

On the graduated evolution of *do*-support in English

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1 Claim

- During the early phase of the spread of *do*-support in English, there existed a grammatical option intermediate between the verb-raising grammar of Middle English and the *do*-support grammar of Modern English.
- Specifically, this grammar merged *do* in little *v*.
- This fact has implications for the understanding of *do*-support as a cross-linguistic and historical phenomenon.

2 Background

- *Do*-support refers to the use of *do* as an auxiliary verb in Modern English.
- It arose in the Early Modern English period (1400–1700)
- Ellegård (1953) provided an early quantitative study of the evolution of the construction.
- Kroch (1989) extended the account, offering a generalization about the relationship between the rate of evolution of *do* in different grammatical contexts.
- Modern *do*-support environments follow a logistic curve (until ca. 1600).
- Their trajectories are parallel on the logit-transformed scale.
- *Do* in affirmative declaratives, not an allowable construction in Modern English, does not follow a parallel trajectory.¹
- See Figure 1 for an chart of the evolution of *do*-support in various grammatical contexts

¹Except in emphatic sentences. However, the tokens of Early Modern English *do*-support cannot in the main be analyzed as emphatics.

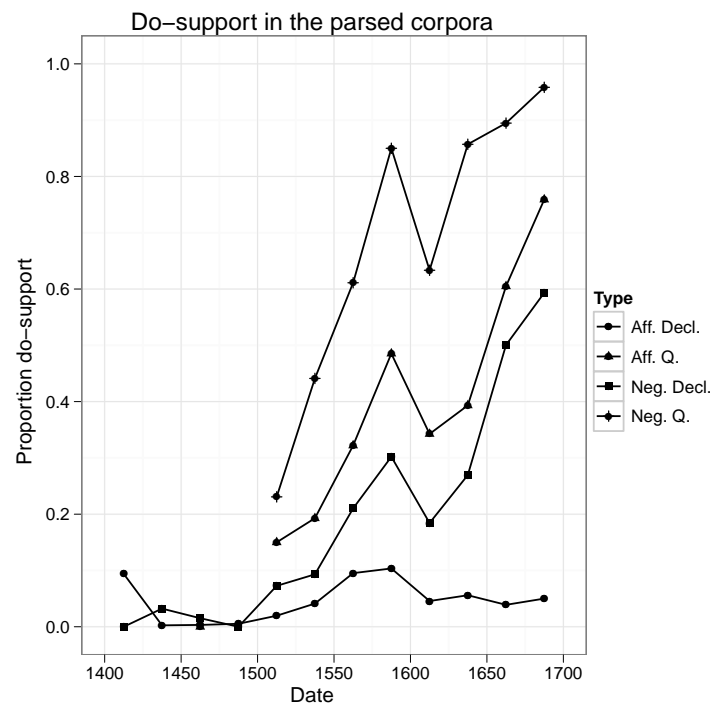


Figure 1: *Do*-support in the PPCEME and PCEEC

3 Evidence

3.1 Auxiliary stacking

- (1) Examples with duplicated causative:
 - a. He leet the feste of his nativitee
Don cryen thurghout Sarray his citee,
(Chaucer *Canterbury Tales* “The Squire’s Tale” c. 1400)
 - b. gret plentee of wyn þat the cristene men han don let make
(PPCME2, CMMANDEV,47.1161 a. 1425)
 - c. The fairest children of the blood royal
Of Israel he leet do gelde anoon.
(Chaucer *Canterbury Tales* “The Monk’s Tale” c. 1400)
 - d. Lat do him calle, and I wol gladly here
(Chaucer *Canterbury Tales* “Physician’s Tale” c. 1400)
- (2) Example with duplicated *do*:
 - a. And thus he dide don sleen hem alle three.
(Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales* “Summoner’s Tale” c. 1400)
- (3) Example with *have*:
 - a. He [death] hes done petuously devour
the noble Chaucer of makaris flour
(Wm. Dunbar “Lament for the Makars” c. 1505)²
- (4) Example with modal:
 - a. consequently it wyll do make goode drynke
(A. Boorde *Introduction of Knowledge* a. 1542)
- (5) Other examples:
 - a. Fro the stok ryell rying fresche and ying
But ony spot or macull doing spring
“From the royal stock rising fresh and young / without any spot or blemish spring-
ing”
(Dunbar *The Thrissill and the Rois* 1503, in Visser (1963) §1419)

3.2 Adverb placement

- Adverbs can function as a diagnostic for the position of words in the functional domain. (Figure 2)
- Each potential adverb position has a probability of use associated with it
- Kroch (1989) finds that the rate of use of AdvP₁ is roughly constant from the Middle English period to the present day

²I am grateful to D. Ringe for bringing this example to my attention.

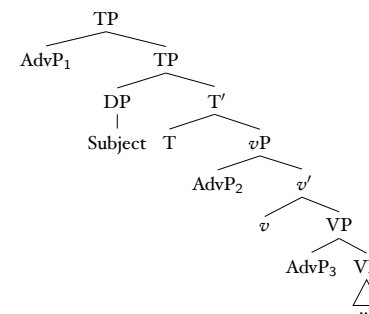


Figure 2: Position of adverbs

- We hypothesize that elements of the auxiliary system which are not undergoing change will have a constant rate of positioning relative to adverbs
- On the other hand, *do* does not show constant behavior over time (Figure 3)

3.3 Agentivity effects

- The association between agentivity and *do*-support provides the third argument for an intermediate grammar
- Ellegård (1953) noticed increased use of *do*-support in transitives (relative to intransitives)
- Extending this, using parsed corpora it is possible to separate unaccusatives from unergatives
- The unaccusatives singles out here are *come, go, die, stand, rise, and arise*
- Affirmative and negative declaratives may be found in Figures 4 and 5 respectively

4 Consequences

- The discovery that an intermediate grammar is detectable during the early stages of the spread of *do*-support has several ramifications:
 - The relationship of English with non-standard dialects of Dutch and German with affirmative declarative *do*-support
 - The approach to modeling the syntactic change underlying the spread
 - The understanding of syntactic change

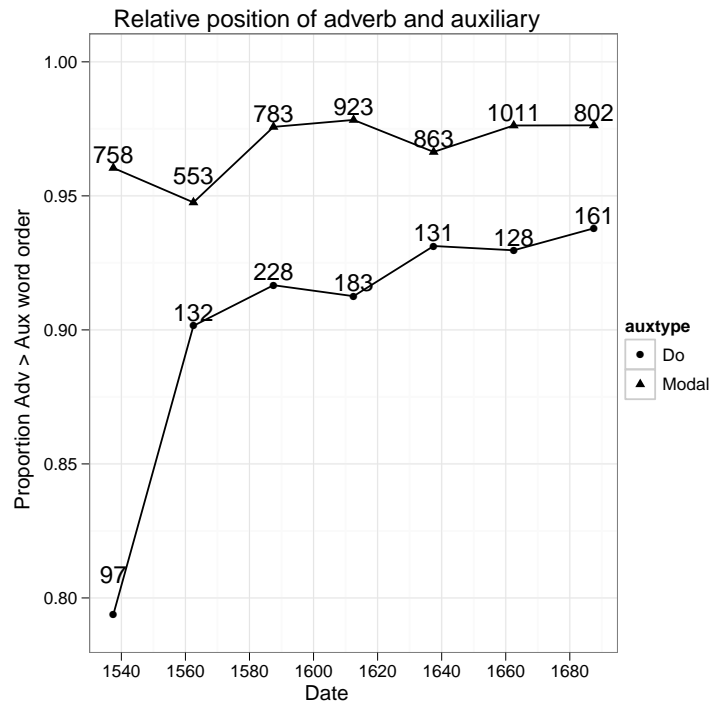


Figure 3: Adverb position, data from PPCEME and PCEEC

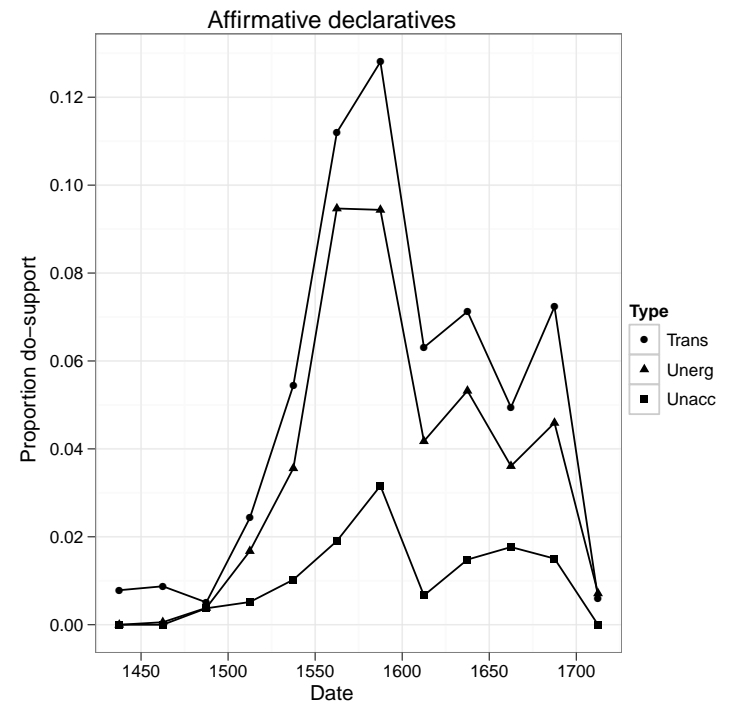


Figure 4: Affirmative declaratives in the PPCEME and PCEEC

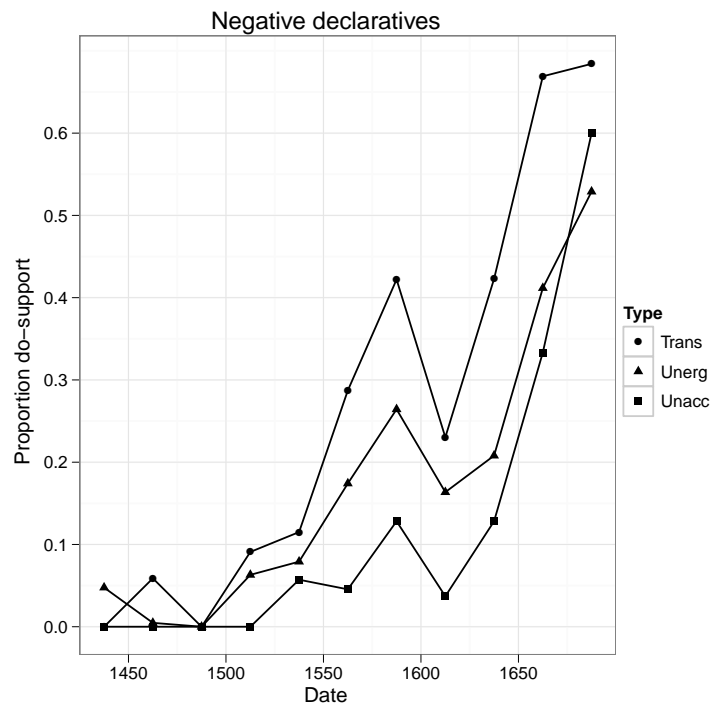


Figure 5: Negative declaratives in the PPCEME and PCEEC

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