8.2: Do-Support

Forming Yes-No Questions

When we form a question that includes a modal auxiliary, the modal moves from the T-head position to the C-head position:

*Could you could read this for me?*

When a sentence contains no auxiliary, only a lexical verb, it appears that the lexical verb cannot move out of its V-head position. So we've proposed that the auxiliary *do* enters at the T-head position and then moves up to the C-head position:

*Did you did see her tattoo?*

*Saw you saw her tattoo?*

One piece of evidence that *do* enters the sentence at the T-head position and moves to C-head, rather than just entering at the C-head position, is that it bears the tense feature of the sentence: if the tense is [+past], then we observe the form *did*, but if the tense feature is [-past], we observe the form *do* or *does*. Another piece of evidence is that whatever verb follows the inserted *do* is in its bare form, not its [-past] or [+past] forms:

*Did she talk to Darren?*

*Did she talks to Darren?*

*Did she talked to Darren?*
**Does** she speak Italian?

*Does she speaks Italian?*

*Does she spoke Italian?*

Both of these observations suggest that the inserted *do* gets its tense morphology from the tense feature (either [+past] or [-past]) in the T-head.

---

### Negation

English also uses *do*-support to form negated sentences, which follow the same pattern: sentences with modals don’t need *do*, but sentences with lexical verbs and no auxiliaries do need *do*:

- *I* did not could believe that rumour.
- *She* speaks not Italian.

*She does not speak Italian.*

If we accept that *not* is in a fixed position between T-head and its VP-complement, then the distribution of *do* makes sense. Just like in questions, the evidence suggests that lexical verbs cannot move out of their V-head position up to the T-head position.

---

### Non-modal auxiliaries

This pattern of how *do* behaves in questions and negative sentences gives us a clue about how the other non-modal auxiliaries, *have* and *be*, behave.

Notice that the verb *be* can always move up to C-head in questions, both when it’s a genuine auxiliary:

- Are you *are* going to the concert?
- Was she *was* joking about that?

And when it’s the only verb in the sentence:

- Are you *are* serious?
- Is this *is* the place?

Likewise, *be* appears before *not* both when it’s an auxiliary and when it’s the only verb:

- You are not *are* going to the concert.
She was not joking about that.
You are not serious.
This is not the place.

But have seems to have two different patterns of behaviour. When it is a genuine auxiliary, it behaves like be. It can move up to C-head in questions:

*Have they have moved to Texas already?*

*Had she had already heard the news?*

And appears before not in negated sentences:

*They have not have moved to Texas already.*

*She had not had already heard the news.*

But when have is the only verb in the sentence, it behaves like a lexical verb. It can't move up to C-head and can't appear before not.

*Has she has five sisters?*

*Have you have a headache?*

*She has not has five sisters.*

*You have not have a headache.*

Instead, when have is behaving like a lexical verb, it needs do-support.

**Does** she have five sisters?

**Do** you have a headache?

She **does** not have five sisters.

You **do** not have a headache.

---

**The Deep Structures**

From all of this evidence, we can conclude that MERGE treats these three kinds of heads differently:

Modals are generated in T-head, from where they can move to C-head if necessary to support a [+Q] feature.

*Be* is generated in V-head, but moves up to T-head (to the left of *not*) and from there up to C-head if necessary.
*Have* is generated in V-head, and can move up to T-head and from there up to C-head only if it is an auxiliary (that is, only if it has a VP complement). But if it is the only verb in the sentence (and has no VP complement), then it behaves like a lexical verb.

Lexical verbs in English are generated in V-head and cannot move to T-head or C-head.