English *do*: on the convergence of languages and linguists[1]

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(Received 5 March 2001; revised 8 April 2002)

This article surveys the debate on the origin of periphrastic *do*, with particular attention to the hypothesis that Celtic languages might have exerted some influence. With respect to the facts, it is argued that there are various types of Celtic hypotheses and that one type is sensible, though unlikely to be proven and even less likely to be proven to be the only relevant factor. With respect to the debate itself, it is shown that a Celtic origin hypothesis is accepted more widely among non-British scholars, and we speculate why that might be the case.

> The debate [on the origin of *do*] still continues and may never be resolved.
> Traugott (1972: 141)

> There is hardly a point of syntax on which there is a greater cleavage of views.
> Visser (1969: 1488)

1 Introduction

In the United States of America the dominant language is English. But English appeared there only in the last few centuries. Previous to the arrival of English, hundreds of other languages were spoken there – Native American languages – and some survive. It is legitimate to ask whether English has undergone any influence from the indigenous languages. No doubt, in language-contact situations there were and are variants of English that betray influence from American First Nations languages. But with respect to the English spoken outside of such situations, the question is trivial, for the answer is obvious and negative. Apart from toponyms

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We use italics to refer to English *do*, and single quotation marks – 'do' – for the meaning of this construction and of similar constructions in other languages.

(e.g. *Chicago*, *Topeka*, *Chesapeake*, *Oklahoma*) and a restricted number of common nouns (e.g. *tomahawk*, *squaw*, *potlatch*), there has not been any influence. If one knows the history of the post-Columbian settlement of what is now the United States of America, this answer is not surprising.

English is also the dominant language in another united country, namely the United Kingdom. Again, English was imported there in historical times. Before the arrival of English, the British Isles and Ireland were home to speakers of Celtic languages, and they still are. Have the Celtic languages influenced English? Again, it is clear that the English found in earlier and present language-contact situations will show signs of Celtic influence (cf. Tristram, 1997c). But can the same be said of the English spoken outside of contact situations? The consensus answer is again negative: with the exception of toponyms (e.g. *London*, *Thames*, *Devon*) and a small number of common nouns (e.g. *ass*, *brock*, *crag*) English does not show much Celtic influence (cf. Tristram, 1997b: 11; Görlach, 1997: 28; Freeborn, 1998: 20; Thomason and Kaufman, 1988: 263–342). Nevertheless, there is a minority of linguists more sympathetic to the idea of Celtic influence on English, in the lexicon (Ahlqvist, 1988; Todd, 2000) but especially in the grammar. The two features of the grammar of standard English that tend to be discussed most in this connection are (i) the progressive form of the verb (e.g. Tristram, 1995), and (ii) *do* periphrasis. This paper is about *do* periphrasis, more particularly about its origin. We discuss both the facts and the linguists that have taken a stand with respect to the facts. We take an areal–typological approach to evaluate hypotheses relating to the origin of the construction. In section 2 we present the linguistic facts regarding the origin and development of 'do' periphrasis in English and neighboring languages and their possible interpretations; we show that English and British Celtic converge with each other in this respect, distancing themselves from Germanic and Celtic languages respectively to which they are closer related genetically. Section 3 focuses on the different positions taken by past and present scholars of the history of English; we show that the Celtic origin hypothesis is accepted more widely among non-British scholars and consider some of the factors that may be responsible for this. Section 4 presents our conclusions.

2 Languages

2.1 English

In modern English, *do* periphrasis has a function in the expression of negation (1b), interrogation (1c), and emphasis (1d).

(1)(a) Roland sounded his horn.
    (b) Roland *(did) not sound his horn.
    (c) *(Did) Roland sound his horn?
    (d) Roland *(did) sound his horn.

In each of the sentences in (1b–d) *do* is obligatory. Whether or not these uses of *do* carry any meaning is a matter of debate. It is rather common to call *do* in these constructions a meaningless dummy or prop word; if one does assign them meaning, it is difficult to define a meaning that would be common to each of these uses (see Stein, 1990: 143, 278 for an attempt). By anyone's criterion, periphrastic *do* is an auxiliary.

In Early Modern English periphrastic *do* also occurred in nonemphatic positive assertions. This still occurs in southwestern English dialects and has been claimed to express generic/habitual aspect (see Garrett 1998 for the view that habitual *do* is the source of periphrastic *do*).

(2) East Somerset Modern English (Ihalainen, 1976: 618)
   It was like this in them days, years ago, you see. A lot of the villagers did rent this land, this peat land, did rent a plot, you see, half an acre, you see, for ten years . . .

Another use, no longer extant but for many linguists the ancestor to the modern periphrastic uses, is the causative one. A mid-twelfth-century use is illustrated in (3).[2]

(3) Early Middle English (Denison, 1993: 257)
   þe biscop of Wincestre . . . dide heom cumen þider
   the bishop of Winchester   did them come   thither
   'The bishop of Winchester . . . had them come there.'

A further relevant use is illustrated in (4).

(4) Fred does the washing up.

The *do* in (4) obviously does not belong to the same class of *do* as those in (1); this is clear in (5), where we negate the assertion and we need a second *do.*

(5) Fred does not do the washing up.

But, surely, the *do* verb in (4) can be called periphrastic in that it creates a more analytic construction (*to do the washing up*) in the place of a more synthetic one (*to wash up*). The most conspicuous aspect of the constructions in (4) and (5), however, is the fact that the verb following *do* takes the form of a verbal noun. We will therefore call this the verbal noun use.

The use of *do* in (6) illustrates yet another type.

(6) Strengthen our navy we did.

It is tempting to analyze (6) as a variant of (7), in which case (6), too, could be said to simply exhibit a periphrastic *do*.

(7) We did strengthen our navy.

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[2] Causative *do* can be called periphrastic, too, in the sense that it contrasts with the causative marking that many languages effectuate in their verbal morphology. To that extent the standard (Anglicist) terminological tradition of contrasting periphrastic (1b–d) with causative (3) is misleading. Nevertheless, for the sake of comprehensibility, we will honor tradition and thus continue to call the uses in (1b–d) periphrastic and the one in (3) causative.

But that is problematic. On the formal side, this view does not explain why, at least in British English, negation of (6) allows for the addition of a second *do*.

(8) Strengthen our navy we didn't (do).

The meaning of *do* in (6) is different too. (6) does not serve to contrast the truth of the utterance with its falsity. It rather focuses on the activity of the strengthening of the navy in the manner of clefts and pseudo-clefts.

(9) (a) It was strengthen our navy (which) we did.
    (b) What we did was strengthen our navy.

Hence the use of *do* in (6) is not periphrastic in the traditional sense – the sense illustrated in (1b–d) – but it certainly is periphrastic in a wider sense, the sense in which (6) is also periphrastic. To mark its special pragmatic function, we will call it pragmatic *do*.

Finally, English also has a substitute use, shown in (10).

(10) – Did Roland sound his horn?
      – Yes, he did.

We do not contend that the terminology introduced above is ideal, and there is also no point in introducing terms that are highly theory-specific. For the purpose of this article, which is to contrast English with the rest of Germanic, with Celtic and with some Romance, the terminology will be sufficient. To sum up, we distinguish between the following types of *do*: (i) periphrastic *do* (1b–d); (ii) aspectual/habitual *do* in nonemphatic positive assertions (2); (iii) causative *do* (3); (iv) verbal noun *do* (4); (v) pragmatic *do* (6); and (vi) substitute *do* (10).

2.2 Germanic

Of all the Germanic languages, English experienced the longest and closest contact with Celtic. The case for the claim that the development of English periphrastic *do* was influenced by Celtic would be strengthened if the coterritorial or neighboring Celtic languages all had relevant 'do' uses and none of the other Germanic ones had them. But the situation is not that clear-cut. Let us turn to Germanic first.

The clearest parallel to periphrastic *do* is offered by German *tun*. It occurs in colloquial, spoken registers of standard and dialectal German; it is said to be meaningless or to have various tense–aspect–mood (TAM) uses. In the modern Hessian example of (11) a 'do' verb creates an analytic subjunctive.

(11) Hessian (Durrell & Davies, 1990: 235)
      Isch deed's   ned mache
      I   would.do.it not make
      'I wouldn't do it.'

Low German also has uses of periphrastic 'do', especially in subordinate clauses (Rohdenburg 1986, 2000).

(12) Low German (Rohdenburg, 1986: 86)
    Ihr   ick dat vergeten doo, . . .
    before I   that forget do
    'Before I forget, . . .'

Periphrastic uses also occur in northern Dutch (e.g. Nuijtens, 1962: 137–61; Giesbers, 1983–4: 60; Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 1990: 13; Cornips, 1994), as well as in older stages of German (Weiss, 1956), Dutch, Frisian (Stapelkamp, 1948: 182) and even Old Norse (Ellegård, 1953: 27; Yoshioka, 1908: 25). Below are examples from Modern and Middle Dutch.

(13) Modern Dutch (Nuijtens, 1962: 156)
    We deden met het altaartje   spelen.
    we did   with the small.altar play
    'We played with the small altar.'
(14) Middle Dutch (Duinhoven, 1997: 472)
    si   deder wenen vele   tranen
    she did   weep many tears
    'she wept many tears'

Note that the fact that a periphrastic use may show up in various stages of a language need not imply that one is the continuation of the other. Usages such as (13) are seen as a component of a stylistically simple register, a strategy for avoiding inflection on lexical verbs. This usage of 'do' is also reported to occur in child language or in the language adults use when speaking to children (see Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 1990:19f. for discussion and references).

Causative 'do' is also found in Germanic. Just as it is found in the older stages of English, it is found in the older stages of Dutch and German (Weiss, 1956; Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 1990). At the present day, it survives only in Dutch (esp. in Belgium) and in Frisian (Ernst Bruinsma, p.c.).

(15) Modern Dutch
    De clown deed het kind lachen.
    the clown did   the child laugh
    'The clown made the child laugh.'

All of Germanic also has verbal noun uses. The construction type is fairly marked, though certain tokens, like Dutch *de afwas doen* 'doing the dishes', are very common.

(16) Modern Dutch
    Jan doet de afwas
    Jan does the off.wash
    'Jan is doing the dishes.'

Pragmatic 'do', with an infinitive in first position, is found throughout Germanic as well.

(17) Modern Dutch
    Zingen doet hij morgen.
    sing   does he tomorrow
    'As for singing, he'll do it tomorrow.'

Pragmatic 'do' is also found in German and Frisian, as well as in Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish.[3]

(18) Modern Danish (Allan, Holmes & Lundskær-Nielsen, 1995: 511)
Læse gør   han aldrig.
read does he   never
'As for reading, he never does it.'

In the Scandinavian languages, an interesting variation is found. Thus whereas the Danish example in (18) has an infinitive in first position, one can also find a finite fronted verb in the colloquial registers (Allan, Holmes & Lundskær-Nielsen, 1995: 512) – with *kyssede* in (19) as a simple past.

(19) Modern Danish (Allan, Holmes & Lundskær-Nielsen, 1995: 511)
Kyssede hinanden   gjorde de   aldrig . . .
kissed   each.other did   they never
'As for kissing each other, they never did it . . .'

Even English has been claimed to exhibit the finite pattern (Hall, 1955), but it is rather marked. Norwegian and Swedish also exhibit both patterns, and in Swedish the finite construction dominates (Holmes & Hinchcliffe, 1994: 516).

Perhaps the only Germanic language that does not have the pragmatic pattern with 'do' is Yiddish: instead of using the 'do' verb it repeats the lexical verb.

(20) Yiddish (Jacobs, Prince & van der Auwera, 1994: 414)
Izn iz er a soykher   un   handlen handelt er mit tvue.
Be is he a merchant and deal   deals   he with grain
'As for what he is, he's a merchant, and as for what he deals in, he deals in grain.'

The final use is that of substitute 'do'. It is not clear to us how widespread it is, but at least it has been reported for archaic southern Dutch by Ryckeboer (1986, 1998).

2.3 Celtic

In Celtic 'do' periphrasis is very prominent. It always combines with the verbal noun – not with the infinitive, because there is no infinitive. There are two subtypes. In the first subtype the 'do' verb precedes the verbal noun. It is attested from Old Irish (pre-tenth century) onwards.

(21) Old Irish (eighth century; Gagnepain, 1963: 85)
dogéntar   aidchumtach tempuil   less
will.be.done rebuilding   of.the.temple by.him
(Literally: 'rebuilding of the temple will be done by him')
'the temple will be rebuilt by him'

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[3] Sometimes constructions such as (17) and (18) are directly compared with English periphrastic *do* in (1) or, more specifically, with its emphatic use in (1d), rather than with the pragmatic *do* of (6) (Hausman, 1974; Duinhoven, 1997: 476; van der Auwera, 1999). This is not quite correct, given the fact that constructions like (17) and (18) derive their pragmatic effect from the fronting of a constituent while the emphatic element in (1d) is the 'do' verb, a point already made by Körner (1955: 83).

This type of construction is fairly common in all stages of the language (Gagnepain, 1963: 85–6, 194–6, 310–11). As an infrequent construction it is also reported for Middle Welsh (Evans, 1976: 160; Lewis & Pedersen, 1961 [1937]: 316), Middle Breton (Le Roux, 1957: 410; Hemon, 1975: 250) and Middle Cornish (George, 1996: 455; Tristram, 1997a: 409). For the modern languages, it is very common in late spoken Manx (Broderick, 1996: 271), Welsh, esp. in the north (Fife, 1990: 237; Watkins, 1996: 327), and late Cornish (George, 1996: 459; Molyneux, 1987: 86).

(22) Modern Welsh (Tristram, 1997a: 406)
      (mi) (w)nes i fwynhau ddoe
      I   did I enjoy   yesterday
      'I enjoyed myself yesterday.'

In the second subtype, the verbal noun comes first, followed by a relative particle ('PT') and then a form of the 'do' verb. This is characteristic of the eastern, Brythonic languages (Welsh, Breton, and Cornish), but is less frequent in the western, Goidelic ones (Irish, Scottish Gaelic, and Manx). For the older stage of Brythonic, it was common in Breton (Hemon, 1975: 249) and Welsh (Wagner, 1959: 98, 174; Evans, 1976: 160); for Cornish there is only a claim that it is attested and nothing is implied about its frequency (Tristram, 1997a: 409).

(23) Middle Welsh (eleventh century; Lewis & Pedersen, 1961 [1937]: 316)
      ath   gyrchu a   wna
      and.your attack PT will.do
      'and he will attack you'

(24) Middle Welsh (eleventh century; Thompson, 1986: 1)
      kyuodi a oruc   a dyuot a Lynn Cuch
      arise PT he.did and come to Glyn Cuch
      'he arose and went to Glyn Cuch'

This VN-initial word-order pattern is an instance of what has traditionally been called the 'Abnormal Order' in Welsh grammars. It is abnormal only because it is not VSO the way both Old and Modern Welsh normally are. The term is unfortunate, however, because non-VSO is in fact statistically more frequent in Middle Welsh than VSO (MacCana, 1973).

It is not clear why the abnormal order became so frequent. It has been claimed (e.g. MacCana, 1973: 115–16, 119, 1993: 62–6, 1997: 184; Poppe, 1989) that it was restricted to the literary register, and influenced by medieval Latin or English word order (for a recent argument against this see Willis, 1998:11f). Sometimes (cf. Fife and Poppe, 1991) the VN-first order is called a cleft order. This terminology would suggest that there is a pragmatic effect of emphasis, contrast, prominence or topicality. However, at least for Middle Welsh there does not seem to be any such effect (Le Roux, 1957: 408; Evans, 1976: 180; MacCana, 1997: 183–6). A different type of word order, the so-called mixed order, is used for contrastive emphasis (Willis, 1998: 4f). Still, one is tempted to think that the abnormal order initially must have had a pragmatic effect, and that by Middle Welsh times a markedness shift had taken or was taking place, more particularly, a kind of bleaching (cf. Fife,

1988: 129; for a discussion of the type of scenario involved in this type of word-order change, see Dik, 1980: esp. 160–3).

The construction is still part of Modern Welsh, where it does seem to have a pragmatic effect, described in terms of focus by Fife (1990: 237, 245) and prominence by Watkins (1996: 327). If the modern pragmatic construction continues the early (Middle Welsh) depragmatized construction – and there is no indication why it should not – then we should speak of a repragmatization of the construction.

Breton exhibits the VN-first construction too.

(25) Modern Breton (Timm, 1990: 192)
      selaou a   reas ar vamm
      listen PT did the mother
      'the mother listened'

Hemon (1975: 249) essentially offers a depragmatization hypothesis for Breton, which makes modern Breton more similar to Middle Welsh than to Modern Welsh. Interestingly, the present construction still betrays its pragmatic origin: the construction is not normally used in complement clauses or in negative clauses, both of which tend to be pragmatically presupposed and hence less salient pragmatically.

The hypothesis about the pragmatic origin of the VN-first type is also supported by Irish. Normally, modern Irish has the VN following the 'do' verb, but in an example such as (26), it scores a pragmatic effect.

(26) Modern Irish (MacCana, 1973:101)
      Má dhúntar scoil   Dhún Chaoin, beidh   an Ghaoluinn faoi chlár, agus múscailt
      if is.closed school Dún Chaoin will.be the Irish   dead   and awake
      ní   dhéanfaidh sí
      not will.do   she
      'If Dún Chaoin school is closed, Irish will be dead, and it will (never again) awake'
      (Literally: 'and awaken it will not do')

Causative uses of 'do' verbs in Celtic are rare or nonexistent. Fife (1990: 235 ff.) discusses all the functions of Modern Welsh *gwneud* 'do', both as main verb and as auxiliary, and mentions no causative uses. Welsh uses other verbs, such as *peri* (Yoshioka, 1908: 19). Gagnepain (1963: 86, 196) explicitly discounts a causative use of Old and Middle Irish *dogní* 'does'. Instead, Old Irish uses verbs like OI *fofera*, *doáirci* and *immfolngi* 'causes', *dobeir* 'gives, causes', *cuirid* 'makes, puts' (Genee, 1998: 326 ff.). In later Irish a causative use of *dogní* 'does' seems to develop, but it remains rather rare and initially occurs in a restricted type of construction with a finite complement. In Middle Irish (tenth–twelfth centuries), there are a few attestations of *dogní* 'do' with a subjunctive complement with causative meaning (Genee, 1998: 328).

(27) Middle Irish (eleventh/twelfth century; Genee, 1998: 328)
      dogénsa   co ndat echtnaig in lucht cretit   indum
      I.will.make that be   happy   the people who.believe in.me
      'I will make the people happy who believe in me' (Literally: 'I will make (it) so that the people who believe in me are happy')

From Early Modern Irish (thirteenth–sixteenth centuries) we have a few attestations of causative *dogní* with verbal noun complements, although the constructions remain comparatively rare and seem to be restricted to texts with a strong English influence (the example in (28) is from a translation of an English original).

(28) Early Modern Irish (1475) (Genee, 1998: 329)
      doníat na hIdhail a   clann   do baisted
      cause the Jews   their offspring to baptize
      'the Jews had their children baptized' (Literally: 'the Jews caused their children to
      be baptized')

Like English, Celtic 'do' verbs also serve substitute functions. For Irish we even find Gagnepain (1963: 311) claiming that Early Modern Irish substitutive 'do' + VN uses may well have been prompted by English. For modern Celtic, see Vincent (1986: 167) and Wojcik (1976: 261).

2.4 French

A first point about the Romance languages, in general, and about French, in particular, is that the relevant verbs, French *faire* and its cognates, translate 'make' as much as 'do'. There are, of course, special verbs or constructions that express these notions separately, like *construire* 'construct' for 'make' and *être occupé à* 'be occupied with' for 'do', but there are no two general verbs corresponding to English *do* and *make*.

This 'do/make' verb does not have much of a periphrastic use; when it does, it is highly specialized. A general periphrastic use is reported for the older stages of French by Gougenheim (1929: 333–8) and said to be rare.

(29) Middle French (Gougenheim, 1929: 336)
      or   me faites entendre
      thus me do   listen
      'Do listen to me!'

For modern French, there is a special exclusive use.

(30) Il ne fait que chanter
      he not does that sing
      'He only sings.'

Another special use is found in Piemontese, and in the colloquial Italian of Piedmont, a Piemontese calque.

(31) Piemontese Italian (Davide Ricca, p.c.)
      Faccio che chiamare io
      do.I   that call   I
      'I call myself.'

Causative 'do/make', however, is very much of a feature of Romance. Latin *facere* had a causative use and so do its successors in the Romance languages.

(32) Mon père me fait   travailler
       my   father me does work
       'My father makes me work.'

Substitutive uses also exist. Interesting differences in substitutive uses between modern French and older French are discussed in Miller (1997).

2.5 Summary

The above survey is by no means exhaustive. Nevertheless, it would seem to allow the following conclusions:

(i)   periphrasis is strong in Brythonic Celtic as well as in English, and weaker in non-English Germanic, in Goidelic Celtic, or in French (and other Romance);
(ii) causative uses are important in French (and other Romance) as well as in older Germanic and in modern Dutch and Frisian;
(iii) pragmatic uses are found in Celtic and Germanic.

Map 1 below shows four isoglosses for some of the modern languages.

The map shows two striking cases of a language siding with a neighbor rather than with a cousin. One case is that of Modern Dutch having a causative 'do', like French, but unlike its Germanic cousins. The other one has English strongly exhibiting periphrastic 'do', like Welsh and Breton, but unlike the other Germanic
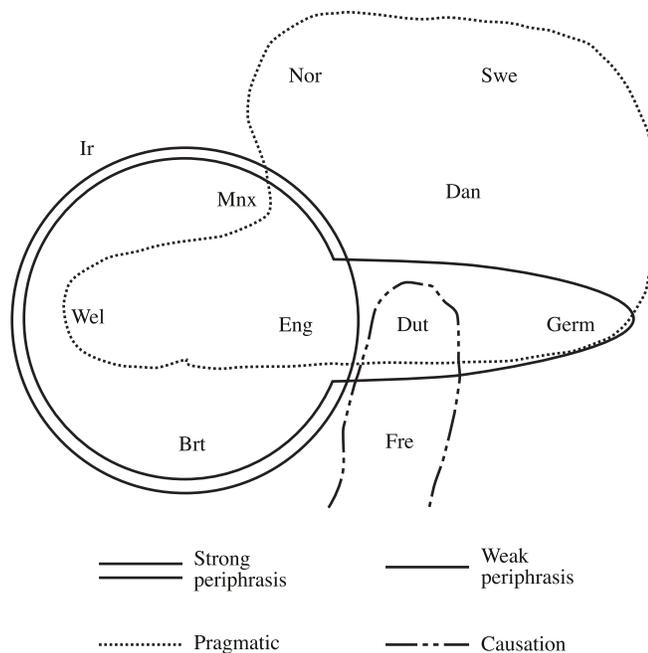
Map 1. Some 'do' isoglosses in Europe

languages.[4] In both cases one should ask whether this convergence is a coincidence or whether there has been contact-instigated influence. The focus of this article is, of course, the case of the English periphrastic 'do'.

3 On the origin of English periphrastic 'do'

3.1 Causative hypotheses

What is the origin of English periphrastic *do*? There is nearly complete consensus that English does not simply inherit it from Proto-Germanic or from Proto-West Germanic (but cf. Garrett, 1998: 288), and there is also a large though by means complete consensus that it developed from a causative use. It is probably fair to say that until recently the standard account was Ellegård (1953) and that Denison (1985, 1993) has now taken over. The essential idea is this: English first develops causative uses of the type '*do* + NP + infinitive', probably under the influence of Latin and French. The NP *heom* in (3), repeated here for convenience, is the subject of the infinitive (whether *heom* is also an object of the *do* verb is not of interest here).

(3) Early Middle English (Denison, 1993: 257)
þe biscop of Wincestre . . . dide heom cumen þider
the bishop of Winchester   did them come thither
'The bishop of Winchester . . . had them come there.'

From this construction a variant develops that lacks the NP.

(33) Middle English (Denison, 1985: 46)
. . . he did carrye grete quantitee of Armure to the Guyldehalle

In Ellegård's view, this construction was originally no less causative than the one with the NP but in its further development it became equivocal or vague. In Denison's view (1985: 53), the NP-less construction was never really causative, but only what he calls completive or perfective: the focus is not on who did something, but on what was achieved. Regardless of whether the initial meaning of the NP-less construction is causative or completive/perfective, Ellegård and Denison agree in assigning it a causative origin, and a periphrastic target; it is this causative or completive/perfective meaning that will fade and yield a pure periphrastic use. Causative-to-periphrastic scenarios have also been posited for German (Weiss, 1956: 183), Dutch (Duinhoven, 1994: 128), and French (Gougenheim, 1929: 333–8; Weiss, 1956: 169). This crosslinguistic support adds to its plausibility. We too agree that the causative scenario makes a lot of sense, and nowhere in what follows will we deny that it could be a possible ingredient in the story of English *do*. Our point is that it may not be the only ingredient.

Note that the development sketched in (34) is not entirely language-internal. Both Ellegård (1953: 54) and Denison (1985: 52, 1993: 279) deem the influence of Latin

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[4] Note also that Manx has strong periphrasis, although it belongs to the Goidelic branch of Celtic.

(34) Latin/French   English

                                                    do INF
                                            causative ⇨ equivocal
                                                    (Ellegård)

        'do' NP INF   ?   *do* NP INF   ↗   ↖   *do* INF
        causative   causative   periphrastic
                         ⇨   ↘   ↗
                                                    do INF
                                              completive/perfective
                                                    (Denison)

probable, an idea which is at least as old as Earle (1887: 542). Also, Denison (1985: 52) allows for influence of French *faire*. In the case of the German causative, influence from Latin has also been called upon (Weiss, 1956: 64–5, 95, 160–1).

Despite its attractiveness, there are some problems for the causative hypothesis. Perhaps the most important and most frequently discussed observation relates to the geographical spread of periphrastic *do*: while both uses are found in the thirteenth century, causatives are more frequent in eastern texts and periphrastic *do* is first found in western texts, to be followed in the east about one century later. This point was hinted at already by Engblom (1938: 65), formulated explicitly by Ellegård (1953: 118, 164), and confirmed, paralleled or accepted by a number of later linguists (e.g. Traugott, 1972: 141; Eroms, 1984: 124; Denison, 1985: 47, 1993: 264; Poussa, 1990: 408; Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 1990: 26–7; Stein, 1990: 18; Garrett, 1998: 284).

How troublesome is this observation for a causative hypothesis? A contact hypothesis has been formulated by Miller & Leffel (1994: 185). It is in the east that French survived longer and French essentially had a causative 'do' only. This makes sense, and once more, nothing in what follows is intended to argue against this idea. We will, however, pursue another idea. No doubt in the east, more particularly the southeast, French continued to be spoken longer; in the west, however, more particularly the southwest, Celtic languages continued to be spoken longer. And whereas French exhibited a causative 'do', the Celtic languages exhibited a periphrastic 'do'.

3.2 Celtic hypotheses

What we will call the 'Celtic hypothesis' is the view that the Celtic languages, more specifically Brythonic, have had an important role in the development of periphrastic 'do'. Arguments in favor of a Celtic hypothesis can be classified in more than one way. One criterion is the question as to whether the hypothesis only refers to the dynamics of language contact or to the specifics of the grammars of Celtic languages. Hypotheses of the first type allude to the genesis of auxiliaries in contact situations. In the case of English and its periphrastic *do* this means that it

would not actually be relevant which language English was in contact with or what the structure of that language would have been; but rather a certain type of contact situation would be conducive to the development of auxiliaries. In hypotheses of the second type, the specifics of the languages involved do matter; in particular, the English *do* auxiliary is claimed to be influenced by Celtic auxiliaries, or even to be a direct calque.

Within this second category, a further distinction can be made between (i) the hypothesis that it is not actually the periphrastic *do* of English that was influenced by Celtic auxiliaries, but a nonperiphrastic ancestor, and (ii) hypotheses that posit a direct link between English and Celtic periphrastic auxiliaries. As we will see, these types of arguments do not exclude each other and two advocates of Celtic hypotheses, Patricia Poussa and Hildegard Tristram, will be discussed under more than one heading.

In what follows we will evaluate a number of arguments for and against the Celtic hypothesis. Before we begin, however, we must first deal with a very general objection to the very notion of a Celtic hypothesis – namely that there is no evidence of Celtic influence on other parts of the grammar (Garrett, 1998: 285–6). This objection is not too damaging. In fact, the literature contains claims for Celtic influence on a few other structural features of English, esp. the English progressive and the Northern Plural Rule (Klemola, 2000). We would also like to note that, even if Celtic influence was only called upon to explain *do*, this would still not be a reason why the claim has to be dismissed, although the case is of course stronger if a coherent complex of influences can be shown to have been at work.

3.2.1 *English* do *sparked off by language contact*
In its most general form, the argument that the dynamics of language contact are responsible for the genesis of auxiliaries is found in Tristram (1997a: 415):

> Languages in contact may accelerate linguistic development through linguistic inter-action, resulting in the simplification of integrated grammatical patterns and in increasing analyticity, that is, in the rise of aggregation instead of integration of grammatical forms. The rise of DO-periphrasis both in English and in the P-Celtic languages may be due to this contact situation . . .

Note that there is no claim that the Celtic languages set the example. Tristram does not want to advance this claim, as 'there is no point in asking which came first or which was the giving and which the receiving language' (1997a: 415) – presumably because there is no textual evidence. She points out that neither Old English nor Old Celtic exhibits 'do' periphrasis in any systematic way (1997a: 412); the fact that Middle Welsh had more 'do' periphrasis than Middle English does not mean that English could not have acquired it first (1997a: 415). We agree: there is no proof for the priority of 'do' periphrasis in Celtic, but then there is no proof that 'do' periphrasis arose because of the dynamics of contact either.

A more specific version of the argument and one that does assign a priority to Celtic is found in Poussa (1990). Her argument can be reconstructed as follows:

(i)   there is evidence that language-contact situations are fertile soil for the develop-
       ment of auxiliaries (Poussa, 1990: 411–12);
(ii)   it is in the west of England that pre-thirteenth-century English and Celtic must
       have been in contact longest (Poussa, 1990: 418–20);
(iii) *do* periphrasis first appears in western texts in the thirteenth century; in the east it
       appears about one century later (Poussa, 1990: 408);
(iv)   (iii) can be explained by (i) and (ii) (Poussa, 1990: 420).

This argument is diachronic. Synchronic evidence is further supplied by the fact that
present-day southwestern English dialects (Somerset) still have special uses of the *do*
auxiliary, already illustrated in (2), which may be associated with habitual aspect
(Poussa, 1990: 420–2).

   Objections to these arguments are made in Denison (1993: 282) (cf. also Ellegård,
1953: 119; Visser, 1969: 1496; Görlach, 1997; Garrett, 1998: 286). A very general one
simply says that there is no textual evidence for the hypothesis. A more specific one
says that one should worry about the rather large time gap between the onset of the
language contact (from early OE onwards) and the first appearance of periphrastic
do. Both counterarguments have already found their answers. First, the texts that
have survived are not representative, especially not with respect to the spoken
language contact varieties in which *do* could have crystallized (Poussa, 1990:
429–30; Tristram, 1997a: 414; German, 2000: 372). Second, large time gaps have
been posited for other substratum effects (Tristram, 1997a: 414; 1999: 27).

   There is yet a third version of the argument that periphrasis could be sparked off
by language contact. Poussa (1990: 411–12) draws attention to the fact that a verb
like 'do' seems particularly useful in a contact situation as a device for incorporating
nominals of one language into the other. There is in fact a large literature on this
phenomenon. A locus classicus, which Poussa also refers to, is Di Sciullo, Muysken
& Singh (1986). A clear illustration, not prominent yet in the 'do' literature, comes
from Korean. In Korean, words of Chinese and Japanese origin outnumber native
words (Chang, 1996: 19); a standard strategy for turning foreign nouns into
predicates is to combine them with *hata* 'do' (in (35) with Chinese *cheypho*).

(35) Korean (Sohn. 1994: 424)
      Swunkynedi totwukul cheypho(lul) hayssta.
      policeman   thief   arrest   did
      'A policeman arrested a thief.'

Could the same have happened to Old English? If so, we would have a more concrete
version of the hypothesis: one would not only expect the western contact situation to
be fertile soil for the appearance of auxiliaries in general, but for the appearance of
'do' auxiliaries combining with foreign elements, in particular.

   Poussa herself does not actually claim that the origin of periphrastic *do* is found in
an early use of *do* as a device to use foreign nominals predicatively. Yet she has been
taken to imply this and has been taken to task about the lack of textual evidence:

early uses of *do* do not show any preference for foreign nominals (Denison, 1993: 282; van der Wurff, 1995: 406).

Note that in all of the cases known to us of a language employing a verb meaning 'do' to verbalize foreign nominals, the 'do' verb language is the socially/culturally inferior one: e.g. Hindi 'do' with English nominals (Di Sciullo, Muysken & Singh, 1986), Persian with Arabic (Sheintuch, 1976), Turkish with Dutch (Backus, 1996), or Korean with Chinese and Japanese, and now also English (Jinyoung Shom, 1994). Applied to the Celtic–English contact situation, one would thus expect Celtic languages to develop 'do' periphrasis rather than English. This means that neither the second nor the third of the arguments discussed in this section is directly relevant for English. The conclusion must be that there is no direct evidence in favor of the various versions of the view that English periphrastic *do* resulted from the dynamics of language contact alone.

3.2.2 *The habitual ancestor of English periphrastic* do *is calqued on Celtic auxiliaries*
Independently of her points about auxiliary genesis, Poussa (1990) also makes a substratumist claim. The starting point is that periphrastic *do* would derive from the habitual *do* still found in the southwest.[5] The latter would be calqued on the tense/aspect auxiliary system found in Celtic, a set which includes a 'do' auxiliary, but is not restricted to it (Poussa, 1990: 424). More specifically, she offers the hypothesis that the original habitual form was *do be*, which survives in southern Hiberno-English, which may simplify into either *be*, in northern Hiberno-English and in Caribbean creoles, or into *do*, in southwestern English.

There are several problems with this hypothesis. Once again, there is no textual evidence for any association of early *do* with habitual meanings, nor for the in-between stage *do be* (Denison, 1993: 283). Also, the association between southwestern English *do* and habitual meaning is not fully established (see Klemola, 1996 for doubts on this point). Finally, the relation between southwestern English *do* and southern Hiberno-English *do* may be more indirect than proposed by Poussa (1990). Thus Hickey (1997: 1009–13; 2000: 112; cf. also 1999: 46) claims that whether or not southwestern English *do* was calqued on Celtic, in Ireland it was periphrastic *do* which was imported and given a new aspectual meaning on the basis of Irish. So, in Hickey's view, Hiberno-English habitual *do* is not a relic but an innovation.

The conclusion must be that the hypothesis that posits a direct influence of the Celtic auxiliary system on a habitual use of *do*, which is then further claimed to result in periphrastic *do*, is not well supported.

3.2.3 *English periphrastic* do *influenced by Celtic periphrastic 'do'*
We now come to a group of hypotheses that posit a direct link between English periphrastic *do* and Celtic 'do' verbs, more specifically Brythonic ones. The most general version of this type of argument is again associated with Tristram (1997a). She not only claims that periphrastic 'do' could owe its existence to simplificatory

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[5] Note that this claim can be defended independently of any substratumist view (see Garrett, 1998).

processes going on in language contact, she also suggests that English and Brythonic formed a kind of *Sprachbund*, in which Brythonic periphrasis and English periphrasis reinforced one another. In Tristram (1997a) the claim is not explicit, but in her earlier work we do find it in explicit terms applied to the progressive (Tristram, 1995), and it is present also in a recent overview article (Tristram, 1999).

This argument has not been discussed in the literature yet, apart from an approving comment by German (2000: 371). Note that the hypothesis about mutual reinforcement is not hampered by the fact that English and Brythonic 'do' periphrasis does not occur in the same conditions: it does not occur in the same conditions within Brythonic either.[6] Also the fact that Brythonic 'do' periphrasis occurs in positive nonemphatic assertions and Standard English *do* periphrasis does not, is not a problem, since English *do* periphrasis originally did occur in positive nonemphatic assertions.

The mutual reinforcement hypothesis treats English and Brythonic both as givers and as receivers. There is also a view that the giver role is played by Brythonic; this is first expressed by Preusler (1938: 181–3). He offers two arguments.[7] The first says that 'do' periphrasis is attested earlier in Welsh than in English (1938: 182; 1956: 334–5), in particular, before the end of the thirteenth century, which is the period in which Preusler sees the appearance of periphrastic *do* in English. Hence it would make sense to believe that English was initially more influenced by Welsh rather than the other way round.[8] Tristram might reply to this line of reasoning (cf. Tristram, 1997a: 412) that older Brythonic did not feature 'do' periphrasis in a systematic way. Still, this does not rule out the existence of the construction in Brythonic before Old English. Tristram (1997a: 413) also accepts that periphrastic 'do' is more established in Middle Welsh than in the English of the same period, and though she is right in pointing out that this does not prove that Celtic periphrastic 'do' is older, this would still seem to us to be the more plausible hypothesis.

Preusler's second argument concerns the positive nonemphatic periphrastic uses of *do* in the southwest. Preusler (1938: 182) – and later also Wagner (1959: 94) – interprets these as relic uses and finds it significant that they occur in an area where one would expect Welsh and Cornish to be most influential – note that this is also the area in which the construction in (6) has been claimed to be strongest (Hall, 1955: 264). We believe that this is an interesting pointer (cf. also Klemola, 1996: 41), but we admit that it does not in and of itself prove Celtic influence on English *do*

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[6] For the general argument that source and resulting construction in language change due to contact do not need to be identical but show a sufficient degree of structural similarity, see Thomason & Kaufman (1988: 62–4).

[7] Preusler (1938) also presents an argument for why English periphrastic *do* became associated with negative and interrogative contexts. The issue is also addressed by Vincent (1986). We will leave these arguments aside here, because they do not directly concern the origin of periphrastic *do*.

[8] The word 'initially' is important. Once the two languages both have 'do' periphrasis, mutual reinforcement could become relevant or perhaps English could assume most of the giving role. Even Ellegård (1953: 120) mentioned the possible English influence on Welsh 'do' (cp. also Görlach, 1997: 31 on Cornish, and Gregor, 1980: 170 and Görlach, 1997: 33 on Manx).

periphrasis. For one thing, the southwestern uses could be innovations rather than archaisms (Tristram, 1997a: 413); and even if they are archaic, perhaps their conservation might be due to Celtic, but it does not say anything about their origin. Interestingly, Preusler (1938, 1940, 1956) did not know that Ellegård was going to argue that it was in the west that periphrastic *do* is first attested. This, we believe, is a much stronger pointer, again, not proof, although it makes Celtic influence rather more plausible.

A final indirect point comes from French. If it is true that English calqued its periphrastic *do* on Brythonic examples, it would be in good company. Franco-Breton, the French spoken by native speakers of Breton, has been claimed to contain a periphrastic *faire*. Trépos (1980: 274) remarks that 'Cette dernière construction est encore un *bretonnisme* que l'on entend souvent dans la bouche des bretonnants parlant français; c'est parce que le français n'a pas d'équivalent.' The correctness of this observation has been confirmed by Tristram (p.c.) and German (p.c.).

It would seem that the conclusion here can be that a direct Celtic, more specifically Brythonic, influence of periphrastic 'do' on English periphrastic *do* is at least possible. The hypothesis is certainly not absurd, but there is no direct evidence to prove or disprove it. Is it a coincidence that (i) within Germanic, periphrastic 'do' is strongest in the westernmost West Germanic language, i.e. English, the one that has been in contact with Celtic longest; (ii) within Celtic, periphrastic 'do' is strongest in Brythonic, the branch of Celtic that has had longest contact with English; (iii) English periphrastic *do* arose in southwestern English dialects, i.e. the dialects which were coterritorial or neighboring with Brythonic; and (iv) that nonemphatic affirmative *do* survives in that same area too? Perhaps all of this is indeed coincidence. If it is not, however, and if it is the case that periphrastic *do* is older in Brythonic than in English and more common in Middle Welsh than in Middle English, then it seems to be plausible that Brythonic influenced the development of a periphrastic *do* in English, just as it seems to have influenced the development of a periphrastic 'do' in Franco-Breton. This is not to say that English periphrastic *do* is solely a calque on Brythonic 'do' constructions. In particular, nothing in this section has been offered as a falsification of the causal hypotheses – or even of a habitual 'do' hypothesis.

4 Linguists

This section is devoted to the convergence of linguists rather than languages, a topic anticipated already by Denison (1993: 255). We will raise two questions: first, why is it that the Celtic hypotheses have on the whole received little support? And second, who are the supporters of a Celtic hypothesis or at least do not discount it entirely?

The first supporter of a Celtic hypothesis for English *do* seems to have been Walter Preusler. The general idea that Celtic may have contributed to the development of English came to him, so he states (Preusler, 1938: 178; 1956: 322), from the

lectures of his teacher, the Anglicist Gregor Sarrazin (1857–1915) around 1912, and from reading Lewy (1913). 'Seitdem ließ mich die Frage nicht los' (Preusler, 1938: 178; 1956: 322) and indeed, 'Keltischer Einfluss im Englischen' is the title of five of his publications.[9] Support for a Celtic hypothesis is also expressed by Wagner (1959), Poussa (1990), Vincent (1986), Molyneux (1987), Tristram (1997a) and German (2000). A general sympathy may also be detected in Dal (1952), Haarman (1976) and Meid (1990). Table 1 classifies these authors on the basis of specialization and a rough indication of scholarly and linguistic background.

Table 1. *The supporters of a Celtic hypothesis*

	English	Germanophone	Anglicist	Celticist
Preusler (1938, 1940, 1956)	–	+	+	–
Wagner (1959)	–	+	–	+
Vincent (1986)	?–	+	+	?–
Molyneux (1987)	±	–	+	–
Poussa (1990)	±	–	+	–
Tristram (1997a)	–	+	+	+
German (2000)	–	–	+	–
Dal (1952)	–	–	–	–
Haarmann (1976)	–	+	–	–
Meid (1990)	–	+	–	+

The number of supporters is small, and the listing suggests that the hypothesis seems more appealing to non-English Anglicists, German ones in particular. Interestingly also, the two or perhaps three British listings show strong non-British connections – Cyril Molyneux worked in Austria; Patricia Poussa worked and works in Scandinavia; Marliese Vincent had German training.[10]

Besides support one finds various other attitudes. Table 2 lists three such attitudes and some supporters.

The majority attitude is one of disapproval or, to the extent that the majority is silent, of neglect.

Why, then, do the Celtic hypotheses attract so little support? We can distinguish seven factors.

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[9] Very little is known about him. He was born in Sacrau (Kreis Oels) in 1894, in 1914 he obtained a doctorate at the University of Breslau with *Syntax in Poema Naturale*. During part of the *interbellum* he must have been Oberstudiendirektor in Görlitz. According to Van Essen (1983: 335) he lost his job in the Nazi period. He was a good friend of the Dutch Anglicist Kruisinga, joined the editorial board of the latter's journal *Taal en Leven*, and contributed various articles to it. After the war we find him in Erwitte (Kreis Lippstadt) in 1952, from whence he moved to Herford during that year. There he wrote his last 'Keltischer Einfluss im Englischen' – a summary of his earlier articles with the same title. In 1957 he moved to Bad Salzufen, where he died in 1959. Thanks are due to the city authorities of Herford and Bad Salzufen.

[10] Thanks are due to Eoghan Mac Aogáin (Dublin) for the information.

Table 2. *Hesitant attitudes towards a Celtic hypothesis*

possible:	Stein (1990; 1991: 363), Rissanen (1991: 335), Wright (1991: 486), Tristram (1993)
possible, but unlikely:	Ellegård (1953), Visser (1969: 1495), Denison (1985, 1993), Voss (1995: 346), van der Wurff (1995: 408), Görlach (1997)
possible, but difficult to prove:	Hickey (1995: 108; 1997: 1010; 2000: 112)

First of all, it is, of course, undeniable that there is little evidence for direct borrowing, which stands in sharp contrast to the magnitude of the evidence for influence and borrowing from French, Latin, and Scandinavian.

Second, there are several Celtic hypotheses. Some versions are more plausible than others and some contain dubious or at least very controversial claims. In some cases, the fact that the linguist in question is a proponent of other, much more controversial hypotheses, makes it easy for their opponents to dismiss anything they say. Preusler (1956: 335), for instance, connects even the German uses, illustrated in (12), with Celtic influence, a point of view which few would take seriously. Wagner (1959), the second supporter, is more known for his adherence to the view that there are nontrivial similarities between Celtic and Berber languages which require a substratum analysis – a point of view which is rather controversial, even though Vennemann (2000: 402) considers it to be fully proven and recent typological work by Gensler (1993) has cast new light on the issue. Poussa (1990), a third supporter of Celtic influence, is definitely to be credited for quickening the interest in the Celtic hypotheses and for taking inspiration from Creole studies. But her versions of the hypothesis fall under 'English *do* sparked off by language contact' (section 3.2.1) and 'The habitual ancestor of English periphrastic *do* calqued on Celtic auxiliaries' (section 3.2.2), subtypes which we suggest are less plausible than 'Periphrastic *do* influenced by Celtic periphrastic "do"' (section 3.2.3).

Third, the work by Preusler and Wagner is written in German, and it is simply a fact that this attracts a smaller audience (cf. the complaint by Tristram (1995: 292; 1999: 27) that Wagner (1959) has gone unnoticed in English language research).

Fourth, many an Anglicist would feel that the study of Celtic is not his/her business but rather that of the Celticist (cf. Dal, 1952: 107) or of the Indo-Europeanist (cf. Meid, 1990: 1000). Or Anglicists may feel that at least some of them should have a competence in Celtic languages, but the fact is that most of them simply do not.

Fifth, what further obstructs taking a Celtic hypothesis seriously is the myth of Anglo-Saxonism (see esp. German, 2000 and Tristram, 1999 but also Hickey, 1995: 103–5). This ideology starts from the unexamined premise that the English are of unmixed Germanic origin, that their history starts with the arrival of leaders like Hengest and Horsa and that the Celtic population they encountered was completely exterminated or driven away; from this it must follow that there was no contact between Early Celtic and Early English and there cannot therefore be any influence

of Celtic on English. A related myth leads to the same denial of the importance of Celtic language and culture in Britain. It has recently been identified under the term Celtoscepticism, and may be seen as the other side of the coin called Anglosaxonism; it consists of the idea that the Celts as a people never really existed or formed a cultural unity, and could therefore of course never as a group have had any influence over other groups (Koch, 2001).

Sixth, as Tristram (1995: 292; 1999: 34–7) has noted, for the British Isles there has not been much areal work, perhaps with the exception of the collection by Ureland & Broderick (1991), although this says nothing about *do*.

Finally, there is the ever-present trap of mono-causalism. This means that researchers who have already convinced themselves of the plausibility of one cause or explanation may find it hard to accept that there could be more than one cause or explanation. With respect to the specifics of *do* periphrasis, if one believes that periphrastic *do* goes back to causative *do*, this still should not stop one from investigating a Celtic hypothesis seriously as well (cf. Stein, 1990: 19).

It is, however, unmistakable that the interest in the relation between Celtic and Standard English has grown. This is due to the article by Poussa (1990), work by Tristram, and a growing interest in modern contact varieties of English. Finally, what is also relevant is that areality is presently a respectable theme in typology.

5 Conclusion

As to periphrastic *do*, we have argued that the hypothesis of Celtic contact influence as at least one of the factors explaining the origin of English periphrastic 'do' is rather sensible. There is no direct proof for Celtic influence, but we hope to have shown that there is good circumstantial evidence. Given the nature of the data it is unlikely that direct evidence can be expected, and in this way Traugott (1972: 141) may be right: the debate on the origin of *do* may never be solved. We do think, however, that we are much closer now than we were thirty years ago to at least being able to distinguish between plausible and less plausible scenarios. We now know much more about the typology of contact situations, about what happens in language shift, and about likely types of structural borrowing. We think that the present state of the available evidence and methods of analysis, including areal–typological analysis, warrants the conclusion that influence of Brythonic periphrastic 'do' on English periphrastic *do* is likely. We do not, however, commit ourselves to the view that Celtic influence is the only factor.

As to the linguists who study periphrastic *do*, it is interesting and a little disturbing to see that the Celtic hypotheses thrive best on non-British soil. There should be no relation between the nationality, native language, institutional environment or scholarly background of a linguist and the hypotheses (s)he defends, but in fact there may well be such a relation.

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