

Uses of anomalous finites

Anomalous finites are the only verbs in modern English which can form their negatives by the simple addition of not.

Compare:

He will come. He will not come.

He came. He did not come. (NOT He came not.)

Can I do it? No, you can't.

Should I take it? No, you shouldn't.

He took the medicine. He did not take the medicine. (NOT He took not the medicine.)

Anomalous finites are also the only verbs that can be used with the shortened form of not.

To form questions

A question is usually formed by putting the anomalous finite before the subject of the sentence.

He is a good singer. Is he a good singer?

They have won the race. Have they won the race?

The cat will kill the mouse. Will the cat kill the mouse?

If the affirmative sentence does not contain an anomalous finite, the auxiliary do and its forms are used to make questions.

He killed the spider. Did he kill the spider? (NOT Killed he the spider?)

They went to Beijing. Did they go to Beijing?

He fell off the ladder. Did he fall off the ladder?

They make good cheese. Do they make good cheese?

She likes ice cream. Does she like ice cream?

To form negative questions

The anomalous finites are also used to form negative questions.

He does not like it. Does he not like it? Doesn't he like it?

They do not eat meat. Do they not eat meat? Don't they eat meat?

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She did not touch it. Did she not touch it? Didn't she touch it?

Notes

The question 'Does he not like it?' is more formal than the question 'Doesn't he like it?'