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The role of DO-auxiliary in subject-auxiliary inversion: Developing Langacker’s notion of existential negotiation

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Abstract: This paper builds on Langacker’s (in press. How to build an English clause. Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics 2(2)) analysis of subject-auxiliary inversion (SAI) as involving “existential negotiation”. Langacker’s account is completed by relating it to full verb inversion (FVI). In FVI, non-core elements are fronted, resulting in inversion without an auxiliary, as in Into the room walked Mary; however, non-core elements are also frontable in SAI, as in Bitterly did we regret our decision. Do is treated as denoting full actualization and SAI is accounted for by focus on an exceptionally intense mode of actualization, whence the use of do to explicitly express what is focused on. The role of into the room in the FVI example is to define a locus into which an entity is introduced. Since this does not involve focus on the fact or manner of the verbal event’s actualization, do is not used. This leads to a different division of inverted structures than that of Chen (2013. Subject auxiliary inversion and linguistic generalization: Evidence for functional/cognitive motivation in language. Cognitive Linguistics 24. 1–32), who distinguishes those that merely reverse subject and auxiliary (argued to denote non-indicative mood) from those where the inverted auxiliary-subject order is accompanied by fronting of a non-subject element (treated as involving focus on the fronted item). It is argued here that fronting do-auxiliary marks focus on the actualization of the verbal event itself.

Keywords: subject-auxiliary inversion, full-verb inversion, do-auxiliary, wh-words, interrogatives, modality, polarity, focus, anaphora

1 Introduction

This paper will attempt to build on the insights of Ronald Langacker’s (2009, in press) work on subject-auxiliary inversion (SAI), particularly on the notion that

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this construction involves “existential negotiation”, i.e., somehow placing the existence of the verbal event under discussion. In his treatment of this construction, Langacker follows in the footsteps of Hirtle (1997) in viewing the auxiliary do as a meaningful item, arguing that it is “schematic for the class of verbs, giving separate expression to their inherently existential nature”. I will elaborate on this intuition and propose that do auxiliary denotes the notion of the full actualization of any verbal event in time. This accounts for the correspondence of do in SAI structures such as polar interrogatives to the simple form of the verb in parallel affirmative contexts (He left – Did he leave?): just as the simple form asserts the full actualization of the event in time, the corresponding interrogative is about whether or not the complete action was actualized by the subject. This is simply a logical development of Hirtle’s and Langacker’s views of the simple form extended to do: Langacker (1987: 250–252) describes the simple form as denoting the “full instantiation” of an action or state, Hirtle (1988: 103) as situating in time all of what is involved in the lexical notion of an event. (In passing, this explains why auxiliary do itself occurs exclusively in the simple form: by definition the lexical notion of full instantiation must be grammatically represented in the form of full instantiation).1

2 Questions raised by Langacker’s account

Langacker’s account of SAI hinges on the notion of “existential core”, a constituent of the clause whose role he defines as that of “giving a basic assessment concerning the existential status of the profiled occurrence”. The existential core is claimed to include elaborations in regard to modality (projected vs. real), polarity (affirmative vs. negative) and speech act (interrogative vs. assertive). According to this account, SAI results from a non-subject existential-core element (a modal or existential verb, a polarity or a speech act) displacing the subject by being promoted to initial position as discursive anchor of the sentence.

1 In contrast, since passivity can be conceived as being in the process of being undergone by the patient, the auxiliary of the passive is construable in the progressive (e.g., We were being eaten alive by mosquitos). In the internal makeup of the progressive itself, however, auxiliary be itself denotes the state of occupying the interiority of the gerund-participle’s event at a certain moment in time and so must be construed as a fully instantiated state just like all other states and signified by the simple form (cf. *We were being walking down the street). In the perfect, auxiliary have denotes the state of the achieved occupation of the result phase of the event denoted by the past participle (cf. Hirtle 2007: 223–225) and so must also be represented as fully instantiated, for similar reasons to those just invoked for the auxiliary of the progressive.
This account provides a coherent explanation for the occurrence of SAI in wishes introduced by the modal auxiliary *may* (1), negative utterances prefaced by *never* (2) and polar interrogatives (3):

(1) May your days be happy and bright, and may all your Christmases be white!

(2) Never again did I go to that restaurant.

(3) Did he leave?

Certain questions arise however in its application to *wh*-interrogatives such as (4):

(4) Why did Mary say that?

Here the fronting of a non-core element triggers the introduction of *do* and inversion. Langacker argues here that “existential status hinges on the information requested via the question word”. However, the interrogative in (4) above presupposes the real existence of the saying and asks merely about its motivation. It is not immediately obvious how this would fit into the existential-core categories of modality, polarity or speech act. In order to cover such cases, it would seem necessary to extend the category of modality beyond the notions of ‘projected vs. real’ to include the manner in which the verbal event was realized. I will attempt to show how such an extension might be implemented below.

Another question that requires clarification concerning *wh*-words is the absence of SAI with these items when they are in subject function. Langacker argues SAI to be triggered with non-subject *wh*-interrogatives because questions containing them involve existential negotiation due to the fact that they are “aimed at eliciting a response allowing a specific occurrence to be included in reality”; for example, the question *What did she eat?* is aimed at eliciting a particular assertion such as *She ate a banana, She ate an apple*, etc. According to this line of reasoning, however, *wh*-interrogatives in subject function would also have to be treated as involving existential negotiation, as they too are aimed at eliciting a response allowing a specific occurrence to be included in reality: the question *Who ate the banana?* is intended to elicit a particular assertion such as *Jane ate the banana, Joe ate the banana*, etc. Nevertheless, *wh*-interrogatives in subject function do not trigger SAI: *Did who eat the banana?* Langacker explains this by attributing SAI to the usurping of the role of clausal anchor by some core element other than the subject, which is the default clausal anchor: since there is no usurping of the subject
role by a non-subject element when the subject itself is the focus of the question, there is no SAI. While this account is coherent in itself, it still leaves the use or non-use of do auxiliary in a grey zone.

I would also like to show that taking into consideration full-verb inversion (FVI), which Langacker did not bring into his in press discussion, allows his analysis to be developed and sharpened. FVI provides support first of all for Langacker’s hypothesis that auxiliary inversion is linked to some form of negotiation of the existential core. In FVI, non-core elements are fronted without triggering the appearance of an auxiliary, as illustrated by the contrast between (5) and (6) below:

(5) Into the room walked Mary.

(6) Never again did Mary walk into the room.

As argued by Birner (1994: 234), FVI serves an information-packaging function “allowing the presentation of relatively familiar information before a comparatively unfamiliar logical subject”. Dorgeloh (1997: 49) views it as “a device by way of which the reader’s focus of attention is managed within an ever-changing discourse model”, allowing a new or reintroduced topic to be situated with respect to other discourse entities in a text, or presented on a scene being described. As Dorgeloh (1997: 192) observes, the fronted element in FVI always involves some form of localization, either within a real-world scenario, as in (5) above, or within a text, as in (7):

(7) We have complimentary soft drinks, coffee, Sanka, tea and milk. Also complimentary is red and white wine.
   (Birner 1994: 245)

In some cases, however, non-existential-core elements can be fronted with SAI rather than FVI. Here are three such contexts:

(8) Hitler allowed the Luftwaffe to become the most party-dominant and totalitarian of his armed forces and dearly did he pay for it.
   (Johnson 1983: 378)

(9) Bitterly did we repent our decision.
   (Hartvigson and Jakobsen 1974: 46)

(10) Seven times did this intrepid general repulse the attack.
    (Hartvigson and Jakobsen 1974: 45)
The question that this data raises is why the fronted non-core elements in (8)–(10) trigger the appearance of auxiliary *do*, making them cases of SAI, whereas the fronted non-core prepositional phrase in (5) does not. Langacker does discuss fronted adverbials such as those in (8)–(10), but the only example he gives of such usage is of an adverb whose meaning involves a judgement bearing on the existence of a certain state of affairs and declaring the latter to be really the case (*truly*):

(11) Truly are we fortunate.

This is not quite the same type of meaning conveyed by *dearly* and *bitterly* in (8) and (9) above, however, and so it is not fully clear how they can be treated as falling under the notion of existential negotiation. One does nonetheless feel a certain connection between the three adverbs in that all three denote high degrees of intensity, a notion I will attempt to make more precise below. As for (10), Langacker accounts for such uses as extensions from the prototypical use of SAI in (6) via a chain of quantification of excluded options running from the universal exclusion found in *Never again did Mary walk into the room* to near-universal exclusion (*Seldom did Mary complain*), to non-minimizing quantification (*Many times have I asked myself that question*). The problem is that in the last example *many* does not quantify excluded options, but rather *included* ones: thus *many times* cannot constitute an extension from *seldom*; it is rather of the very opposite polarity to the latter. The final stage on the *never–seldom* scale would be something like *all but one time*, which evokes minimal exclusion.

### 3 Defining the role of *do* auxiliary in subject-auxiliary inversion

I am going to argue that cases of SAI such as those in (8)–(10) above can be accounted for by the presence of a focus on an exceptional mode of actualization of the verbal event, whence the use of *do* to explicitly express the notion of actualization as part of what is focused on. Thus in (10) it is the number of times that the general was able to repulse the attack which is remarkable; this explains both why the phrase *seven times* is fronted and why the notion of actualization is explicitly represented by *do* in order to evoke it as having occurred in an exceptional way. Even two times can be remarkable for certain occurrences, as illustrated by (12):
(12) Twice in a life-time has Winston Churchill helped to preserve them from enemy domination.
(Hartvigson and Jakobsen 1974: 46)

Exceptionally long duration can also be focused on as remarkable and trigger SAI:

(13) For two years did they labour with their own hands erecting huts and building a church of logs and reeds.
(www.electricscotland.com/history/genhist/hist18)

The role of a locative expression such as into the room in (5) above, on the other hand, is simply to define a locus into which a discourse-new entity (Mary) is introduced: as Birner (1994, 1996), referred to above, argues, FVI is an information-packaging mechanism which presents relatively familiar information before a comparatively unfamiliar postposed subject. An impression of surprise may be associated with this structure, but it is not the mode of actualisation of the action that is astonishing or unexpected, but the person who appears on the scene.\footnote{The impression of surprise is not always associated with FVI moreover, whose basic function is to introduce or locate an entity on a scene, as in its use at the beginning of stories, e. g., In a little white house lived two rabbits (cf. Green 1980: 590) or to relate a discourse-new item to what is already present in the discourse, e. g., The statement of principle was made first. After that came the finer details (cf. Birner 1994: 234).}

Since this does not involve any focus on the fact or manner of the verbal event’s actualization as being remarkable, however, do is not used in such constructions.

High intensity of actualization can also be discerned in correlative constructions opening with the adverbs so and such:

(14) So uncomfortable did this make Martha that she turned away from the bed, feeling her face hot.
(Hartvigson and Jakobsen 1974: 38–39)

In (14) the event denoted by the so-clause is presented as having taken place with such a high degree or intensity that it produced the unexpected consequence expressed by the correlative that-clause. This explains why the informants in Penhallurick’s questionnaire (reported in 1987: 116–117) matched the clause So much did Fred love ice cream more frequently with the apodosis that he sold his grandmother into white slavery than with that he had some with every meal. It also explains why fronting and inversion do not seem appropriate in a neutral statement such as:
The piano was so wide that we couldn’t get it in through the door.

Inversion would give the impression here of a hyperbolic exaggeration of the width of the piano.

Inversion can also be found after the adverbials *particularly* and *especially*:

Particularly had she resented Tempest’s bossy activeness and physical agility at Lisa’s funeral.

It was almost inevitable that Flanders and Holland should become for a time the art center of Europe ... Especially was this inevitable in Protestant Holland.

(Hartvigson and Jakobsen 1974: 44)

Once again, the idea of an emphasis on the intensity with which the actualization occurred is present: here it takes the form of an outstanding degree of particularity setting one case off from all the others and putting it in a class of its own. While this idea is already contained in the meaning of the adverbial, inversion and fronting serve to amplify it.

Amplification of the notion expressed by the adverbial can also be observed in non-literary usage with the adverb *well* such as:

Well do I remember that time we got lost in the woods during our camping trip in the Rockies.

The evoking of a memory which is so vivid that the speaker is unable to forget it is quite clearly another manifestation of the notion of high intensity of actualization.

In all of the cases discussed above there is some trace of an exclamation: these utterances are not mere assertions of fact, but involve something that transcends flat assertion – a remarkably high, sometimes even inexpressible, degree of one of the event’s modalities. According to my analysis, this causes focus to be placed on the mode of actualization of the verbal event, which is treated as remarkable – sometimes in the sense that its degree of actualization is so intense that it cannot even be expressed, as in exclamations such as *Boy, did they give him a lesson!*; sometimes in the sense that its remarkable character does not allow it to be merely asserted and no more than that, as in (10), where the event’s having occurred seven times is not just stated but also marvelled at. This focus on actualization is what accounts for the use of *do* auxiliary.
4 Subject-auxiliary inversion in uses relating predications to one another

The notion of a remarkable degree of intensity is not applicable to all uses of subject-auxiliary inversion however, and it is here that the claim that SAI is the signal that “some uncertainty attaches in some way to the occurrence designated by the predicate” (Penhallurick 1987: 105) and Langacker’s related notion of existential negotiation run into difficulty. There is a sizable set of uses which can be grouped under the general idea of identity of mode of actualization. This category of uses has also been noted by Dorgeloh (1997: 190), who attributes two different functions to subject-auxiliary inversion: indicating that the speaker is “emotively affected by the fronted item” (as in negative inversion of the type Never again did he touch my car), and indicating how the speaker relates predications to one another. The latter type of utterance contains an anaphoric item referring back to the mode of actualization which is declared to be identical with that of the predicate containing the inversion. One such anaphoric opener is the adverb thus:

(19) A man can reach a point of marginal utility in the accumulation of ice-cream cones, but not in the accumulation of credits, for there is an infinity to these ambitions. Thus does man seek to become God in gratifying limitless desires for riches, when he impoverishes himself from within.
(Sheen 1949: 25)

(20) The word “segregation” became part of the vocabulary of discrimination, as did “uppity”, a White Southern word for Blacks who did not know their place. Thus did language signal social and political change.
(McCrum et al. 1987: 217)

While the uses just cited belong to a formal register, there are many other cases with openers denoting identity that are part of everyday usage. This is the case, for instance, of the connector so:

(21) While Crosby distracted the Beardens, stewardesses Carnegey and Toni Besset dropped out of a rear door. So did hostages Casey, Cleveland and Mullen.
(Brown University Corpus A42 61)

Dorgeloh characterizes both types of SAI as signals of subjectivity and the intervention of the speaker in the discourse. Although this observation is valid
as far as it goes, I believe that it can be made more precise. Moreover, Dorgeloh is not concerned with offering an explanation for the appearance of do-auxiliary in constructions where the corresponding non-inverted sentences contain no auxiliary. Here one sees that inversion has an impact on the grammatical content of the sentence which is not accounted for by a generic reference to the subjectivity of the speaker. We now turn therefore to a closer look at the anaphoric type of use in an attempt to uncover what it has in common with the other uses of subject-auxiliary inversion and to account for the occurrence of do-auxiliary in such constructions.

Associated with the occurrence of thus illustrated in (19) and (20) above, one observes an impression of what could be described as conclusive emphasis – these uses are generally found at the end of a paragraph when the discussion of a topic is being capped off. Hartvigson and Jakobsen (1974: 41–42) point out regarding this use that inversion does not occur when thus functions as a sentence modifier meaning ‘accordingly; for example’, as is the case in (22) below, but only when thus signifies ‘in this way’:

(22) The play is commonly criticized because there are too many scenes. Thus in the Fourth Act there are, according to the Globe text, no less than thirteen scenes.

This is confirmed by Granath’s (2007: 178) 250-million-word corpus investigation, which found no cases of inversion with thus expressing the senses ‘therefore’, ‘as a result’ or ‘in particular’, inverted word order being observed only when this adverb functioned as a deictic pro-form. The occurrence of inversion in such structures is therefore linked to the anaphoric role of thus. Here is how this construction works.

In the stretch of text previous to the occurrence of thus, the manner in which some situation came about or some event occurred is described in some detail. The anaphoric element is then placed at the outset of the encapsulating sentence to indicate that the event which it refers to was actualized in the precise same way as that described in the previous stretch of discourse. The emphatic-conclusive impression associated with this use involves an insistence on the fact that the description given corresponds to the event’s mode of actualization exactly, even though it is theoretically conceivable – and the hearer/reader may even have imagined – that it could have occurred in some other way. Consequently, there is more involved here than mere assertion: there is a focus on the exact correspondence of the event’s mode of actualization to that described by the speaker, which involves a cancelling out of the background possibility that it might have taken place in a different way.
Langacker applies Goldberg (2006)’s treatment of SAI as a prototype category to anaphoric openers, viewing them as extensions from the purportedly more prototypical wh-interrogatives. The use of thus and that in Langacker’s examples quoted in (23) and (24) below has nothing to do however with any correspondence to the wh-questions How did she learn the truth? and How did he manage to survive?:

(23) Thus did she learn the truth.

(24) In that way did he manage to survive.

As argued above, when one examines the broader context in which such usage occurs, one observes that the way that she learned the truth and the way that he survived have been extensively described in the previous stretch of discourse. The role of fronting thus and in that way is to emphasize the exact correspondence of the mode of actualization of the learning and the surviving to that referred back to by the fronted anaphoric element; the occurrence of auxiliary do is due to the explicit focus on the mode of actualization of these actions that this type of construal implies.

The cancelling out of a background possibility of difference also underlies the use of so to express addition, as in:

(25) Mary likes roses and so does Anne.

Hartvigson and Jakobsen (1974: 76) misclassify this construction as a case of full-verb inversion (“weight inversion” in their terminology). However, it only occurs with auxiliaries (as can be seen from the shift from like to do in the second clause of the example above), and do can replace stative verbs here (as it does in (25) above), something which is not possible when this verb is used as a substitute predicate in do so constructions, which can only refer back to dynamic, action-like events (cf. *Mary likes roses and Anne does so too/Mary lets out a sigh and Anne does so too).³ Penhallurick (1987: 118) deals with this use as a case of subject-auxiliary inversion and attempts to fit it into his hypothesis that the latter signals uncertainty, claiming that “the occurrence that follows so is in some way surprising or contrary to expectation”. Here is an example which he analyses in detail:

But it wasn’t plain sailing by any means, for though I could always get away, Lucy couldn’t. (…) Sometimes her parents wanted her at home, sometimes to go for walks with them. They were more jealous of her than my parents were of me. When she knew she wouldn’t be free, she used to leave a note under a heap of granite-chips for road-mending close to Soames’ bridge. (…) To hide it, she had to make sure that no one was about, and so did I when I returned it.

(Penhallurick 1987: 119)

Penhallurick’s explanation (1987) runs as follows:

The emphasis throughout the passage is on Lucy’s need for secrecy in communicating. So it is natural that she must ensure that no-one is about when she leaves the note. Given that the writer has emphasized his freedom, it comes as something of a surprise to find that he too needs to use caution in retrieving her note. And this surprise explains why we have auxiliary inversion. (Penhallurick 1987: 119)

Contrary to these claims, however, the event expressed in the so-clause is not really surprising or unexpected here: under the circumstances described in this passage, it seems quite normal for the writer to use caution in returning the note, an interpretation which is confirmed by the fact that one could add the expression of course to the so-clause without creating any contradiction. The key to understanding inversion in this type of use lies rather in the fact that the introduction of a new participant in the second clause opens up the possibility of things being different for this second participant than for the first. The role of so is to denote exact sameness of actualization for the second subject even though a difference in modality of actualization would have been equally conceivable. This involves a focus on the mode of actualization of the predicate in the so-clause, which is declared to be exactly the same as that of the immediately preceding predications in spite of the possibility of a difference in modality. The introduction of a new protagonist is the crucial factor opening up this possibility; this can be seen from cases where so is fronted without triggering inversion such as (27):

(27) However, like General MacArthur he made the promise “I will return” and so he did, the next night.

(British National Corpus G29 326)

Here the subject of the so-clause refers to the same person as that of the preceding clause, and so there is no introduction of a new subject opening up the possibility of things being different for this person than for the first – and consequently there is no subject-auxiliary inversion.
In some sentences, such as (28), this type of use of so is prefaced by an as-clause denoting the mode of actualization which is copied by the second event:

(28) Just as the classical and baroque triumphed in the design of state capitols and fell back into railway stations, so did Australia cling to forms which had never entirely been superseded as the official language of imperialism. (British National Corpus AR0 1623)

Here the manner in which Australia has clung to imperialist architecture is presented as being exactly the same as the way in which classical and baroque styles have been perpetuated in railway stations after a more glorious debut gracing state capitols. Parallelism of actualization is also expressed by structures introduced by the definite article plus a comparative adverb:

(29) He watched the “creature” stealthily and cautiously, but the longer he stared at that strange countenance and studied it feature by feature, the more insistently did the question go round in his brain in a different form – “is that a German?” (Hartvigson and Jakobsen 1974: 40)

Here the degree of actualization of the event denoted by the second clause depends on the degree of actualization of the event evoked by the first: to the very same extent that the staring and studying were performed longer, the degree of insistence of the question going round in the person’s brain was intensified. The exact parallelism of the second event to the first, when such a close identity is in no way a necessary phenomenon, places one in similar conditions to those calling for auxiliary inversion after so.

Another type of use involving an anaphoric opener is found in conditional sentences. The apodosis of a conditional sentence introduced by then sometimes contains an inversion, as in:

(30) If a Jew’s condemnation were confirmed by the Roman judge, the just, impartial, disinterested Roman, then would all the world know that their sentence was just (...). (Goodier 1951: 289)

Then has the function here of recalling the condition expressed in the if-clause. Since it is optional, its use has the effect of emphasizing the exclusivity of this condition as the sole candidate capable of producing the consequence expressed in the apodosis. This is sometimes explicitly denoted by the addition of and only then, as in:
(31) When we become firm enough to stand for those ideals which we know to be right, when we become hard enough to refuse to aid nations which do not permit self-determination, when we become strong enough to resist any more drifts towards socialism in our own Nation, when we recognize that our enemy is Communism not war, and when we realize that concessions to Communists do not insure peace or freedom, then, and only then, will we no longer be “soft”.

(Brown University Corpus B19 87)

The possibility of the event taking place under other conditions is implicitly envisaged in these uses, with this possibility being cancelled out by means of the use of *then*, whose role is to insist on the actualization of the consequence under the exact same conditions as those specified in the protasis and no others. Confirmation of this analysis is provided by the fact that inversion is not possible in the absence of initial *then*:

(32) *If a Jew’s condemnation were confirmed by the Roman judge, the just, impartial, disinterested Roman, would all the world know that their own sentence was right (...).

Without the anaphoric opener, one cannot convey the impression of ‘under this condition and no other’ which is observed in this type of usage.

In all cases of subject-auxiliary inversion, then, the event expressed by the inverted predicate is not merely asserted of its subject, but seen against the background possibility of it being otherwise. In many cases, this is linked to the idea that the intensity of some modality of the event is higher than normal: the event could have taken place in a normal way, but it was extraordinary in some respect; consequently, it cannot be merely asserted, but its mode of actualization must be focused on at the same time. In other cases, the expression of an exact identity of actualization between two events involves a negation of the possible difference between them; this also is more than mere assertion and involves a focus on the mode of the event’s actualization, which is declared to be exactly the same as some other event’s, even though it is conceivable that it could have been different.

5 A clearer view of the role of *do*
in subject-auxiliary inversion

The discussion proposed here brings clarification as to the exact nature of the role of *do* in subject-auxiliary inversion. This aspect of the construction is not
envisaged at all by Dorgeloh (1997), who focusses on the overall discourse function of inversion as a signal of subjectivity and speaker viewpoint. Langacker’s notion of “existential negotiation”, for its part, carries the unfortunate implication that in SAI the existence of the verbal event is somehow not accepted or treated as difficult to accept, i.e., exceptional; while this is the case in a good number of uses, it does not apply to its occurrence after expressions of identity of mode of actualization such as so and thus. Here the basic notion of the actualization of the verbal event does a better job of characterizing the import of do: the role of so being to denote exact sameness of actualization for the second subject as for the first even though a difference in modality would have been equally conceivable, it involves a focus on the mode of actualization of the predicate in the so-clause, which is declared to be exactly the same as that of the immediately preceding predication in spite of the possibility of a difference in its mode of realization.

6 A more coherent classification of inverted structures

The analysis proposed here also leads to a different classification of inverted structures than that proposed by Chen (2013). This author distinguishes structures that merely reverse subject and auxiliary, which are argued to denote non-indicative mood, from those in which the inverted auxiliary-subject order is accompanied by the fronting of a non-subject element, which are treated as involving focus on the fronted item. I would argue however that the fronting of do-auxiliary itself also marks focus on the fronted item, which in this case denotes the very actualization of the verbal event. Consequently, in yes-no questions such as Did they hurt him?, there is focus on whether or not the event was actualized. One way of bringing this out is to compare questions with and without auxiliary inversion such as:

(33) a. So you know the answer?
    b. So do you know the answer?

As observed by Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 881–885), positive declarative questions such as (33a) have an epistemic bias towards a positive answer which is reflected in the fact that they “can naturally receive confirmatory responses like that’s right, exactly, quite so, which would be out of place with a neutral question”. This is because “at the direct level they are statements, but the
intonation overrides this to yield an indirect question”. Confirmation of the fact that they are affirmative statements can be seen in the fact that they do not allow negative polarity items:

(34) There’s something/*anything else you need?

This indicates that what questions with SAI are about is the actualization/existence of the event denoted by the main verb. Declarative questions, on the other hand, assert the event and ask for confirmation of this assertion. Thus the focus of an SAI question, i.e., what the question is about, is the actualization/existence of the main verb’s event, the latter’s existential status, which is signified by the fronted auxiliary. And the focus of a *wh- question, what it is about, is also the fronted item, which denotes the aspect of the occurrence that the speaker is asking to be identified.

A similar analysis can be applied to the fronting of the auxiliary in exclamations such as (35):

(35) Did they ever play well in that game!

Here there is a focus on a degree of actualization which is so high as to be inexpressible. This account is applicable in addition to the use of SAI in conditional clauses, as in (36):

(36) I will attempt briefly to justify this generalisation, or at least to indicate the lines along which I should attempt to justify it in detail, did space permit. (Coppleston 1962: 114)

In such structures there is focus on a hypothesized actualization, so that what the conditional clause is about is a non-realized state of affairs.

These considerations are significant because they bring out a greater semantic unity among SAI constructions than Chen’s classification does. He argues (2013: 8) that auxiliary-second SAI with pre-auxiliary items as in Never again did Mary walk into the room “has far more affinity” with FVI as exemplified by Into the room walked Mary than with auxiliary-first SAI constructions such as Did Mary walk into the room? Here, on the contrary, I am arguing that FVI has less in common with auxiliary-second SAI than does auxiliary-first SAI. There are several facts that speak in favour of this new classification. Firstly, the pre-verbal items in FVI and SAI are of very different natures. In FVI the fronted element is typically a locative such as into the room in (5) or an anaphoric phrase such as also complimentary in (7). In SAI, on the other hand, the fronted element is typically a negative or interrogative word. Secondly, unlike in SAI, in FVI I would argue, contra Chen, that there is no
focus on the fronted element. The latter plays the role of a scene-setter or anaphoric connector, and the focus is rather on the new element which is introduced onto the scene or into the context. As pointed out by Birner (1994: 240), in no case in her corpus did the pre-posed constituent provide the topic for the next clause. Thus (37a) below is far less acceptable as the first sentence of a story about a little white house than as the opener of a story about two rabbits:

(37) a. In a little White House lived two rabbits. # It/# the house was the oldest one in the forest, and all the animals worried that someday it would come crashing down.
    b. In a little White House lived two rabbits. They/the rabbits were named Flopsy and Mopsy, and they spent their days merrily invading neighbourhood gardens.

The non-inverted structure, however, is an acceptable opening sentence for either type of story:

(38) Two rabbits lived in a little white house.
    i. It/the house was the oldest one in the forest
    ii. They/the rabbits were named Flopsy and Mopsy

In line with its function of introducing a new element into the context or situation, in FVI the verb is never negative:

(39) *In a little White House didn’t live two rabbits.

Negative polarity, on the other hand, is one of the hallmarks of SAI. This is related to another difference between SAI and FVI. As the name of the latter construction indicates, full-verb inversion does not involve the introduction of any auxiliary; the verb is simply placed after its logical subject:

(40) a. The six hundred rode into the Valley of Death.
    b. Into the Valley of Death rode the six hundred.

In contrast, SAI requires the intervention of an auxiliary even when none is present in the canonical-order construction:

(41) a. They never faltered in their loyalty.
    b. Never did they falter in their loyalty.
This resembles auxiliary-first SAI, as illustrated in:

(42)  a. Mary knew the answer.
     b. Did Mary know the answer?

The need for auxiliary *do* arises because there is focus on the actualization of the event in SAI, either to emphatically negate it, question it, marvel at its intensity or declare its exact identity with another actualization, whereas FVI involves no such notion but rather introduces a new entity onto a previously set scene. Fronting in SAI always signals focus on the fronted item; and *do* always signifies the actualization of the verbal event, which by being explicitly represented by means of the auxiliary is also focussed on, either *per se* as in polar questions, where the questioner wants to know whether the event was actualized or not, or *per accidens*, due to the fact that some aspect of the event’s actualization is in the spotlight.

7 A more explicit explanation for the presence or absence of *do* in *wh*- questions

The account proposed here also provides an explanation for the presence or absence of *do* with SAI in *wh*- questions, which is left somewhat in the shadows in Langacker’s discussion: in this type of interrogative, the question bears on the time, place, reason for, or object of the event’s actualization and so there is a focus on some aspect of the actualization that calls for the latter to be explicitly represented by *do*. An explanation can also be provided for the ungrammaticality of *wh*- questions without auxiliary inversion in English (cf. Spada et al. 2005: 207):

(43) *How she opened the door?*

The fronting of the *wh*- word implies focus on some modality of the event’s actualization, which is what the speaker is asking about: as Dorgeloh (1997: 96) observes, constituent fronting with SAI always involves some aspect of the *predication*, which is taken by the speaker as the focus of the clause. This requires the explicit representation of the notion of actualization by means of the auxiliary *do*. Since subject pronouns are not part of the verbal predicate, they are not construable as modalities of the latter’s actualization, and so do not call for the introduction of this auxiliary even when construed as the focus of a question.
8 Conclusion

To recap, the exact nature of the role of *do* in subject-auxiliary inversion has been clarified here. Langacker’s notion of “existential negotiation” has been revised towards the notion of ‘mode of actualization’ so as to apply to expressions of identity of manner of actualization such as *so*, where it does a better job of characterizing the role of *do*: *so* denotes exact sameness of actualization for the second subject as for the first even though a difference in modality would have been equally conceivable and therefore involves a focus on the mode of actualization of the predicate in the *so*-clause, which in turn requires the explicit representation of the notion of actualization by means of the auxiliary *do*. The analysis proposed here has also led to a different classification of inverted structures than that proposed by Chen (2013), bringing to light a greater semantic unity among SAI constructions than his classification does: fronting in SAI always signals focus on the fronted item; and *do* always signifies the actualization of the verbal event, which by being explicitly represented by means of the auxiliary is also focused on, either directly as in polar questions, where the questioner wants to know whether the event was actualized or not, or indirectly, due to the fact that some aspect of the event’s actualization is in the interrogative spotlight. An explanation has also been provided for the presence or absence of *do* with SAI in *wh*- questions, which is left somewhat obscure in Langacker’s account: in this type of interrogative, the question bears on the time, place, reason for, or object of the actualization of the event denoted by the predicate, and so there is a focus on some aspect of that actualization which calls for the latter to be explicitly represented by *do*. Since the subject is not part of the predicate, a question bearing on its identity is not a question about the mode of actualization of the predicate and so *do*-auxiliary is not used.

References


