Lexical DO or auxiliary DO?

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This paper investigates *which* PRP[1] *do* (cf. [1]), *that* PRP *do* (cf. [2]) and *this* PRP *do* (cf. [3]) sequences and the apparent transitivity of the verb *do* in its aforementioned uses. The aim is to determine whether such transitivity can be explained by the presence of a lexical *do* in these structures or if *do* is in fact an auxiliary (i.e. a grammatical verb).

[1] *Perhaps she thinks it sounds n– better.* **Which it does** *really. Well it does really, yeah.* (BNC)

[2] *'Would you like my place? It's rather a tight fit,' she said apologetically, and the woman beamed at her. 'Thanks ever so, miss, I do call that kind,' she said breathlessly. 'I wish there was more like you,* **that I do***!'* (BNC)

[3] *I remember one subject that required that she lay flat on the ground, and* **this she did** *for hours on end while I drew her.* (BNC)

To determine whether *do* is an auxiliary or a lexical verb, the following questions will be addressed:

a. Can *do* be negated (this property being characteristic of operators)[2]?

b. What types of antecedents does *do* have in such structures? Purely stative antecedents (e.g. *sound better* in [1]) are extremely rare with proforms containing a lexical *do* (cf. Lakoff & Ross 1976, Culicover & Jackendoff 2005), particularly with the proforms *do it*, *do this* and *do that* (in which, contrarily to *do so*, *do* is transitive).

c. c. How often is *do* modified by an adjunct? Adjuncts are rare when an operator is in charge of the anaphora (cf. Miller 2011), i.e. in cases of post-auxiliary ellipsis.

The electronic corpora show that, in the syntactic structures *which* PRP *do* and *that/this* PRP *do*, *do* is sometimes auxiliary (e.g. when it refers to a predicate denoting a purely stative event, as in [1]), sometimes lexical (e.g. when it is modified by an adjunct, as in [3]), but that the syntactic properties used as identification criteria for an auxiliary / lexical verb are not always iconic of the semantic-discursive criteria which appeared prototypical of each form of *do* in other structures. The analysis of such sequences reveals a certain lack of differentiation between the lexical and the grammatical *do* because of a common factitive meaning, which is underlying in the operator. The properties of the lexical verb appear to spill over into the auxiliary, more particularly in the COCA. The fuzzy boundary between grammatical and lexical uses of *do* crystallises in the lexical status of the verb in *this* PRP *do* sequences and its auxiliary status in *that* PRP *do* sequences.

References

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[1] Personal pronoun.
[2] Cf. Huddleston (1976: 333) and the *NICE* properties (Negation, Inversion, Code, Emphasis).

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