have the verb 'bought' shifted to the left of the subject NP or else we get such an ungrammatical result as in;

*Bought Kate a book.
If the original sentence does not contain an auxiliary, then *do* is inserted in accordance with the tense element of the lexical verb: Kate did buy a book. Fronting the tensed auxiliary via subject-auxiliary inversion to form yes/no question results in:

SC: Did Kate buy a book?

Affix Hopping
In generative grammar, the term 'affix' applies to such notion as 'present' and 'past' as well as –ing, be, have, etc., in the formation of rules. Affix hopping, in this approach, is an obligatory transformational rule which attaches an affix to the appropriate formative in a string: The affix hops over the verb, which is adjacent to it (Crystal 12).

Using **Do**-support in negative sentences, Radford asserts that if the tense (Tns) affix carries the features [first person singular number, present tense], [Tp 1 [T Do + Tns [NEGP not [NEG] VP [V care] for her]]], the string Do + Tns will eventually be spelled out as ***do***. What is implicitly being assumed here is that affix hopping and **Do** support are complementary PF operations which provide two different ways of ensuring that an affix attaches to an appropriate list (174). It remains unclear whether such operations are possible in ESL Learners' first language. However, in English such operations are obvious:

SD: I care for her.

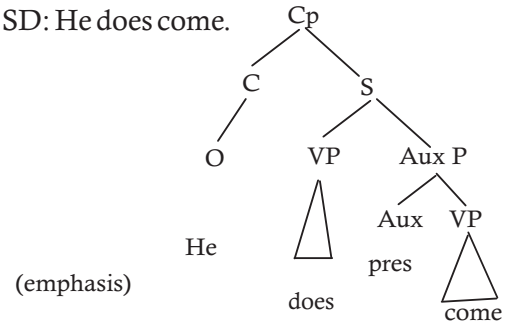
SC: I do not care for her.

In negative sentences with not, therefore, auxiliary **do** is required to carry the tense in the absence of any other auxiliary [Burton-Roberts 129].

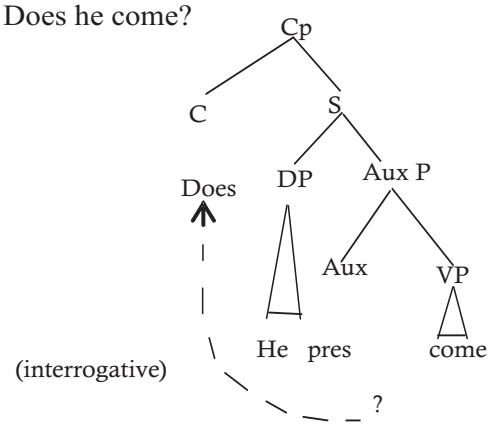
<u>Tree Diagram</u> [for the sentences a, b &c earlier mentioned]

a. He comes.

SD: He does come.

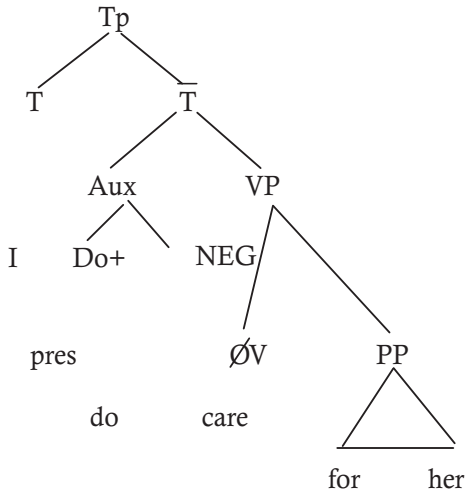


SC: Does he come?

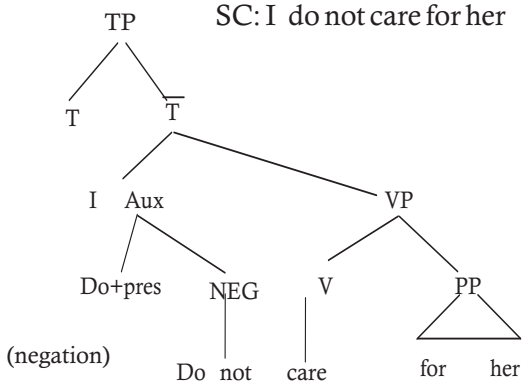


b. I care for her.

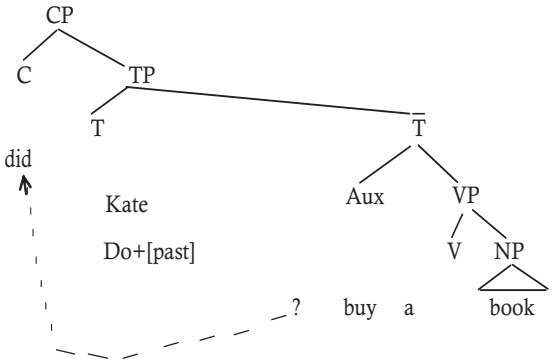
SD: I do care for her.



SC: I do not care for her

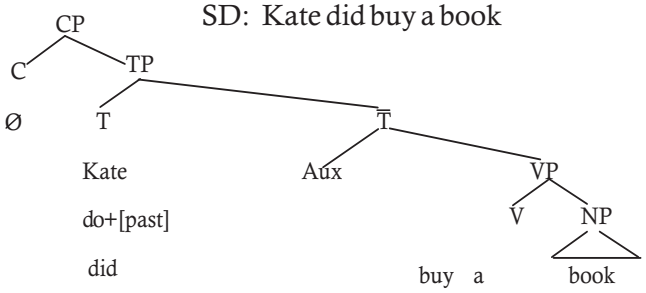


SS: Did Kate buy a book?



c . Kate bought a book

SD: Kate did buy a book



The Structure of Declarative, Yes/No Questions and Negative Sentences in Taroh and Mwaghavul

Taroh language

Declarative sentences

English	**Taroh**
She bought a book	Igampel yap aʒang iyam nlir
	The young girl bought paper something writing
He works	I nem inok
	He do work
I care for her	Nnak ishi ka na
	I give attention (humanly) on her
They danced	Oʒa gbep
	They danced
Yes/no questions	
Did she buy a book?	Uʒa yap aʒang iyam nlir ? o
	She/he buy paper leave something writing?
Does he work?	Uʒa nam inok ? o
	She/he do work?
Do I care for her?	Nnak ishi nak ki gampel ? o
	I give attention humanly give attention thing girl?
Did they dance	Oʒa gbep ? o
	They dance?

Negative sentences

She did not buy a book.	Igampel yap aʒang iyem nlir kat
	The young girl buy paper something writing not
He does not work	Anam inok kat
	He do work not
I do not care for her	Nnak ishi ka na kat
	I give attention humanly on her not.
They did not dance	Oʒa gbep kat
	They dance not

Mwaghavul

Declarative sentences

She bought a book	Raa set garvip
	She bought book
He works	Rii ciin dak
	He does work
I care for her	Wan kii wal ra
	I have love (for) her
They danced	Muu tash kook
	They did dance

Yes/no question

Did she buy a book?	Raa set garvip meh
	She buy book ?
Does he work?	Rii cin dak meh
	He does work ?
Do I care for her?	Wan kii wal raa eh
	I have love (for) her ?
Did they dance?	Muu tash kook meh
	They do dance?

Negative Sentence

She did not buy the book	Ba raa set garvip ni kas
	Not she buy book the not
He does not work	Ba rii cin dak kas
	Not he does work not
I do care for her	Ba wan kii wal ra kas
	Not I have love (for) her not
They did not dance	Ba muu tash kook kas
	Not they do dance not

A cursory look at the syntax of the above among other languages on the Plateau reveals that subject/auxiliary inversion and do-support in yes/no questions are restricted only to the English language. In Mwaghavul language, for instance, the declarative; 'Raa set garvip' directly translated as: 'She bought book' does not require a do support nor a subject/auxiliary inversion in its yes/no question form in the surface structure; 'Raa set garvip meh' directly translated as 'She bought book? What is required to map the deep structure to the surface structure in this instance is the inclusion of a question marker 'meh' to the sentence. This applies also to negative sentences in Mwaghavul where two mandatory negative markers 'baa' and 'kas' are required in the beginning and at the end of a sentence respectively: 'Baa Kate set garvip kas' directly translated as 'Not Kate buy book not'. This is to a great extent applicable to Tarok (typified in the sentences above), Gomai, Ngas, Berom among others. We therefore dare to hazard the generalization that ESL Learners' inability to appropriately use do-support and subject/auxiliary inversion in questions stems from lack of it in the syntax of their first languages.

Learners' Usage of the Auxiliary DO

Earlier in this study, it was noted that there is a syntactic variance between ESL Learners' first language and English. Therefore, direct transfer of the structure of their native language into English is possible.

A test was administered in a Technology Class of 44 students of a renowned secondary school in Jos North Local Government Area to turn four declarative sentences into yes/no questions and three declaratives into negative sentences using *do* auxiliary. Eleven (25%) of the class failed to express

yes/no questions and negative sentences correctly. These are the wrong expressions made by the students:

Sentences for Yes/No Questions Students' Answers

1. She bought a book - *Did she bought a book?
2. He works - *Does he works?
3. I care for her - *Did I care for her?
4. They danced - *Did they danced?

Negative Sentences

5. He arrived at the party - * He did not arrived at the party.
6. They came - * They did not came.
7. He eats - * He did not eats.

From the answers given above, it is clear that ESL Learners place double tense marking on the auxiliary element and the main verb in a sentence unlike the native speaker whose acquisition of the **do** support transformation rules from childhood is an unconscious process.

Possible Way Forward

English Second Language Learners must first of all learn that negative sentences and polar questions with **do** support are products of their declarative forms as confirmed by Chomsky's Standard Theory Model. They do not exist in isolation or independent of these declarative forms. Therefore, before making these emphases, negative sentences and asking these polar questions:

1. a. She did eat my food.
   b. She did not eat my food.
   c. Did she eat my food?
2. a. They do enjoy watching football.
   b. They do not enjoy watching football.
   c. Do they enjoy watching football?
3. a. He does work in the factory.
   b. He does not work in the factory.
   c. Does he work in the factory?

ESL learners should consciously have these declarative forms in mind:

1. She ate my food.
2. They enjoy watching football.
3. He works in the factory.

The choice of the appropriate do support in the present form 'do' and 'does' –plural and singular respectively depends on learners' understanding of subject/verb agreement and the exceptionality of 'I' and 'you' (singular):

	Singular	Plural
1st Person	I	We
2nd Person	You	You
3rd Person	He, She, It	They

The 3rd person singular, pronouns 'He' 'She', 'It' and other singular nouns take 'does' while the remaining personal pronouns 'I', 'We', 'You' (singular), you (plural), 'they' and other plural nouns take 'do' as in 3(abc) and 2(abc) above.

The affix that hops on 'ate' in (1) above is past simple tense; hence, the *do* support takes the past tense affix on the main verb and becomes 'did' as in 1abc.

This applies to 'enjoy' in 2 which has plural present tense in agreement with the plural subject 'they'. The *do* support required must take the plural present tense 'do' as in 2abc.

In the same way, the affix that hopes on "works" in 3 above is singular present tense which is in agreement with the singular subject 'He'. Therefore, the *do* support required in 2abc must take the 's' singular form from the main verb to become 'does'.

Contrary to the above explanation, some ESL learners use double tense markers as in " Did she ate the food?" partly because a close look at a number of secondary school texts such as Essential English Language for Senior Secondary Schools, New Oxford Secondary English for Junior Secondary Schools 123 and Senior Secondary Schools 123, New Concept English for Junior Secondary Schools 123 and Senior Secondary Schools 123 among others reveals that the books barely identify auxiliary verb generally and their forms with little or no information on how ESL learners could use them in sentences and questions. In order to effectively teach these rules to learners of English, a teacher must first exhume, reconstruct

and make explicit these hidden rules.

Conclusion

Reviewing the movement operations that map simple declarative sentences from their deep structure to the surface structure can illumine and provide concrete evidence of the 'hows' and 'whys' of language change to the ESL teacher who exposes the ESL learners to the prescriptive *do support* rules with their exceptions.

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