Do-doubling in West Yorkshire English − F.M. Chalcraft

The availability of non-finite forms of *do* at the site of VP ellipsis has long been regarded as a feature peculiar to (certain varieties of) British English (see e.g. Joos 1964, Trudgill 1984). That such semantically redundant forms optionally appear in the context of modals, (1), and perfective *have*, (2), is well-known:

(1) a. I don't know if I'm still going. I might do.
     b. That noise must get on her nerves. It would do mine.

(2) a. She said she wanted to join. She might already have done.
     b. John hasn't chosen Mary, but he has done Bill.

Less widely acknowledged have been cases, such as those in (3), where non-finite *do* appears at the ellipsis site preceded by another form of *do*:

(3) a. Has anything like that ever happened to you? Oh, yes. It does do regularly.
     b. I don't know if she went to university. I seem to think she did do.
     c. Although we don't like Peter, we do do Paul.

This possibility has gone virtually unnoticed in the generative literature and has received only scant attention in descriptive works, where it is typically assumed to be rare (see e.g. Quirk et al. 1985: 875; Denison 1998: 199). But whilst they may be uncommon in the standard, in some non-standard varieties, constructions involving a double use of *do* are increasingly widely employed. It is the goal of this paper to explore their distribution in one such dialect of northern British English, and, consonant with its broader aim of melding sociolinguistic and generative methodologies, empirical support is drawn from a corpus of spontaneous tape recorded conversation with forty-eight speakers of West Yorkshire English, supplemented by grammaticality judgments from the same informants.

Previous analyses have been divided as to whether non-finite *do* is a main verb of the type found in the *do so* pro-form construction exemplified in (4a) (see e.g. Gazdar, Pullum and Sag 1982), or a pleonastic auxiliary similar to that found in VP ellipsis constructions of the type in (4b) (see e.g. Baker 1984, Miller 2002):

(4) a. Would you mind feeding the cat, if you haven't already done so?
     b. Bonnie knows the combination to the safe and Clyde does too.

This paper argues that both analyses are in one sense correct. Its central claim is that non-finite *do* is an overt realisation of little *v* (Chomsky 1995 *et seq*.), which serves to satisfy the morphological requirements of the functional head when there is no main verb available to do so. In other words, although non-finite *do* is merged in a position associated with main verbs, it is functionally parallel to auxiliary *do*, a form which is inserted by default to satisfy the requirements of T whenever it is stranded. This parallel suggests that there is but one pleonastic *do* in English, which surfaces either in T or in little *v* (see Stroik 2001 for a conceptually similar suggestion). From there, it follows that examples such as those in (3) must involve the iteration of this pleonastic *do* simultaneously instantiated in both of the positions in which it may occur. Further, from the perspective of syntactic micro-variation, the analysis presented here implies that, since non-finite *do* is a last resort device, it must be present even in dialects where it is never pronounced. This in turn implies that variation within and between dialects must reduce to the differential realisation of an underlying *do*: speakers who accept as grammatical the examples in (3) make use of the phonologically

contentful allomorph, whereas, for speakers who reject them, the phonologically contentless variant is the only form allowed. On the view presented here, then, *do*-doubling turns out to be essentially a PF phenomenon, and, despite their surface differences, different dialects turn out to be underlyingly the same.

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