

REVISITING ‘SA’ AND ‘O’ IN SRANAN TONGO.

Sranan employs two markers, *sa* and *o*, which both express some kind of futurity, but the precise nature of the difference between them has been difficult to pin down. Earlier studies such as Simons (1954) and Donicie (1954, 1955) claimed that *sa* and *o* were both primarily temporal in nature, but there were slight differences due to the kind of attitude speakers have toward the event. Other researchers such as Voorhoeve (1957, 1962) and Seuren (1981) treat *sa* as primarily modal, and *o* as primarily temporal, though they disagree on how far its meaning overlaps with that of *o*. Finally, Wendelaar and Koefed (1900) claim that *sa* expresses an uncertain future, while *o* expresses a certain future. They argue that *sa* is competing with *o* in two senses: first, the two are mutually substitutable, with slightly different meanings; second, *o* is gradually replacing *sa* in certain contexts. However, their analysis is not completely borne out by their data.

This paper employs data from historical texts, as well as examples and judgments elicited from five speakers of Sranan, to determine the precise nature of the differences in meaning and use between the two markers. I argue that the conflicting views on this issue can be reconciled if we take into account the different histories of *sa* and *o* in Sranan, and the differences in the ways they are used by older, more conservative speakers, as opposed to younger, less conservative speakers. Early Sranan texts reveal that *sa* was used as a general marker of futurity, while the combination of Progressive *e + go* was sometimes used to express a prospective future. When *e go* was grammaticalized into future marker *o*, *sa* came to assume a more modal character, largely due to influence from its Dutch source, *zal*. I argue that the traditional view that *sa* expresses uncertain future while *o* expresses certain future, is only partly correct, since *sa* covers a broad range of meanings associated with potential mood. On the other hand, *o* is primarily temporal in nature, expressing prediction.

The combination of historical developments and more recent changes in the use of *sa* under Dutch influence, reflected in the contemporary sociolinguistic distribution of the two markers, best explains the conflicting views of *sa* versus *o*, which both researchers and contemporary speakers of Sranan express.

References.

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