Multiple sources in language change: The emergence of auxiliary *do*

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One of the explanatory gains in historical linguistics has been the identification of recurring paths of change. This has enhanced our understanding of change, however, it has also given primacy to the search for one-to-one developments. The notion of 'multiple source explanation' captures the fact that for many examples of linguistic change, the view of change as a development of an innovative construction out of one ancestor construction is unsatisfactory (see De Smet et al. 2015). The development of *do* is a paradigm example of this: many sources have been proposed for the modern development, but all have problematic aspects as the sole source (for proposed explanations, see for instance Engblom 1938, Ellegård 1953, Denison 1985, Garrett 1998, Budts 2021, Ecay 2015, Denison 1985, Poussa 1990, Van der Auwera and Genee 2002). In this paper, we develop a multiple source analysis of the earliest development of what was to become "dummy" auxiliary *do* in English. We focus on the pre-innovation Old English stage and explore what properties of the verb itself and the verbal system more generally facilitated the development.

We distinguish between primary sources, the source constructions that provide the building blocks for the innovative construction, and secondary sources, properties of the language system that facilitate the innovation, but do so in an indirect way. We identify the causative and the composite predicate use of Old English *(ge)don* as primary sources. The causative is the most frequently proposed source of auxiliary *do* (most influentially by Ellegård 1953). However, one issue with this account is the unexplained development from causative to empty semantics. We argue that within a multiple source account, the causative contributed only the structure to the innovative construction. The lexical use of *do* has figured in the literature (Rissanen 1991, Garrett 1998), but has been dismissed by others as a plausible origin of modern *do* for semantic and structural reasons. However, if the work by Akimoto and Brinton (1999), identifying *(ge)don* as a contributor to an early composite predicate construction, is taken into account, the composite predicate *(ge)don* becomes a plausible source of the semantics of *do* and the multiple source analysis explains away the structural counterargument. We identify a number of secondary sources which facilitated this development, like the properties of the system of both causative verbs and composite predicates as well as the development of auxiliary verbs as a class Warner (1993).

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