DO+NP Constructions

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1. Introduction

This study discusses *do+NP* constructions which involve *do* as the main verb taking the object headed by a noun. This head noun may be classified into four types with respect to form and meaning: Gerundive noun, derived noun from a verb, concrete noun, and abstract noun. Examples are shown in this order:

(1) I did two years of teaching before that. (Nakau (1998:507))

(2) Howard did the assignment of the problems.

(3) I did the living room this morning.

(4) She did economics at Harvard University. (*OALD*)

In example (1) *do* takes as its object the gerundive noun *teaching*, whose original verb is *teach*, and in (2) *do* takes as its object *assignment*, which is derived from the verb *assign*. In (3) *do* takes the concrete noun *the living room*, which has a referent in the world, and in (4) *do* takes the abstract noun *economics*, which has no referent in the world, only existing in our brain.

The *do+NP* constructions in (1)-(4) are all called light-verb constructions, involving the light verb *do*, in the sense that *do* denotes an underspecified activity, or represents "no more than 'act'" (Leech (1987:169)). They are then interpreted depending on something other than *do* itself. *Do+NP* constructions involving a gerundive noun and a derived noun are mainly interpreted with recourse to these nouns. Thus, (1) and (2) are semantically related to (5) and (6), respectively:

(5) I taught two years before that.

(6) Howard assigned the problems.

Do+NP constructions involving a concrete noun and an abstract noun, on the other hand, are understood with recourse to context through inference. Thus, *did* in (3) may be understood as "cleaned" with the help of the rest of the sentence, and *did* in (4) as "studied" in a similar way.[1]

The aim of the present study is threefold. One is to examine the constructional properties of *do+NP* constructions. Another is to specify the types of gerundive noun and derived noun occurring in the construction, and to determine the interpretation of *do* when taking a concrete noun and an abstract noun in the construction. The last is to bring light to the semantic role of what is called a light verb. Since Jespersen (1909-49:PartVI) coined this word, linguists have regarded a verb called a light verb as being devoid of lexical meaning, carrying the significance of tense and number (cf. Live (1973), Cattell (1984)). The present study, however,

shows that a light verb semantically plays an important role in the light-verb construction.

This study is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses Nakau (1998), which deals with *do+NP* constructions in detail, proposing the types of derived noun and gerundive noun compatible with the construction, and also determining the interpretation of *do* when taking a concrete noun and an abstract noun in the construction. In section 3 constructional properties of the *do+NP* construction are investigated, especially the thematic role of the subject the construction takes. In section 4 the semantic role of *do* is examined in specifying the types of gerundive noun and derived noun for the construction. It is proposed that *do* imposes two conditions on the specification of the two types of nouns: One is imposed on the noun itself; and the other is on its original verb. A detailed discussion is given in section 5. Section 6 discusses the semantic role of *do* in determining the interpretation of the verb when taking a concrete noun and an abstract noun in the construction. It is argued that *do* may be semantically replaced by the verbs that take the thematic role discussed in section 3. Concluding remarks are given in section 7.

2. Nakau (1998)

2.1. Outlines

Nakau observes several characteristics of the *do+NP* construction, which he himself calls the "do+object" construction. First, the subject this construction takes is limited to humans. Consider the following examples given by Nakau (1998:507):

(7) a. Ann did a report on gender.

b. *This article does a report on gender.

c. This article reports on gender.

Do a report may take a human subject, but not a nonhuman subject, as in (a) and (b); the verb *report*, in contrast, may take a nonhuman subject, as in (c).

Secondly, a *do+NP* construction is compatible with a noun derived from a verb of "action," which is one of the three classes of verbs defined in Nakau (1994); nouns derived from verbs of the other classes, "process," and "state," do not occur in the construction. Consider the following examples, where (8a) and (8b) are given by Nakau (1988:506):

(8) a. Jack did {*knowledge of karate/*some meaning (that he was ill)}.

b. Howard did some rapid calculations on the back of an envelope.

c. I did two years of teaching before that. (=(1))

The nouns *knowledge* and *meaning* do not occur in the *do+NP* construction, as in (a), because *knowledge* and *meaning* are derived from the state verbs *know* and *mean*.

Calculation and *teaching,* in contrast, are derived from the action verbs *calculate* and *teach,* respectively. They thus may occur in the construction, as in (b) and (c).

Similarly, Nakau argues that the interpretation of *do* is limited to the activity denoted by action verbs when the verb accompanies a concrete noun and an abstract noun in the construction. Consider:

(9) a. I did the report last night. (Nakau (1998:508))

b. He did Macbeth admirably last night. (Nakau (1998:509))

In (9a), where a concrete noun occurs, *do* may be understood through inference as "make," and in (9b), where an abstract noun appears, *do* may be understood as "perform." *Make* and *perform* are both action verbs.

Nakau's claim that only action is the class compatible with the *do+NP* construction is grounded on its description. Action is semantically described as taking the argument "DO," but process and state are not:

(10) a. state: BE (THING, PLACE)

b. process: GO (THING, PLACE)

c. action: DO (ACTOR, THING) (Nakau (1994:311))

Thirdly, Nakau states, following Ross (1972), that *do+NP* as a whole functions as a pro-VP. Look at the following examples provided by Nakau (1998:507):

(11) a. You do one thing right now: apologize.

b. If you can apologize, it should be done immediately.

In (a) the verb *apologize* is equivalent to *do apologizing,* not just to *one thing.* In the same way *apologize* in (b) corresponds with *do it.*

Fourthly, a *do+NP* construction focuses on the subject's activity. Thus, while transitive verbs such as *kill* always require their object, nouns derived from them do not necessarily do so when in the construction. Consider:

(12) a. *John killed yesterday.

b. "No," said Brutus. "We must not do more killing than we need."

(Nakau (1998:507))

While sentence (a) is unacceptable because *kill* does not take the object, the *do+NP* construction in (b) is acceptable, though *killing* takes no object.

2.2. Insufficiencies and Problems

Of the characteristics seen above, the present study goes along with Nakau in the following points: (i) The *do+NP* construction focuses on the subject's activity; and (ii) *do+NP* as a whole functions as a pro-VP.

However, this study does not agree to the following points. First, it is too strong to claim that *do+NP* constructions only take a human subject. The following examples show that higher animals can occupy the subject position:

(13) a.   My cat is doing her nails against the wall.

     b.   My dog is doing a dance.

Qualifications for the subject of the construction are discussed later.

Secondly, it is too strong to claim that the *do+NP* construction exclusively admits nouns derived from verbs of action on the ground that this class is described as taking the semantic argument DO. The construction may also admits nouns derived from verbs of process, which does not take DO. Consider:

(14) a.   John did a lot of staying in Tokyo.

     b.   Mary did a lot of going to church when she was young.

     c.   The train did a lot of stopping at small stations.

The gerundive nouns *staying, going,* and *stopping* occur in the *do+NP* construction, despite the fact that their original verbs *stay, go* and *stop* do not belong to action; they are members of process. The data in (14) indicate that the semantic argument DO is not the factor that determines the type of noun d from a verb occurring in the construction.

Lastly, a question arises from Nakau's argument that *do* may represent the activity denoted by verbs of action when taking a concrete noun and an abstract noun in the construction. Why is it impossible to understand *do the book* as "read the book," and *do the piano* as "play the piano," although *read* and *play* are action verbs and *reading a book* and *playing the piano* are activities performed as part of daily life? The second issue is discussed in sections 4 and 5, and the third one in section 6.

3. Constructional Properties

3.1. *Focus on the Subject*

Two constructional properties may be found with *do+NP* constructions. One property is that the construction focuses on the subject's doing a given activity, as we have seen in (12), repeated as (15).

(15) a. *John killed yesterday.

     b. "No," said Brutus. "We must not do more killing than we need."

Another property is that the construction takes a certain thematic role as its subject. This property is discussed in detail in the following subsection.

3.2. *The Thematic Role of the Subject*

We have seen in section 1 that the verb *do* denotes an underspecified activity in the *do+NP* construction. From this, I assume that it shares some property with *do* used in other constructions in which this verb as well denotes an underspecified activity. One of those constructions is the *What X did was* ...construction. In the following, this construction is examined in detail.

3.2.1. Jackendoff (1990)

Jackendoff (p.126) argues that *What X did was* ...constructions includes *X* which can be labeled "Actor," following Culicover and Wilkins (1986) and Talmy (1985). First, look at the following examples:

(16) a. The sodium emitted electrons.

   b. Bill rolled down the hill.

   c. The sponge absorbed the water.　　　　　(Jackendoff (1990:126))

The sodium in (a), *Bill* in (b), and *the sponge* in (c) may be labeled differently with respect to a thematic tier which deals with motion and location; *the sodium* is "Source," *Bill* is "Theme," and *the sponge* "Goal" (*Ibid.*).

These nouns, however, may be labeled the same role by the test, the *What X did was*...construction. Consider:

(17) a. What the sodium did was emit electrons.

   b. What Bill did was roll down the hill.

   c. What the sponge did was absorb the water.　　　　　(*Ibid.*)

Jackendoff labels the common role in question Actor.[2]

Jackendoff (1990:127) notes that verbs such as *receive* take neither Actor nor what he calls "Patient" because they do not occur in the *What X did was* ... construction and the *What happened to X was* ...construction:

(18) a. *What Bill did was receive a letter.

   b. *What happened to Bill was receive a letter.

(Jakendoff labels Patient to *X* in the *What happened to X was*...construction.)

The argument presented by Jackendoff seen above is summarized as follows:

(19)　*Do* in the *What X did was* ... construction is compatible with the verbs that take an Actor.

3.2.2. Nakau (1994)

Nakau (1994:433-440) argues that *What X did was*...constructions are compatible with the verbs that belong to process or action in his classification of verbs:

(20) a. *What the machine did was be noisy.

   b. *What the United States apparently expects all smaller nations to do is be grateful for our intervention.

(21) a. What everyone would like the president to do is be frank with the press.

   b. What I did then was be as polite to Mary as possible.

(22) a. What the machine did was make noise.

   b. He did what he had always wanted to do: give up linguistics...

　　　　　(Nakau (1994:436))

Be in *be noisy* and in *be graceful* is a state verb, so it is ruled out of the *What X did*

was... construction, as in (20). In contrast, verbs of process and action are compatible with the construction. Thus, *be* in the examples in (21) is a process verb, since *frank* and *polite* are stage-level predicates which denote a temporary state, but not a permanent one, and *make* in (22a) and *give up* in (22b) are action verbs.[3]

Nakau gives a comment on process verbs such as *hear* and *receive,* which are not allowed in the *What X did was* ... construction:

(23) a. *What Fred did was hear about the accident.

b. *What Fred did was receive the letter. (Nakau (1994:439))

While *do* in the *What X did was* ...construction takes the subject which causes a situation, *receive* and *hear* takes the subject which experiences a situation. There, then, arises a conflict between the roles of the subjects.

The argument presented by Nakau seen above is summarized as follows:

(24) *Do* in the *What X did was* ... construction is compatible with the verbs of action and process, except for those process verbs which take the subject experiencing a situation.

3.2.3. *Actor*

Let us return to the *do+NP* construction. Since the verb *do* involved in this construction denotes an underspecified activity, it must share the property *do* in the *What X did was* ...construction bears. Thus, *do+NP* constructions are characterized as in (25), with Jackendoff's description seen in subsection 3.2.1:

(25) The verb *do* takes as its subject an Actor in the *do+NP* construction.

4. The Semantic Role of *DO*

In this section the semantic role of *do* is discussed in specifying the types of derived noun and gerundive noun compatible with *do+NP* constructions. I argue that *do* imposes two conditions on the specification of these two types of nouns: One condition must be met by the noun itself; and a second one by its original verb. The former is presented in subsection 4.2, and the latter in 4.1.

4.1. *Actor*

The semantic characteristic of *do* described in (25) imposes a condition on the original verb of a gerundive noun and that of a derived noun occurring in the *do+NP* construction. The condition is specified in (26):

(26) A derived noun and a gerundive noun must have their original verbs taking an Actor when in the *do+NP* construction.

A detailed discussion is given in section 5.

4.2. *Process Nominals*

Another condition has to do with what a gerundive noun and a derived noun

import. To begin with, let us look over two types of derived nouns proposed in Grimshaw (1990), for one of them is relevant to the present discussion.

4.2.1. Grimshaw (1990)

Grimshaw (1990:ch.3) argues that "complex event nominals," which name a process or an event," take arguments obligatorily, while other nominals, which "name the output of a process or an element associated with the process," do not take arguments (p.49). Grimshaw calls the former nominals "process nominals," and the latter "result nominals."[4]

To elaborate this distinction, Grimshaw provides the following examples:

(27) a. The assignment is to be satisfied.
    b. *The constant assignment is to be avoided..
    c. The constant assignment of unsolvable problems is to be avoided.
    d. We constantly assign *(unsolvable problems). (Grimshaw (1990:50))

(28) a. The examination/ exam was long/ on the table.
    b. The examination/*exam of the patients took a long time/*was on the table. (Grimshaw (1990:49))

In (27a) *assignment* is a result nominal, since it does not require arguments. The addition of *constant,* as in (27b), rules out the result reading, because *constant* cannot be construed as a modifier of *assignment* on its result reading, forcing its process reading. Thus, the argument structure of *assignment* must be fulfilled by adding, say, *of unsolvable problems,* as in (27c), just as the argument structure of the verb *assign* must be satisfied, as in (27d).

The phenomenon shown in (28) is explained in a similar way. In (28a) *examination* and *exam* are result nominals, whether abbreviated or not, since they do not require arguments. The examples in (28b) show that while the abbreviated form *exam* only has the result reading, the full form *examination* exclusively has the process reading when requiring arguments.

In addition to argument, Grimshaw provides two criteria which distinguish the process nominal and the result nominal: (i) Result nominals may occur predicatively, or with equational *be,* but process nominals do not; and (ii) result nominals can be modified by temporal possessives like *yesterday's* and *this semester's,* but process nominals cannot. Consider:

(29) a. That was the/an assignment.
    b. *That was the/an assignment of the problem. (Grimshaw (1990:55))

(30) a. This semester's assignment led to disaster.
    b. *This semester's constant assignment of unsolvable problems led to disaster. (Grimshaw (1990:57))

Since *assignment* in (29a), which does not take any argument, is a result nominal, it occurs predicatively, or with equational *be*. *Assignment* in (29b), which takes an argument, is a process nominal, so that it is not used predicatively.

The contrast shown in (30) indicates that *assignment* may be modified by a temporal possessive on its result reading, but not on its process reading.

4.2.2. A Proposal

A closer examination, however, reveals that Grimshaw's distinction between the process nominal and the result nominal seen above is not satisfactory. While the behavior of *assignment* observed in (27), (29) and (30) seems to be evidence for Grimshaw, some other nominals do not behave like *assignment* when taking arguments: They can occur predicatively and also allow temporal possessives to modify them. Consider:

(31) a. That was the/an examination of the patients.

    b. That was the announcement of his resignation.

    c. That was the denial of the accusation.

    d. That was the observation of comets.

(32) a. Yesterday's examination of the patients led to disappointment.

    b. Yesterday's announcement of John's resignation surprised everyone.

    c. Yesterday's denial of the accusation surprised them.

    d. Yesterday's observation of comets was unbelievable.

Given Grimshaw's distinction, the nouns in (31) and (32) are process nominals and result nominals as well: They are process nominals because they require arguments; and they are also result nominals because they occur with equational *be*, and allow the temporal possessive *yesterday's* to modify them.

Apart from Grimshaw, I argue that a result nominal, which represents the output of a process, may occur with equational *be*, or be used predicatively, and allow temporal possessives such as *yesterday's* as modifiers, whether it takes arguments or not, and that a process nominal, which represents a process, is not used predicatively, and does not occur with a temporal possessive, whether it takes arguments or not.

Thus, *assignment* is a result nominal when taking no argument, since it may occur with equational *be,* as in (29a), and be modified by a temporal possessive, as in (30a). *Assignment* is a process nominal when taking arguments, since it does not occur with equational *be*, as in (29b), nor can it be modified by a temporal possessive, as in (30b).

Examination, announcement, denial and *observation* in (31) and (32), in contrast, are result nominals when taking arguments, since they are used with equational *be*, and are modified by *yesterday's*.

The discussion above is summarized as follows:

(33) a. Derived nouns are understood on the result reading, or represent the output of a process if they may occur with equational *be*, and be modified by temporal possessives.

    b. Derived nouns are understood on the process reading, or represent a process if they are neither used predicatively, nor modified by temporal possessives.

Let us turn to *do+NP* constructions. I argue, on the basis of the discussion above, that the verb *do* requires a gerundive noun and a derived noun to bear the following property when occurring in the construction:

(34) Gerundive nouns and derived nouns must represent a process when they occur in the *do+NP* construction.

In the next section a detailed discussion is given on this condition.

5. Gerundive Nouns and Derived Nouns

I have proposed two conditions on selecting suitable gerundive nouns and derived nouns for the *do+NP* construction: (i) Gerundive nouns and derived nouns must have their original verbs taking an Actor; and (ii) they must represent a process. These conditions are substantiated in the following subsections. Let us begin with gerundive nouns.

5.1. Gerundive Nouns

Grimshaw (1990:49-50), following Lebeaux (1986), points out that gerundive nouns name a process without exception, since they neither occur with equational *be*, nor allow temporal possessives. Consider:

(35) a. *That was the shooting of rabbits.

    b. *Yesterday's shooting of rabbits is terrible.   (Grimshaw (1990:56))

Gerundive nouns are then possible candidates for the *do+NP* construction if their original verbs take an Actor. Consider the following examples:

(36) a. John did a lot of going to church when he was young.

    b. The train did a lot of stopping at small stations.

    c. John did some slipping on the ice.

(37) a. What John did when he was young was go to church.

    b. What the train did was stop at small stations.

    c. What John did was slip on the ice.

Going, stopping, and *slipping* occur in the construction, as in (36), because they are derived from verbs taking an Actor, as in (37).

In contrast, gerundive nouns such as *keeping, holding, and receiving* do not

appear in the construction, as in (38), because their original verbs do not take an Actor, as in (39).

(38) a. *John did a lot of keeping wild animals.

b. *She did a lot of holding the record for the backstroke.[5]

c. *John did a lot of receiving a letter from his mother.

(39) a. *What John did was keep wild animals.

b. *What she did was hold the record for the backstroke.

c. *What John did was receive a letter from his mother.

5.2. Derived Nouns

Let us shift our attention to derived nouns. As with gerundive nouns, this type of noun must satisfy the following conditions when in the *do+NP* construction:

(40) Derived nouns must represent a process and have their original verbs taking an Actor when in the *do+NP* construction.

In what follows, a detailed discussion is given.

5.2.1. Six Groups

Derived nouns may be classified into six groups with respect to argument and reading. The first group consists of derived nouns which only represent a process when they take arguments. The second group consists of derived nouns which are ambiguous between the process reading and the result reading when they take arguments. Derived nouns of the third group are ambiguous between the process reading and the result reading when they take no arguments. The fourth group is composed of derived nouns which only represent a process when taking no arguments. The fifth group is made up of derived nouns which only represent the output of a process when taking arguments. The sixth group is composed of derived nouns which only represent the output of a process when taking no arguments.

Of these groups, the fourth group seems to have no members, as far as I have investigated.

The first, second, and third groups are relevant to the *do+NP* construction, because they involve a process reading. The fifth and sixth groups are irrelevant to the construction, since they are only understood on the result reading. The six groups, except for the fourth, are discussed in this order in the following subsections.

5.2.2. The First Group

The first group consists of derived nouns which only represent a process when they take arguments. A process nominal is defined as neither occurring with equational *be*, nor with a temporal possessive. This definition is satisfied by derived nouns such as *assignment, creation*, and *production*. Consider:

(41) a. *That was the assignment of the problem.

b. *That was the creation of several million new jobs.

c. *That was the economical production of goods.

(42) a. *Yesterday's assignment of the problem led to disaster.

b. *Yesterday's creation of several million new jobs led to disaster.

c. *Yesterday's economical production of goods surprised everyone.

Assignment, creation, and *production* are also derived from verbs taking an Actor: Their original verbs *assign, create,* and *produce* may occur in the *What X did was...* construction. Consider:

(43) a. What he did was assign the problem.

b. What they did was create several million new jobs.

c. What he did was produce goods.

Thus, *assignment, creation,* and *production* appear in the *do+NP* construction when taking arguments:

(44) a. He did the assignment of the problem.

b. They did the creation of several million new jobs.

c. He did the economical production of goods.

Incidentally, derived nouns taking arguments can be treated in parallel with their original verbs in terms of telicity, as Grimshaw (1990:58) points out. Consider:

(45) a. The total destruction of the city in only two days appalled everyone.

b. *The total destruction of the city for two days appalled everyone.

c. The bombing destroyed the city in only two days/*for two days.

(Grimshaw (1990:58))

5.2.3. The Second Group

The second group consists of derived nouns which are ambiguous between the process reading and the result reading when requiring arguments. Take *examination* and *translation*, for example, which are derived from verbs taking an Actor:

(46) a. What John did yesterday was examine the patients.

b. What Mary did was translate the document into English.

When *examination* and *translation* are understood on their process reading, they may appear in the *do+NP* construction:

(47) a. John did the examination of the patients yesterday.

b. Mary did the translation of the document into English.

Examination and *translation* in (47) represent a process, referring to the actions of *examining* and *translating*, respectively.

When *examination* and *translation* are understood on their result reading, they may occur with equational *be*:

(48) a. That was the examination of the patients.

b. That was the translation of the document into English.

Examination and *translation* in (48) represent the output of a process, referring to a concrete object.

5.2.4.   The Third Group

The third group is composed of derived nouns which are ambiguous between the process reading and the result reading when they take no arguments.   Take *translation*, whose original verb, *translate*, takes an Actor, as in (46b), for example:

(49) a.   She did a translation.

b.   That was a translation.

(50) a.   She did simultaneous translation at the U.N.

b. *That was simultaneous translation.

Translation is ambiguous between the two readings since it occurs in the *do+NP* construction, as in (49a), and is also used predicatively, as in (49b).   The data in (50) show, however, that *translation* in *simultaneous translation* is only understood on its process reading, since it does not occur with equational *be*.

5.2.5.   The Fifth Group

The fifth group is composed of the derived nouns that only represent the output of a process when they take arguments.   Thus, *announcement, demonstration,* and *indication* are derived from verbs taking an Actor, as in (51), and exclusively represent the output of a process when they take arguments, as in (52):

(51) a.   What John did was announce his resignation.

b.   What they did was demonstrate their joy.

c.   What they did was indicate their joy.

(52) a.   That was the announcement of his resignation.

b.   That was their demonstration of their joy.

c.   That was the indication of their joy.

Since *announcement, demonstration,* and *indication* only meet one of the two conditions a derived noun must satisfy when in the *do+NP* construction, as seen above, they are ruled out of the construction when taking arguments:

(53) a. *John did the announcement of his resignation.

b. *They did the/a public demonstration of their joy.

c. *They did the/an indication of their joy.

5.2.6.   The Sixth Group

The sixth group is composed of the derived nouns that exclusively represent the output of a process when taking no arguments.   *Announcement* and *translation*, which are derived from verbs taking an Actor, as in (51a) and (46b), are used predicatively when they take no arguments:

(54) That was an announcement/examination.

Therefore, *announcement* and *translation* do not occur in the *do+NP* construction when taking no arguments:

(55) *John did an/the announcement/examination.

(*Announcement* is ruled out of the construction whether taking an argument or not.)

5.2.7. A Sequence of Actions

Note that derived nouns representing the output of a process would turn out to be process nominals in certain circumstances.   Look at the following examples:

(56) a.   She did the constant announcement of inaccurate results.

b.??She did the announcement of his resignation.

c.??She did the announcement of inaccurate results.

In (56a) adding *constant* to *announcement* changes the result reading inherent in *announcement* into the process reading: *Constant* forces *announcement* to be understood as a set of events with the help of the plural noun in the following *of*-phrase.   With *announcement* in (56b) and (56c), such a change in reading does not occur, resulting in the unacceptable *do+NP* constructions.

This difference in reading between *announcement* in (56a) and *announcement* in (56b) and (56c) is made clearer in (57):

(57) a. *That was the constant announcement of inaccurate results.

b.   That was the announcement of his resignation.

c.   That was the announcement of inaccurate results.

Announcement in (57a) does not occur with equational *be*, which indicates that the derived noun is a process nominal.   In (57b) and (57c) *announcement* is used predicatively, which shows that this derived noun is a result nominal.

The change of reading seen above may be found with result nominals in the plural form.   Consider:

(58) That was an appearance/stop.

(59) a.   She did hundreds of appearances a year on television.

b.   This train did hundreds of stops at small stations.

While *appearance* and *stop* have a result reading, as in (58), *appearances* and *stops* are understood on the process reading, as in (59): Repetition of the output of a process is captured as a sequence of actions, namely, a process.

6.   Concrete Nouns and Abstract Nouns

This section deals with the *do+NP* constructions where NP is headed by a concrete noun or an abstract noun, and *do* is understood depending on context through inference.   The *do+NP* construction including a concrete noun is henceforth called

the *do+NP* construction (I), and the *do+NP* construction including an abstract noun the *do+NP* construction (II).

We have seen in previous sections that the light verb *do* takes an Actor in the *do+NP* construction, and that this characteristic imposes a condition on specifying the types of derived noun and gerundive noun occurring in the construction.

The characteristic directly influences the interpretation of *do* in the *do+NP* construction (I) and in the *do+NP* construction (II) as well. The condition *do* imposes on its interpretation is specified as follows:

> (60) *Do* must be interpreted as representing the activity verbs taking an Actor
>
> denote when in *do+NP* constructions (I) and in *do+NP* constructions (II).

In what follows this condition is verified with some additional restrictions.

6.1. DO+NP *Constructions (I)*

Verbs taking an Actor seem to be possible substitutes for the *do* involved in *do+NP* constructions (I):

> (61) a. My father did the garden/living room/garden wall.
>
> b. Mary did the potatoes/carrots/meat/food.
>
> c. My mother did breakfast.

In these *do+NP* constructions (I) the interpretation of *do* is inferred from the context. In (a) *did the garden, did the living room* and *did the garden wall* can be respectively interpreted as "dug the garden," "cleaned the living room," and "painted the garden wall." In (b) *did* in *did the potatoes/carrots* may represent "peeled," and *did* in *did the meat/food* may be understood as "cooked." *Did breakfast* in (c) may be understood as "prepared breakfast." These substitutes for *did* all take an Actor.

The interpretation of *do* in *do+NP* constructions (I) seems to be restricted further. This *do* may not be semantically replaced by some verbs which take an Actor and could be most likely reasoned from context. Consider:

> (62) a. I did the book/the Washington Post.
>
> b. Mary did the piano/television/car.

Do in these examples cannot be understood as what is most likely inferable from the context. For example, in (62a) the most likely interpretation of *do* would be "read," since *reading a book/paper* is part of daily life. However, this is not the case.

Similarly with the other examples: *Did the piano* cannot be understood as "played the piano," though *playing the piano* appears to be a daily experience; and it is impossible to interpret *did television* as "watched television," and *did the car* as "bought the car," or "sold the car."

What is represented by *do* in the *do+NP* construction (I) seems to be limited to the actions of *affecting* and *producing*. Since this construction is used frequently in a

daily conversation, in particular in British English, such usage may limit the semantic relation between the underspecified activity *do* denotes and the following concrete object to physical relation, more specifically, physically affecting or producing that object. Thus, *I did the book/paper* may be understood as "I made the book/paper," but not as "I read the book/paper," and *Mary did the piano* may be understood as "Mary destroyed the piano," but not as "Mary played the piano."

The discussion in this subsection is summarized as follows:

(63) *Do* in the *do+NP* construction (I) is understood as either physically affecting or producing the NP involved.

6.2. DO+NP *Constructions (II)*

The *do+NP* construction (II) includes an abstract noun in object position, as is exemplified in (64):

(64) a. We did "Macbeth" in the first year.   (Nakau (1998:509)

  b. He did Macbeth admirably last night. (=(9b))

  c. She did economics at Harvard University. (=(4))

Macbeth in (64a) and (64b) and *economics* in (64c) are abstract nouns, since they have no referents in the world, only existing in our brain. It follows that such entities could not be affected or produced. *Do* in *do+NP* constructions (II) then may be understood as representing the activity verbs taking an Actor denote, except for those verbs which denote affecting or producing. Thus, *did* in (64a) may be understood as "studied" with the help of the rest of the sentence. Similarly, *did* in *did Macbeth* in (64b) may be interpreted as "performed" or "played." In (64c) *did* may well be understood as "studied," since economics is a branch of knowledge usually studied at university.

The discussion in this subsection is summarized as follows:

(65) *Do* in *do+NP* constructions (II) may be semantically replaced by the verbs that take an Actor, except for those which represent affecting or producing.

7. Concluding Remarks

The light verb *do* is not 'light' in semantics: It plays an important role in the light-verb construction. This study has shown that *do* is deeply involved in specifying the types of gerundive noun and derived noun compatible with the *do+NP* construction, and in determining the interpretation of the verb itself when accompanying a concrete noun and an abstract noun in the construction. It has also been shown that this light verb controls the entity eligible for the subject.

NOTES

[1] Nakau (1998:509) notes that Kempson (1977) is the first study dealing with the *do+NP* construction.

[2] The role of *X* in the *What X did was*...construction varies according to researchers.   Dowty (1986) and Nakau (1994) label it as *agent*.

[3] The terms *stage-level* and *individual level* were first introduced by Carlson (1978).

[4] The distinction between the result nominal and the process nominal is also dealt with in Anderson (1983-1984) and Lebeaux (1986).

[5] *Hold* in (i) takes an Actor since it occurs in the *What X did was*...construction, as in (ii).

    (i)   He held her sleeve.

    (ii)   What he did was hold her sleeve.

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