

## An interesting device in the English language : DO (does/did)

Anyone learning English is familiar with the fact that auxiliary DO (does, did) is a typical feature of English :

Do you like tea ?  
I do not like tea.  
You do not like tea, do you ?  
You do like tea, don't you ?  
I like tea and so does my sister.  
« He likes tea ». « So do I. »  
« I do not like tea ». « Neither do I. »

At this point questions must be asked :

Why is DO used in different types of utterances ?  
What do all these sentences have in common?  
What grammatical role does DO play ?

Saying DO a « dummy operator » is not enough and does not shed any light on its presence. Using a « do insertion » type of explanation does not either. Other types of utterances also use DO and inevitably word order is at stake :

*You do do not understand human nature, Mr. Wade. still less do you understand feminine nature.*

*Niko was born on the day war was declared but his parents did not consider this a bad omen. Nor did they have any reason to do so.*

*I ran from the house, rushed from the horrible scene. Only next morning in the paper did I learn the dreadful result.*

Why is DO also present in such cases ? Why is word order - DO + subject + verb – identical to questions ? How does one account for such similarity ?

What is at stake when studying the role of DO is *predication*.

Within the theoretical framework known as *meta-operational grammar* we propose to account for the presence of DO in all the types of utterances mentioned in this proposal. What is at stake is the core value of DO. In all of the following sentences :

He did go back.  
Only then did he go back.  
He went back, didn't he ?  
Did he go back ?  
Boy, did he go back !

DO is used for one and only reason, for one and only one abstract operation.

Key words : meta-operational grammar ; core value ; predication ; status.