

The modal value of *ancora/angórə* in Barese and northern Apulian varieties*

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INTRODUCTION

This squib presents some aspects on the syntax and semantics of a particular instantiation of the adverb *angórə/ancora* in the dialect/regional Italian of Bari (South-eastern Italy).

Historically, *ancora* developed from the Latin adverbial periphrasis *HINC HAC HORA* ‘from then to the present hour’ (Rohlf 1969: 270) and was grammaticalised in standard Italian (henceforth SI) and, more generally, in Italo-Romance varieties (cf. also French *encore*: Vikner 1978: 93ff.; Catalan *encara*: Wheeler, Yates & Dols 1999: 228; Romanian *încă*: Vasile & Dinică 2013: 432) with a broad range of spatio-temporal and quantificational meanings (i.e. ‘still’, ‘not ... yet’, ‘again’ and ‘even’; cf. Section 2).

In the Barese dialect and regional Italian¹ (henceforth BRI), as well as in the dialects of the neighbouring provinces,² the SI-interpretations of *ancora* coexist alongside an additional modal value licensed in presuppositional contexts. Such a feature has gone unnoticed in the specialised literature, e.g. in Rohlf (1969), in which only the spatio-temporal and intensificational values are attested for Italo-Romance.

We will first briefly illustrate the interpretations of the adverb *ancora* in SI, which will be shown to perfectly overlap with the adverbial functions found in the Barese counterpart: for this reason, we will use the label SI-*ancora* for the adverbial item also in BRI. The functions of the SI-*ancora* will then be contrasted with the peculiar modal function this item presents in Barese (B-*angórə/ancora* henceforth). The syntactic and semantic behaviour of the latter suggests that a modal operator is encoded in this item, roughly paraphrasable as ‘it might be the case that (*p*)’, conveying ‘possibility’ only when occurring in clause-initial position. The strict distribution of the modal B-*angórə/ancora* leads us to hypothesise that one of its original instantiations (possibly the non-factual ‘not ... yet’) was desemanticised and reanalysed as a presuppositional *irrealis* discourse marker, lexicalising a posi-

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¹ For exposition purposes, we present the examples in Barese regional Italian.

² Taranto and Foggia in Apulia and Matera in Basilicata, including the border towns of Ariano Irpino and Grottole in eastern Campania.

tion in the left periphery of the Barese clause (cf. the similar Abruzzese ‘evidential’ complementiser *chi*; D’Alessandro & Di Felice 2015).

ANCORA IN SI

Tovena (1994: 232) discusses the different interpretations of *ancora* in SI by providing the following examples:

- (1) *Laura è ancora arrabbiata.*
Laura is still angry.
‘Laura is *still* angry.’ (temporal: durative)
- (2) *Laura suona ancora il preludio.*
Laura plays again the prelude.
‘Laura is playing the prelude *again*.’ (temporal: iterative)
- (3) *Daniele non è ancora arrivato.*
Daniel not is yet arrived.
‘Daniel hasn’t arrived *yet*.’ (temporal)
- (4) *La palla da tennis è ancora nel tuo campo.*
the tennis ball is still in your court
‘The tennis ball is *still* in your court.’ (spatial)
- (5) *Luisa è ancora più bella di Laura.*
Louise is even more beautiful than Laura
‘Louise is *even* more beautiful than Laura.’ (quantificational)

Examples (1) and (3) show the temporal/durative use of *ancora*, meaning ‘still’ in declarative contexts with positive polarity and ‘yet’ in negative contexts (Belletti 1990: 29); in example (2), *ancora* is used as a temporal expression of frequency, conveying an iterative interpretation of the event, i.e. ‘again’; example (4) relates to the spatial coordinates which *ancora* describes with respect to the event, i.e. ‘still (in a specific location)’; finally, example (5) shows that *ancora* can act as a quantificational intensifier in comparative contexts.

According to Tovena (1994), the English translations of *ancora* as ‘again’, ‘yet’, temporal and spatial ‘still’ and ‘even’ suggest its interpretative lexical ambiguity, typical of polyfunctional adverbs. In this respect, she argues for a single instantiation of *ancora*, whose apparent differences in meaning are derived from its ‘sensitivity to the context’, i.e. the various eventualities (Bach 1986) to which it applies.

Ancora also shows a fixed syntactic distribution in unmarked contexts: it always occurs post-verbally (yet higher than past participles in compound tenses), lexicalising a position in the IP-field (for details see Cinque 1999).

ANCORA/ANGÓRƏ IN BARESE REGIONAL ITALIAN/DIALECT

As remarked in the introduction, the Barese meanings of adverbial *ancora/angórə* perfectly overlap with SI-*ancora*, e.g. 1–5. However, beside these SI-canonical interpretations, *ancora/angórə* displays an additional property in Barese when occurring certain syntactic contexts, which does not emerge in SI. In this respect, von Fintel (2006) claims that ‘modality is a pervasive feature of natural language’, which may be encoded in the semantics of expressions without a clear modal exponent. This is the case of the B-*ancora/angórə*, whose original functions and meanings do not present links with a possible modal interpretation; nonetheless, this item carries a modal feature in a very specific syntactic context. In fact, B-*ancora/angórə* expresses the possibility that a certain action or event *might* happen only in clause-initial contexts, exemplified in (6) to (10) below in BRI:

- (6) *Stai attenzione al bambino, ancora cade.*
 stay.2SG.IMP attention to=the child B-ancora falls.3SG
 ‘Look after the child, he might fall.’
- (7) *Mi sono levato subito la camicia, ancora si sporcava.*
 self am removed immediately the shirt B-ancora self got dirty.3SG
 ‘I took off my shirt immediately, it might have gotten dirty.’
- (8) *(Ti vedo brutto:) ancora vuoi una camomilla?*
 You.ACC see.1sg bad B-ancora want.2sg a camomile
 ‘(You look sickly:) you might fancy some camomile tea?’
- (9) *Muoviti, ancora non arriviamo in tempo.*
 hurry up.2SG.IMP=yourself B-ancora not arrive.1pl in time
 ‘Hurry up, we might not arrive on time.’
- (10) *Oggi decido io cosa mangiamo, ancora⁴ non vuoi!*
 today decide.1sg. I what eat.1pl B-ancora not want.2sg
 Today I decide what to eat, no question about that!’

First of all, we observe that the distribution of B-*ancora* must be strictly clause-initial in order to license the modal interpretation ‘it *might* be the case that *p*(proposition)’. The (*p*) embedded under B-*ancora* are non-factual states, actions or events, i.e. they have not occurred yet, nor they will occur with any certainty. These *ancora*-sentences, in fact, accord with the notion of *irrealis*, which ‘portrays situations as purely within the realm of thought, knowable only through imagination’ (Mithun 1999: 173). The grammatical mood required in the B-*ancora*-sentences can only be the indicative,⁵ as observed in (6) to (10). Strikingly, the indicative is by definition the grammatical mood of *realis*, dealing with evidences and factual statements, whereas the interpretation of the B-*ancora*-construction above deals with non-factual states/actions/events which *might* happen following a certain presupposition. In (6) to (10), we note that the grammatical Mood of the verbs does not overtly mark *irrealis* modality (as in e.g. SI), suggesting that a modal feature must be encoded in the semantics of B-*ancora*. An alternative way of expressing the modal B-*ancora*-construction of example (6) in Barese dialect and BRI would indeed involve the selection of a non-factual mood, namely the pluperfect subjunctive of the modal verb ‘must’, i.e. [*dovere*+infinitive], as in (11a) (cf. (6) above).⁶ On the other hand, the SI equivalent to the B-*ancora*-construction would also require the conditional of the modal verb ‘can/may’, i.e. [*potere*+infinitive], as in (11a), or similar expressions, e.g. restructuring ‘risk to’ [*rischiare*+*di*+infinitive]. Both moods are prototypical markers of *irrealis* modality.

- (11) a. *Fai* *attenzione al* *bambino, potrebbe* *cadere.*
 make.2SG.IMP attention to=the child may.3SG.COND fall
- b. *Stai* *attenzione al* *bambino, dovesse* *cadere.*
 stay.2SG.IMP attention to=the child must.3SG.PST.SUBJ fall
- ‘Look after the child, he might fall’

One last remark concerns the temporal features connected with the B-*ancora*-construction: *passato remoto* (‘preterite’), *trapassato remoto* (‘remote pluperfect’), and the future tenses (simple and compound ones, used for non-factive utterances making predictions, but not statements) are consistently incompatible with this construction. Only present, imperfect and present perfect are the only Tenses licensed within the B-*ancora*-construction

SI-ANCORA VS. B-ANCORA IN BRI

In order to discern the two variants of SI- and B-*ancora*, we must compare and contrast the syntactic conditions under which the latter, but also both of them, may

⁴ This instance of B-*ancora* is a non-literal, fixed idiomatic expression, used to exclude the possibility of questioning the content/presupposition of the preceding sentence; it is perceived as though the speaker yields warning tone.

⁵ Note that Barese entirely lacks the present subjunctive.

⁶ The use of this [*dovere*+infinitive] is more common in southern Italy as the calque of the periphrasis [*avere*+(d)a+infinitive], in which past subjunctive is used to express the conditional, as the latter does not have any formal exponent in southern Italian dialects.

feliculously occur in BRI. For this purpose, the instances of SI-*ancora* presented in (1) to (5) will be rearranged in order to have both SI- and B-*ancora* co-occurring in the same sentence. B-*ancora* may, in fact, be ambiguous and yield a particular SI-reading, and vice-versa; hence, order permutations in the distribution of both items do alter their interpretation. We will also provide explicit context to the examples, highlighting the only circumstances under which the modal variant can appear and be interpreted accordingly.

- (12) *Laura is angry for some reason. Someone is going to approach her and I say: "That's not a good idea..."*

	<i>Ancora</i>	<i>Laura sta</i>	<i>ancora</i>	<i>arrabbiata</i>	<i>(ancora).</i>
i.	B- <i>ancora</i>	Laura stays	SI- <i>ancora</i>	angry	SI- <i>ancora</i>
ii.	SI- <i>ancora</i>		*B- <i>ancora</i>		*B- <i>ancora</i>

'... it might be the case that Laura is angry.'

- (13) *Laura is angry for some reason. Someone is going to approach her and I say: "That's not a good idea..."*

	<i>Ancora</i>	<i>Laura sta</i>	<i>ancora</i>	<i>arrabbiata</i>	<i>(ancora)</i>
i.	B- <i>ancora</i>	Laura stays	SI- <i>ancora</i>	angry	SI- <i>ancora</i>
ii.	SI- <i>ancora</i>		*B- <i>ancora</i>		*B- <i>ancora</i>

'... it might be the case that Laura is *still* angry.'

- (14) *I dislike the piece of music Laura was practising and I tell my friend: "Close the door please..."*

	<i>Ancora</i>	<i>Laura suona</i>	<i>ancora</i>	<i>il</i>	<i>preludio</i>	<i>(ancora)</i>
i.	B- <i>ancora</i>	Laura plays	SI- <i>ancora</i>	the	prelude	SI- <i>ancora</i>
ii.	SI- <i>ancora</i>		*B- <i>ancora</i>			*B- <i>ancora</i>

'... it might be that Laura plays the prelude *again*.'

- (15) *I am trying to call my friend Daniel but he does not pick up the phone. My friend suggests: "Wait a little before calling again..."*

	<i>Ancora</i>	<i>Daniele non è</i>	<i>ancora</i>	<i>arrivato</i>	<i>(ancora).</i>
i.	B- <i>ancora</i>	Daniel not is	SI- <i>ancora</i>	arrived	SI- <i>ancora</i>
ii.	SI- <i>ancora</i>		*B- <i>ancora</i>		*B- <i>ancora</i>

'... it might be that Daniel has not arrived *yet*.'

- (16) *I am playing tennis and it is my turn to serve. I cannot see the ball in my court and so I say to my partner: “Take a look around you...”*

Ancora la palla da tennis sta ancora nel campo tuo (ancora).

- i. B-ancora the tennis ball stay SI-ancora in court your SI-ancora
 ii. SI-ancora *B-ancora *B-ancora

‘... it might be that the tennis ball is *still* in your court.’

- (17) *I have to select models for a fashion company: I am already convinced by the picture of the first one, Luisa, but my assistant says: “Have a look at the second picture...”*

*Ancora Luisa è ancora più bella di Luisa *(ancora)*

- i. B-ancora Louise is SI-ancora more beautiful than Luisa *SI-ancora
 ii. *SI-ancora *B-ancora *B-ancora

‘... it might be that Louise is *even* more beautiful than Luisa.’

In the examples from (12) to (17), the co-occurrence of the independent form of the modal subordinator *B-ancora* and the adverbial *SI-ancora* is allowed and perfectly grammatical in BRI, provided that *SI-ancora* surfaces post-verbally (either in its original unmarked position within the nucleus of the sentence, or in sentence-final position in the right periphery, cf. Cinque 1999: 30). These facts suggest that, albeit homonymous/homophonous, these are functionally and interpretatively separate items lexicalising different syntactic positions. Obviously, the co-occurrence of more *SI-ancora* in the same clause is blocked. The only case in which ambiguity could arise between *SI-* and *B-ancora* can be seen in the pragmatically marked occurrence of the former in clause-initial position. In this respect, Cinque & Salvi (2001) claim that adverbs may only move to pragmatically salient positions to check discourse-oriented features, i.e. in constructions such as focalisation and topicalisation, accompanied by a particular intonational stress on this constituent. In fact, the clause-initial *SI-ancora* in (12ii) to (16ii) must sit in the left periphery of the clause and competes with the modal *B-ancora*, witness the fact that they could never co-occur in that same (peripheral) position. The only exception to this is found in (17), in which the *SI-ancora* can exclusively appear as a modifier/intensifier of the comparative expression, yet its co-occurrence with the *B-ancora* is perfectly grammatical.

The omission of the main clause (i.e. the overt non-selection of the *B-ancora*-clause) may occur, but is not frequent, as this provides the hearer with sufficient context in order for the *B-ancora* to be interpreted felicitously. This allows the Barese speaker to disambiguate between the instances of the fronted adverbial *SI-ancora* and the modal *B-ancora*.

THE CENTRALITY OF THE CONTEXT IN (UNSELECTED) B-ANCORA-CLAUSES

So far, we have observed that B-*ancora* only occurs when it is referring to an event, state or action that *might* take place in a “possible world” (Kratzer 1991), given a certain presupposition, and that its distribution is to heading an embedded clause. This section examines centrality of the context for the felicitous licensing of B-*ancora*-clauses. In a nutshell, the context must be expressed by the main clause selecting the B-*ancora*-clause, or it has to be clearly implicit within the conversational context. Furthermore, considering that B-*ancora* mainly occurs in informal dialogues, the types of main clauses that trigger the use of the modal *ancora* turn out to be mainly *recommendations, advice, orders, or observations*. The felicity of B-*ancora* relies on the speakers sharing the same common ground, which makes them able to understand the modal meaning of B-*ancora*. Somewhat paradoxically, these types of main clauses do not convey the crucial information which the speaker wants to convey: this is visible in example (6), renumbered here as (18):

- (18) *Stai attenzione al bambino, ancora cade.*
 stay.2SG.IMP attention to=the child B-ancora fall.3SG
 ‘Look after the child, he might fall.’

The intonation of the entire utterance rises at the beginning of the *ancora*-clause, signalling the information that the “child might fall” is immediately relevant in the discourse, rather than the content of the main clause. Crucially, the B-*ancora*-clause is the main point of the entire utterance as a whole, whereas the main clause provides the concrete conversational context for the whole scene setting to be understood. Consider the example in (19):

- (19) *Mi sono levato subito la camicia, ancora si sporcava.*
 self am removed immediately the shirt B-ancora self got dirty.3SG
 ‘I immediately took off my shirt, it might have gotten dirty.’

Once the context is mutually accessible by the interlocutors, the main clause may remain ‘silent’ and only the unselected *ancora*-sentence can be uttered:

- (20) *I go back home for dinner, wearing an expensive shirt. My partner comes out of the kitchen and notices that I am no longer wearing the shirt. She looks surprised at me, and I say:*
Ancora si sporcava!
 B-ancora self got dirty.3SG
 ‘It (i.e. the shirt) might have gotten dirty!’

The *ancora*-sentence is grammatical and felicitous in isolation, despite the omission of the main clause. This means that, as long as the context is clear to both

speakers, the modal meaning of *ancora* emerges. These observations reveal something of the illocutionary properties of B-*ancora* as advice or warnings, and require further investigation.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROPOSITION EMBEDDED UNDER B-ANCORA

Statements of the form MODAL(*p*) are typically infelicitous if the speaker knows the proposition (*p*) embedded under the modal is true or false. For example, if the speaker is looking outside on a rainy day and can clearly see the rain coming down, it would be infelicitous to then utter ‘it must be raining.’ This test can be applied to *ancora* in the following way: if a speaker uses a sentence of the form B-*ancora*(*p*) when they know *p* is true, we predict that *ancora* will lose its modal meaning in favour of the SI reading. However, if they do not know whether *p* is in fact true or not, the modal meaning of *ancora* should emerge. Consider this contrast in example (21):

(21) *My friend and I are chatting next to the window, while looking outside on a rainy day. He suddenly has to leave and I say:*

- a. #*Coprìti* *bene, ancora piove!*
cover.2SG.IMP=yourself well B-ancora rains
‘Wrap up well, it might rain.’
- b. *Coprìti* *bene, ANCORA piove!*
cover.2SG.IMP=yourself well SI-ancora rains
‘Wrap up well, it is STILL raining.’

Sentence (21a) is infelicitous, as the speaker has evidence that (*p*), i.e. ‘it is raining’, is true, and there would be no need to use any weak or strong modal-featured item. By contrast, example (21b) is felicitous in this context, albeit pragmatically marked: *ancora* would assume its conventional meaning whereby the speaker is simply expressing a temporal notion: it was raining before, and *still* is. However, the focalisation of SI-*ancora* in (21b) would sound more appropriate in an interrogative or exclamative contexts, even though it would sound somewhat unnatural, for there is no explicit coordination between the two main clauses and the SI-*ancora*-clause would be uttered too abruptly. The felicitous and true variant of this sentence is *coprìti bene, (che) piove* ‘wrap up well, it is raining’, with a declarative form of the clause.

B-ANCORA IN EMBEDDED, NEGATIVE AND INTERROGATIVE CONTEXTS

The ‘embeddability’ test determines whether *ancora* can be syntactically embedded into a secondary clause. As previously mentioned, B-*ancora* itself functions as a subordinator, hence we predict the impossibility of *ancora* to be further embedded.

We demonstrate this hypothesis by means of a logic implication, accompanied by an explicit context:

- (22) *My friend and I would go for a walk only if it is sunny outside. However, we cannot check whether it is sunny or not at this very moment:*

*Se *ancora sta il sole, allora usciamo.*
if *B-ancora stays the sun then go out.1PL

*‘If it might be sunny outside, then we’ll go out.’

As expected, the embedding of B-*ancora* leads to ungrammaticality, as it cannot be treated as a simple adverb (as it is in SI), but rather as a functional operator encoding modal features. Therefore, the SI-reading of *ancora* is forced in (22), yielding (23) as the only possible grammatical option:

- (23) *Se (ancora) sta (ancora) il sole, allora usciamo.*
if SI-ancora stays SI-ancora the sun then go out.1PL

‘If it is still sunny outside, then we’ll go out.’

Note, again, that the pre-verbal position of the SI-*ancora* in (23) is pragmatically marked, whereas the post-verbal one is not.

The last two tests concern the matter of whether B-*ancora* can be negated or used in interrogative contexts. The former test turns out to be impossible, as the only element that can be negated is the entire proposition, rather than the operator/subordinator, as showed in (22).

- (24) *Non vado a mare, ancora non (*ancora) sta il sole.*
not go.I to sea B-ancora not *B-ancora stays the sun

‘I won’t go to the seaside, it might not be sunny.’

This indeed suggests that B-*ancora* sits higher than negation, which can indeed negate (*p*), but not the modal operator, which we argue to be merged in the CP-layer of the Barese clause, above negation (cf. Zanuttini 1997).

On the other hand, B-*ancora* is perfectly grammatical in interrogative contexts. One example in interrogative contexts was already provided in Section 3, i.e. example (8) with a volitional verb, and (25) provides a further example with the relative context:

- (25) *Two friends have been waiting for a parcel to be delivered. Suddenly, the doorbell rings and one asks the other to open the door, wondering:*

Ancora è il postino?
B-ancora is the postman

‘Might it be the postman?’

These test showed that B-*ancora* is allowed in interrogative contexts, but its negation cannot take place if the configuration is the following: $\neg f(p)$; the only suitable option is $f\neg(p)$, that is, negating the proposition rather than the modal operator.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH GOALS: IN WHAT TYPE OF MODAL CONTEXT CAN B-ANCORA OCCUR?

According to [Nauze \(2009: 317\)](#), in languages such as English and Italian, '[m]odals are construed as neutral propositional operators with a specific force, contextually dependent on an intensional context that fixes their interpretation as epistemic, deontic or circumstantial'. In other words, modals have two general semantic facets: one is to lexically encode modal 'necessity' and 'possibility', which correspond to propositional operators such as the modal auxiliaries *must* and *might* in English. The second one has to do with the context, which determines the meaning of modals. Contexts can be divided into two subcategories: EPISTEMIC contexts, on one hand, and ROOT contexts, on the other. Epistemic contexts represent the speaker's assertion of 'possibility or necessity relative to some state of knowledge' ([Brennan 1993: 1](#)): it reflects the speaker's judgment of the likelihood of the truth-value of the utterance. Root modality is further subdivided into deontic, circumstantial, bouletic and teleological types. Whereas epistemic contexts involve knowledge internal to the speaker, root modality involves knowledge that is external to the speaker. Deontic modality involves sets of rules and laws, expressing what is required or allowed by some normative system. Circumstantial modality also deals with what is possible or necessary, though it is dictated by circumstances of a certain kind which are not merely depending on the speaker's knowledge/subjective opinion, unlike what it is found in epistemic modality. Bouletic modality contexts are used to express wishes, hopes and fears. Teleological ones, lastly, have to do with directions and goals.

Having established that B-*ancora* encodes a weaker type of modality, namely 'possibility', with a specific distribution, further research should be carried out in order to define the type of modal context of occurrence of B-*ancora* and to provide a systematic analysis.

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