Do plays a central role in Present-day English verbal structure. Its use as a periphrastic auxiliary is one of the most striking features of PdE syntax as compared with Standard Average European or with older stages of English itself. However, the emergence of the auxiliary *do* is one of the most intriguing developments in the history of English syntax, taking place in Middle and early Modern English and spreading from the southern areas toward the northern ones. By the end of the 18th c. *do* becomes an obligatory element of the structure of English. (NICE properties: **N**egatives, subject/verb **I**nversion, substitute verb '**C**ode' and for **E**mphasis). Traces of similar periphrastic use can be found at the early stages of other Germanic languages but *do* has not been grammaticalised in the same way as in English; indeed, corresponding constructions are still current in some German, Dutch and Frisian dialects.

Old English

The OE verb *don* 'to do' was used as:

(a) a FULL LEXICAL verb (cf. 1a)
(b) SUBSTITUTE *do*, it replaces a lexical verb used elsewhere in the clause to avoid repetition (cf. 1b, b')
(c) a CAUSATIVE verb (cf. 1c)

(1)

a. Ne mot ic **don** þæt ic wylle
not may I do   what I want
'I am not allowed to do what I want.'
Mt. Bos. 20,15 (B&T)

b. gif he aðor   **dyde**, oðþe ofergimde, oðþe forgeat, oðþe tobræc ænig þing
if he any-of-the-following did   either neglected or   forgot   or   violated any thing
'If he did any of the following: either neglected or forgot or violated anything.'
BenR xlvi 71.15 (Denison 261)

b'. ..he miccle ma on his deaðe acwealde, ðonne he ær   cucu **dyde**
he much more in his death killed   than he before alive did
'He killed many more in death than he did when he was alive. '
(Judg. 16.27)

c. And treowa he **deð**   færlice blowan and eft   raðe   asearian
And trees   he causes suddenly bloom   and again quickly wither
'And trees he does (=causes) to bloom suddenly and again to wither quickly.'
(HomU 34)

Middle English

These uses continue in ME when they are joined by a new type: PERIPHRASTIC *do*.

(a) as a FULL LEXICAL verb
(2)
a. þis he **dyde** eall for þes biscopes luuen.
this he did   all for the bishop's love
'This he did all for love of the bishop.'
c1123 Peterb.Chron. 1123.73 (Denison 256)

b. Me **dide** cnotted strenges abuton here hæued
one put knotted strings   around their heads
'Knotted strings were tied around their heads.'
c1155 Peterb.Chron. 1137.23 (Denison 256)

c. Y most **do** as hothyr men dothe, ar ellys Y most kepe stylle.

I must do as other men do or else I must be inactive.'
1478 Let.Cely 22.34 (Denison 256)

(b)   as a SUBSTITUTE verb
(3)

Hire ne **dide** noðer. ne   oc.   ne smeart. þo þe hie bar ure louerd ihesu crist.
her not did   neither. neither ached nor smarted when she bore our Lord   Jesus Christ
... Ac elch oðer wimman **doð.** akeð. and smearteð sore. þan hie beð mid
   but each other woman   does aches and smarts   sorely when she is   with
childe   bistonden
child(birth) afflicted
a1225(?a1200) Trin.Hom. 179.34 (Denison 261)

(c)   as a CAUSATIVE verb
(4)
a.   þe biscop of Wincestre ... **dide**   heom cumen þider.
       the bishop of Winchester   caused them come   thither
       'The bishop of Winchester had them come there.'
       c1155 Peterb.Chron. 1140.22 (Denison 256)
b.   Þis ymage   is made after þee.   J **dude** it an ymageoure Casten after þi vigoure
       this sculpture is made in   your-likeness. I caused it a   sculptor   cast   after your face
       'This sculpture is made in your likeness. I had a sculptor cast it in the likeness of your
       face.'
       c1400 (?a1300) Kalex. (Ld) 7681
c.   preyng you þat ye wole **do**   them spede them   in þat matier
       praying you that you will cause them speed themselves in that matter
       'Asking them to cause them to succeed/hasten in that matter.'
       1460 Paston 55.4 (Denison 257)

PERIPHRASTIC *do* is **first found in 13th c** rhyming verse from the southwest of England.
(5)
a.   His sclauyn   he **dude** dun   legge
       his pilgrim's-cloak he did   down lay
       'He laid down his pilgrim's cloak.'
       c1300 (?c1225) Horn 1057 (Denison 264)
b.   toward þe stude þat þe sonne: In winter **does** a-rise.
       towards the place that the sun   in winter   does arise
       c1300 Sleg.Patr.Purg (Ld) 205.191 (Denison 264)

▪ Affirmative sentences
⇒ At the earliest stages of development, up to the 15th c. periphrastic *do* was used in
   affirmative sentences (further examples in (6)) and reaching its **peak in the second half
   of the 16th c.**; in questions and negations it becomes common in the 16th c.
(6)
a.   I confess I **did** mislike the Queenes Mariage with Spain. (*Throckmorton*)
b.   ...for I **did** learne the Resons of my disliking
c.   I **did** see the whole Consent of the Realm against it.

⇒ The decrease in the popularity of do-periphrasis in affirmative sentences (in the 17th c.)
   was as rapid as its rise. In the 18th c. it is used in the same way as today. The decline may
   have been due to the regularisation of the auxiliary system, which gave each auxiliary a

functional slot in the overall syntactic-semantic pattern of VP. In this system *do +
infinitive* was redundant. However, many 17th and 18th c. grammarians treat the simple
form and *do*-periphrasis as equal alternatives. The first ones who point that *do*-periphrasis
in affirmative sentences is emphatic are Gill (1619), Wallis (1653). Dr Johnson (1755)
calls the 'superfluous' use of *do* 'a vitious mode of speech'.

- Questions
⇒ The earliest recorded instance of *do*-periphrasis in questions occurs in **Chaucer's verse**
  but it remains uncommon throughout the 15th c.

(7)

> what became of the kynge of Castell ... *made he* ony recovery, or **dyd** *he close*
> hymselfe in ony of his townes
> Berners Froissart IV 282 (*Rissanen* 1999: 244)

⇒ Rapid increase in the **16th c** (as in the affirmatives). In the second half of the 16th c the
  majority of yes-no questions are formed with *do*. Non-periphrastic inversion continues
  longer in *wh*-questions.
⇒ By the **18th** c the use of do in questions is very close to PdE yet it is still easy to find non-
  periphrastic questions, especially with high-frequency verbs, such *as know, think, say,
  speak, come, go*. The use of non-periphrastic structures is also a marker of archaic style.
  As late as the 18th c many grammarians point out that *do* can be omitted in questions.

(8)
a. What **didst** thou loose Iacke?
    Shakespeare, Henry IV III.iii (*Rissanen* 1999: 244)
b. What **doe** you call him?
    Shekespeare, Henry V III,vi (*Rissanen* 1999: 244)

(9)
a. *Think'st thou* so Nurse, What sayest to Wat and Nicke?
    [HC] Middleton 20 (*Rissanen* 1999: 244)
b. What *say'st thou*?
    [HC] Lisle 122 Ci (*Rissanen* 1999: 244)
c. In the Name of Wonder, Whence *came ye*?
    [HC] Farquhar V.ii (*Rissanen* 1999: 244)

- Negative sentences
⇒ The earliest unambiguous instances of *do*-periphrasis in negative sentences appear in the
  late 14th c.
⇒ Rapid increase from in the 16th c.
⇒ From the 17th c onwards it increases steadily at the expense of simple verb + negative and
  the usage is established in the 18thc. Non-periphrastic negation is not uncommon in the
  18th c. especially with high-frequency verbs (see 9 above and 10 below).

(10)

> I *speake not* nowe to simple men
> [HC] Essex 14 (*Rissanen* 1999: 245)

It is natural to assume that the use of *do* in negative sentences is connected with the
tendency to locate the negative particle not before the verb.

- Origins of periphrastic *do*

Most linguists agree that periphrastic *do* developed from one of the earlier uses of *do*

(theories of borrowing from Celtic or French influence are now generally ruled out). A full lexical verb is not a likely candidate (not normally followed by an infinitive). Similarly, a 'substitute' *do* is rather unlikely because usually a clause or phrase intervenes between *do* and the infinitive.

$\Rightarrow$ Most frequently the 'causative' *do* has been regarded as the originator of periphrastic *do*.

(11)
a.   þe king **dede** þe mayden arise .....
       'The king did (=made) the maiden rise'
       (Havelok 205)
b.   He **dude** writes sende .....
       he did   letters send
       He sent letters or He had letters sent
       (Horn 1001)

In (11a) we have an oblique noun phrase (*þe mayden*) that functions as object of *do* and as subject of the infinitive (*arise*). Sentences like (11a) are usually unambiguously causative. (11b) has no such noun phrase and can therefore in principle be interpreted as non-causative. In that case *did* can be regarded as semantically empty.

$\Rightarrow$ Other theories claim that it developed from a 'substitute' kind of *do*, through the weakening of its basic meaning.

$\Rightarrow$ Denison suggests that *do* in sentences like (11b) might have developed a perfective meaning. This could nicely explain the non-occurrence of *do* with the main verbs *be/have* and most of the auxiliaries.

$\Rightarrow$ Other likely triggers: 1) to avoid ambiguity with certain verbs (*do set*, *did set* versus *set* pres., *set* past.); 2) phonotactics *Thou didst imagine* vs. *Thou imaginedst*; 3) pragmatic and stylistic considerations (emphasis, demands of balance and rhythm especially in poetry).

$\Rightarrow$ Rissanen (1999:240): "Although it may be impossible to find a decisive answer to the question of the origins of *do*-periphrasis, the role of spoken language seems important in accounting for its later development . Textual evidence implies that the periphrasis has always been favoured in discourse situations more typical of speech than of writing."