

The context sensitivity of the Italian adverb *ancora*

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appeared in *Proceedings of ConSole 3*, Rijks Universiteit Leiden, 1994, 231-246

Ancora is used in contexts where English uses ‘still’, ‘again’ and ‘yet’. In this study, *ancora* is viewed as a single operator sensitive to the characteristics of the instantiators of its arguments. The range of uses is shown to involve one adverb with the same core meaning. A unified analysis exploiting the mutually constraining effects of a reduced set of factors is proposed. The labelling of subsets of uses of *ancora* as negative or affirmative polarity items in the traditional sense is rejected. A revision of the role of negation in polarity sensitivity, and overall of the notion of sensitivity is discussed. The new notion is defined in terms of capacity of taking into account the characteristics of the context and of interacting with operators of compatible type.

1. Introduction

The analysis of the Italian adverb *ancora* presented in this study is part of a research on the semantics of items considered of negative polarity. The underlying conviction is that the phenomenon of polarity sensitivity has less to do with licensing and more with sensitivity than what is said in the literature. The study opens with some data that illustrate the variety of uses exhibited by *ancora*. Then, a unified analysis of *ancora* as a binary operator is presented. Its basic meaning is identified and formalised as a mapping of the first argument by means of the information provided by the second one, and an effect of continuance. The mapping allows the possibility of drawing a distinction between the distribution of *ancora* in positive and negative contexts. Subsequently, the details of the proposal are worked out on more data. The semantic load is spread between *ancora* and its arguments, to obtain an analysis which captures how the wide variety of semantics of *ancora*-phrases stems from the variety of the semantics of its arguments. It is shown that the continuance effect produced by *ancora* gets realised in different

ways according to the entities to which it applies. The extension of the analysis of temporal *ancora* to spatial and scalar uses is straightforward because of the formalisation in terms of partial order which underlies the whole approach.

- (1) Laura è ancora arrabbiata.
 Laura is ANCORA angry
 ‘Laura is still angry’
- (2) Laura suona ancora il preludio.
 Laura plays ANCORA the prelude
 ‘Laura is playing the prelude again’
- (3) Daniele non è ancora arrivato.
 Daniel not is ANCORA arrived
 ‘Daniel hasn’t arrived yet’
- (4) Il volano è ancora nel tuo campo.
 the shuttle is ANCORA in the your court
 ‘The shuttle is still in your court’
- (5) Luisa è ancora più bella di Laura.
 Louise is ANCORA more beautiful than Laura
 ‘Louise is even more beautiful than Laura’

Examples (1) to (5) present a selection of possible uses of *ancora*. A comparison with their respective English translations ‘still’, ‘again’, ‘yet’, temporal and spatial ‘still’ and ‘even’ might give the impression that *ancora* is a polyfunctional adverb. An analysis in terms of polyfunctionality would imply the assumption of lexical ambiguity of the item. The resulting assumption of homography would require an explanation. On the other hand, most of the literature on negative polarity could be quoted in support of the classification of *still* and *yet* respectively as polarity positive and negative sensitive items, see for instance (Linebarger 1980). Were the same classification to be extended to Italian, certain occurrences of *ancora* should be labelled of negative polarity (Belletti 1990:29), others of positive polarity or neither, thereby splitting the item into a constellation of elements. Although one may argue for the merits of this practice, its use in the case of *ancora* is problematic, because not two, but many different items should be postulated. Comparative and diachronic considerations cast doubts on a fragmentary analysis of *ancora*. On the one hand, the existence of a similar variety of meanings in other Romance languages, e.g. the French adverb *encore* (Victorri and Fuchs 1992) and the Brazilian *ainda*, suggests a systematicity underlying its uses. On the other, Old English shows a similar cluster of uses for *yet*, namely the ‘already’, ‘still’, ‘again’ and scalar readings, which have subsequently been lost in an increasing specialisation of use of the item, look at the entry in the OED. This study discounts the hypothesis of lexical ambiguity on semantic grounds. The seeming differences in meaning of the adverb are derived from its sensitivity to the context, i.e. the various

eventualities (Bach 1986) to which it applies, and to the presence of negation. The notion of sensitivity adopted in this study is defined in terms of capacity of taking into account the characteristics of the instantiators of the arguments, and of interacting with operators of a compatible type (Tovena 1994). The connection between these two points is established through the notion of compositionality. Two features of the research on polarity are particularly relevant for the discussion that follows. The first one is that the literature (see Ladusaw 1979, Linebarger 1980), or even work as recent as (Krifka 1994), offers no direct definition of negative polarity items NPI. The standard procedure is to characterise the items by means of a description of what constitutes the ‘polar type’ behaviour according to the approach adopted. The second feature is that it is usually taken for granted that the vast majority of NPI are lexically ambiguous expressions. To the best of our knowledge, the reasons for such a ‘schizophrenic’ behaviour are not explained. The conviction of the existence of such a split fits the standard approach to negative polarity, which accounts for the variation in meaning of the item in terms of satisfaction or non-satisfaction of licensing conditions, whereas the reverse is not so certain. There is no perfect prediction of the distribution of the readings. For instance, questions are environments where *any* can occur both with licensed polarity sensitive reading and unlicensed free choice reading (Lakoff 1969).

2. The basic schema

Ancora is a binary operator, that can be schematically represented as ANCORA (A,B). Argument A is overt, and it is instantiated by a proposition. Argument B is covert and contains an identifier, an eventuality identifier in the common temporal use. This use is exemplified in (1), where Laura’s being angry is the instantiation of argument A. Argument B is instantiated with information coming from the verb, namely that the state holds at the present moment. Similarly, in example (2), the event of Laura’s playing the prelude instantiates argument A, and an identifier of the present interval instantiates argument B. Figure 1 contains the schema representing pictorially the semantic content of the operator. The space from

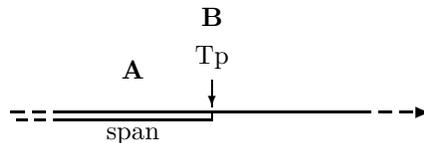


Figure 1: The basic schema

which the operator carves out the area where it will map the en-

tity contained in A is represented by a directed line. ‘Tp’ is the transition point that marks the end of the area, and ‘span’ the interval onto which the operator focuses. The information contained in B makes it possible to identify the transition point, which partitions the space into two parts. The left boundary of the span is unspecified. The notion of span has been introduced to represent the effect of continuance expressed by *ancora*. For instance, sentence (1) does not assert only that Laura’s being angry holds at the interval identified by B, but also that it was holding at some prior interval. Similarly, in (2), Laura plays the prelude now and played it at some other time in the past too. These two facets of the meaning of *ancora*, that is mapping and continuance, are responsible for different effects. The terms of ‘transition point’ and ‘span’ have been selected with the aim of covering both the cases of temporal and spatial use of the operator, without biasing in either direction. The schema in Figure 1 allows us the possibility of representing the different uses of *ancora* without requiring its fragmentation into several items. König and Traugott (1982) have characterised the divergence of *still* and *yet* by means of the different distribution of the two properties of ‘instantiation prior to some reference point’ and ‘imminent change’. Our analysis makes it possible to identify these characteristics in the *ancora*-phrases, in parallel with the English cases, without attributing contrasting properties to the item *ancora*.

The facet of the meaning of *ancora* that gives rise to an effect of continuance corresponds to the property of ‘instantiation prior to some reference point’ identified by König and Traugott. It is responsible for the sensitivity of *ancora* to the characteristics of the instantiators of A. Both the semantics of the verb and the verbal form have an impact on the semantics of the *ancora*-phrases. In case of an eventuality with a poorly defined termination point, continuance means extension of the same eventuality over time, because the transition between current and immediately preceding intervals is undistinguishable. Considering a state, *ancora* asserts that the eventuality e_i holds at interval t_i , identified via B, and e_j holds at t_j , where t_j precedes t_i , and e_i and e_j are of the same type, i.e. same aspect and same participants, see the discussion of examples (9)–(11) in section 3. Strict identity between e_i and e_j follows from the fact that the duration of a state can be extended without affecting its homogeneous internal structure, or rather the state can be asserted to hold over a longer interval. The immediate precedence of the intervals follows from the impossibility of identifying the boundaries of the state. From the crucial role played by the right boundary it follows also that atelic events pair with states.

In case of an eventuality with a well defined termination point, continuance means its repetition over a previous interval. When A is instantiated by an event, a sentence containing *ancora* asserts that

the eventuality e_i holds at interval t_i , identified via B, and e_j holds at t_j , where t_j precedes t_i , and e_i and e_j are of the same type. The presence of a well defined termination point is incompatible with a merge between events e_i and e_j . Whether repetition is simple iteration of the same event, or there is also an alteration of a participant between the two occurrences, depends on the type of event, see the discussion of examples (12)–(14) in section 4. Pragmatic considerations determine constraints on the distance between the two intervals. The use of the span in Fig.1 represents a long perspective towards preceding intervals, and captures the concept of continuance for any eventuality. Furthermore, it expresses that continuance holds in the interval moving backwards from the transition point, and not beyond it. The relevance of this remark is apparent when *ancora* occurs in negative context.

When *ancora* occurs in positive contexts, the eventuality instantiating argument A is mapped inside the span, a situation depicted in Figure 2, where the shaded area represents the eventuality. This situation is called direct mapping.

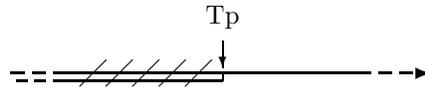


Figure 2: DIRECT MAPPING

In negative contexts, the situation is slightly more complicated, because negation can interact with *ancora* in various ways. Negation can take the whole sentence in its scope, and alter the truth value of the proposition, as expressed by the formula $\neg \text{ANCORA}(A,B)$. In this case, the negation is interpreted as applying to the function, and the result of its application is the negation of the function, i.e. the modification of the truth values of the proposition. This case is equivalent to the formula $\neg \exists x, y \text{ANCORA}(x, y) \wedge x = A \wedge y = B$, i.e. the relation expressed by *ancora* does not hold for the pair of arguments A and B. Instances of this configuration are given in (6), where negation negates the truthfulness of the proposition. The falsity of the relation may ensue from the eventuality in A not holding at the interval identified by B, see (6a), its not holding at a previous interval, see (6b), or its not holding at either intervals, see (6c).

- (6) a. Laura NON HA protestato ancora, ha solo
 Laura not has protested ANCORA has just
 fatto conoscere le sue ragioni.
 made known her reasons
 ‘Laura has NOT protested again, she has just mani-
 fested her reasons’
- b. Laura NON HA rovesciato ancora
 Laura not has knocked over ANCORA

il bicchiere, perché non era mai successo.
 the glass because not was never happened
 ‘Laura has NOT knocked over the glass again, because it had never happened before’

- c. Laura NON HA mangiato ancora la carne, è
 Laura not has eaten ANCORA the meat is
 una vegetariana convinta.
 a vegetarian convinced
 ‘Laura has NOT eaten meat again, she is a true vegetarian’

A negative sentence containing *ancora* can also be interpreted as if negation applies to one of the arguments of *ancora*, and not to the whole relation. It may mean, for instance, that there is a certain B and a relation ANCORA holding for it, but not for B in pair with A. This situation may be expressed by the formula $\forall x \text{ ANCORA}(x, B) \Rightarrow x \neq A$. In this case, the negation has scope only over argument A. This is a marked case. We will come back to it in section 5, where supporting linguistic data will be provided, see example (34). On the other hand, the presence of negation cannot mean that the relation ANCORA holds for A but not for the pairs A and B, as said in the formula $\forall y \text{ ANCORA}(A, y) \Rightarrow y \neq B$, because negation cannot have scope only over the covert element instantiating B, and also because their types are incompatible. In fact, if the identifier is negated, so is the sentence that expresses it. It cannot be set to false *per se*, but only for the use *ancora* makes of it, which is to say that the function is set to false.

There is another interpretation, not easily represented in first order-style, which turns out to be very common. In this case, negation applies only to the functor *ancora*, before the arguments are instantiated. The result of the application of negation to *ancora* produces the modification of meaning seen in (3). More precisely, the ordering information contained in *ancora* is modified, that is the facet of meaning compatible with the function of complementation or scale reverser, the traditional characterisation of negation. As a result, the entity is mapped in the complement of the span, i.e. beyond the transition point. This case is called indirect mapping precisely because the position where the entity instantiating A is mapped has to be computed via the evaluation of the interaction of the two operators, and is not defined directly by *ancora* itself. This situation is depicted in Figure 3.

We believe that ‘imminent change’ is not a property of the item, characterising only *yet* (König and Traugott 1982:171), but an epiphenomenon of the type of mapping due to the interaction between the item and negation. Hence, it may be said to characterise *ancora*-phrases, but not occurrences of *ancora* itself. A comparison between Figures 2 and 3 reveals immediately why only the latter use of *an-*

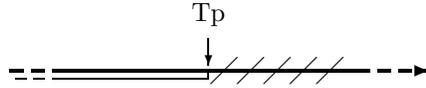
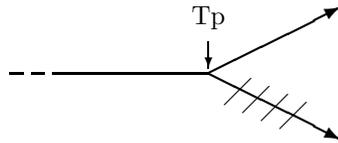


Figure 3: INDIRECT MAPPING

cora is associated with the expectation. There is certitude that the situation will differ from the preceding one only when the eventuality is mapped in the interval subsequent to the transition point.

Finally, Figure 1 allows us the possibility of discussing another issue. Although there are strong expectations for Tom’s reading that book, a sentence like (7) cannot be considered as asserting that Tom will definitely read that book in the future. Both continuations presented in (8) are possible. There is no need to invoke cancellable inferences. The interpretation of (7) as a case of indirect mapping tells us that the event of Tom’s reading that book is to be mapped in the interval following the transition point. The conventional representation of time is a semi-tree like structure $\langle T, < \rangle$, not branching to the past (Landman 1991). The schema used here is just a simplification of the conventional representation. On the partial order $\langle T, < \rangle$, the span can be defined as an interval, because it is a subset of some branch b in $\langle T, < \rangle$, and it is convex in b , i.e. it is uninterrupted. The variation presented in (8) can be accounted for by considering that the situation after the transition point may evolve in the future in different ways, and either of the branches of Figure 4 can become the ‘real’ one, but not both of them. In other words, the contribution of *ancora* to the sentence consists in the mapping of the eventuality on an interval subsequent to the span individuated by argument B, but there are no guarantees on this interval belonging to the actual time axis, nor conditions on its proximity.

Figure 4: The interpretation of *ancora* in negated sentence

- (7) Tom non aveva ancora letto il libro.
 Tom not had ANCORA read the book
 ‘Tom had not read the book yet’
- (8) a. Tom non aveva ancora letto il libro, e
 Tom not had ANCORA read the book and
 mai lo lesse in seguito.
 never it-ACC read afterwards
 ‘Tom had not read the book yet and he never did’

- b. Tom non aveva ancora letto il libro, ma
 Tom not had ANCORA read the book but
 lo fece poco dopo.
 it-ACC did shortly afterwards
 ‘Tom had not read the book yet, but he did so shortly
 afterwards’

3. The ‘still’ reading

States are eventualities which have no temporal boundaries described (Smith 1991). As a consequence of the absence of a well defined termination point, the effect of continuance brought about by *ancora* translates into uninterrupted continuation of the state, and *ancora* has the reading ‘still’, see (9) and (10). For this purpose, the differences between states and progressive are irrelevant, because the progressive removes the boundaries and makes an event to be similar to a state (Vlach 1981), see (11). The existence of a secondary reading for (9)–(11), of the type ‘again’, is to be ascribed to the possibility of giving eventive readings to states.

- (9) Sono ancora stanca.
 am ANCORA tired
 ‘I am still tired’
- (10) Daniele risiede ancora a Verona.
 Daniel resides ANCORA at Verona
 ‘Daniel still resides in Verona’
- (11) Stiamo ancora vedendo il film.
 are ANCORA watching the film
 ‘We are still watching the film’

4. The reading ‘again / one more / more’

Whenever both endpoints of the eventuality are described, as in the case of processes or achievements (Smith 1991), the continuance effect translates into repetition. The idea that *ancora* does not carry with itself selectional restrictions on its arguments, rather it interacts with the peculiarities of the entities with which it combines, provides an easy explanation for the meaning variation presented in this section. For an event to be repeated, the existence of the possibility of repetition is crucial. Hence, it is necessary to distinguish between ‘unique’ and ‘non-unique’ events (Krifka 1987). Unique events, e.g. ‘eat the soup’, cannot be iterated. Non-unique events, e.g. ‘boil the soup’, can be iterated. Furthermore, one has to consider whether any of the participants created or destroyed during the event can be replaced freely, or there are constraints, due to the different referential properties of definite and indefinite NP. Strictly speaking, the notion of uniqueness or non-uniqueness

relevant for this study is composed by the semantics of the verb and that of its complements. The two factors, non-unique/unique event and non-specific/specific NP, give rise to four basic combinations, exemplified in (12) and (13). Continuance results in reduplication in the case where *ancora* applies to a non-unique event. When the non specificity of an NP allows the alteration of one participant, this possibility is highlighted by the reading ‘one more’ or ‘another’, see (12a). Whereas, continuance results in iteration in the case of a non-unique event with no change of participants, see the reading ‘again’ in (12b). The potential but not necessary alteration of the participant *una lettera*, due to the ambiguity between specific and non-specific readings of the indefinite, results in the availability of the reading ‘again’ too in (12a). In the case of a unique event, if it is possible to reinstantiate an argument position of the predicate, i.e. to replace one participant with another of the same type, the sentence is grammatical, see (13a). Whereas, if this is not possible, because the NP denotes a token, the status of the sentence deteriorates considerably, see (13b). Speakers who accept (13b), do so only with the same interpretation of (14a). The grammaticality of the sentence is recovered by overt indication of the repetition of the event, see (14b).

- (12) a. Lesse ancora una lettera.
 read ANCORA a lettera
 ‘S/he read one more letter’
 b. Lesse ancora la lettera.
 read ANCORA the letter
 ‘S/he read the letter again’
- (13) a. Scrisse ancora una lettera.
 wrote ANCORA a lettera
 ‘S/he wrote one more letter’
 b. ?*Scrisse ancora la lettera.
 wrote ANCORA the letter
- (14) a. Riscrisse la lettera.
 re-wrote the letter
 ‘S/he wrote the letter again’
 b. Scrisse ancora una volta/di nuovo la lettera.
 wrote ANCORA one time/of new the letter
 ‘S/he wrote the letter one more time’

Then, a few more cases are to be considered. We start from the cases when a definite NP is coerced into a ‘type’ reading, when a completely new participant is introduced, or when the NP is a mass. In the first case, coercion causes the reading ‘again’, because there is no alteration of the type of participant, and disregarding the instances or tokens of the type transforms a unique into a non-unique event, see (15a). In (15b), the NP *la fetta* works as a unit of measure, and as such cannot be converted into a type. In the second

case, the new participant is introduced explicitly, in a coordinate structure, and usually the content remaining constant is elided, see (16). In the third case, either the mass noun is sorted, and the ‘type’ reading is produced, hence the interpretation as non-unique event, or it is interpreted as denoting a discrete entity, and there is change of participant, however with a trivially different reinstantiation, thence the reading ‘more’ and the impossibility of the reading ‘another’, see (17).

- (15) a. Mangiò ancora la zuppa (e non il riso).
ate ANCORA the soup (and not the rice)
‘S/he ate soup again (and not rice)’
b. ?*Mangiò ancora la fetta di torta.
ate ANCORA the slice of cake
- (16) Luisa è una grande benefattrice: costruì un ospedale
Louise is a great benefactress built a hospital
nel 1970, e ancora una casa di riposo
in the 1970 and ANCORA a nursing home
nel 1975.
in the 1975
‘Louise is a great benefactress: she built a hospital in 1970,
and also a nursing home in 1975’
- (17) Ha mangiato ancora polenta.
has eaten ANCORA polenta
‘S/he has eaten polenta again’
‘S/he has eaten more polenta’

Bare plurals constitute participants that can be freely replaced, hence the iteration and the atelicity of the event. There is a plurality of events, see (18). However, since the iteration is composed of discrete entities, no constraint of immediate precedence between the intervals can be considered. As expected, the reading is ‘again’ with a definite plural NP, see (19). The data in (20) provide further support to the proposal that atelicity, see (20a), and telicity, see (20b), affect the interpretation of *ancora*.

- (18) a. Luisa ha scritto ancora romanzi.
Louise has written ANCORA novels
‘Louise still wrote novels’
b. Luisa ha letto ancora romanzi.
Louise has read ANCORA novels
‘Louise still read novels’
- (19) Luisa lesse ancora i romanzi.
Louise read ANCORA the novels
‘Louise read the novels again’
- (20) a. Nuvolari corse ancora.
Nuvolari run ANCORA
‘Nuvolari went on racing’

- b. Nuvolari corse ancora la Millemiglia.
 Nuvolari run ANCORA the Millemiglia
 ‘Nuvolari raced again in the Millemiglia’

Summing up, the treatment of *ancora* as a mapping operator allows us the possibility of explaining the reading variation between positive and negative contexts. The application of negation to the compatible part of the semantics of *ancora* results in variations of the use of the adverb, captured in different representations. The identification of the effect of continuance introduced by *ancora* allowed us the possibility of accounting for the relevance of the type of eventuality in the variation of uses, and in the range of uses available. More precisely, the relevance of the degree of definition of the right boundary of eventualities has been explained.

5. Constraints on positioning

The positioning of *ancora* in the sentence also gives an indication of the type of continuance in question. In this section, we review the different uses and we relate them to the positionings that make them available. The reading ‘still’ needs *ancora* to occur after the verbal form whenever this is simple, see (21), or between the auxiliary and the past participle with composite forms, see (22), in order to be available. The hypothesis we formulate to explain this distribution is that the preferred positioning close to the element that bears the aspectual information may be due to the fact that in the ‘still’ reading *ancora* affects the eventuality from inside, i.e. it asserts the extension of its duration. In the ‘still’ reading, the participants are not modified, as predicted by the strict identity between e_i and e_j . This semantic relation would translate in syntactic terms by a connection between *ancora* and the aspect of INFL. This ‘internal’ modification should be contrasted with an ‘external’ one, like in the case of the ‘again’ reading, where the whole eventuality is reduplicated. While the former modification involves only a relation with the aspect of the predicate, the latter involves a relation with its complements as well.

- (21) a. Ti amo ancora.
 you-ACC love ANCORA
 ‘I still love you’
 b. Risiedeva ancora in Veneto.
 resided ANCORA in Veneto
 ‘S/he was still settled in Veneto’
- (22) Sono ancora situate in Veneto.
 are ANCORA located in Veneto
 ‘They are still located in Veneto’

- (23) Sono situata ancora in Veneto.
are located ANCORA in Veneto
'They are located still in Veneto'
- (24) a. Sei ancora felice.
are ANCORA happy
'You are still happy'
- b. *Sei felice ancora
are happy ANCORA
- (25) *Sei ancora arrivato.
are ANCORA arrived
- (26) Stai ancora arrivando.
are ANCORA arriving
'You are still in the process of arriving'

The requirement of proximity with the element carrying aspectual information is confirmed by the contrast between (22) and (23), where the former has temporal and spatial readings, and the latter has only the spatial one, or the contrast in (24), where it is shown that *ancora* must occur before the predicative adjective for the sentence to be grammatical. However, interaction does not mean that *ancora* by itself can produce aspectual type coercion, of the type described in (Moens and Steedman 1988), see (25). A progressive auxiliary is required, see *stai* instead of *sei* in (26). Finally, the existence of a reading 'again' for (21a) is due to the Italian present indicative having habitual and progressive readings.

Some considerations are in order for example (18), where *ancora* has the 'still' reading while occurring after the whole verbal form. The reason for this 'exceptional combination' of position and use is to be found in the fact that the poorly defined termination point of the complex eventuality is not due to the semantics of the verb, nor of the verbal form, but to the unbounded iteration of discrete entities brought about by the bare plural *romanzi* in direct object position. The result of the application of *ancora* is a continuation of the same complex eventuality. Therefore, it is difficult to check the constraint of immediate precedence on intervals t_i and t_j , because they contain sequences of discrete entities.

In general, the readings 'again' and 'one more' are associated with the positioning of *ancora* in post verbal position. After a simple verbal form, the choice between 'still' and 'again' depends on the aspect of the verb, whilst there is a strong preference for 'again' after a complex one. This use is interpreted as a case of 'external' modification of the event, whose duration is unchanged, but whose occurrence is repeated, see (27). The aspectual information expressed by the verbal morphology does not seem to be accessed, whereas the information expressed in the semantics of the verb remains relevant, contrast (26) with (27c), that has only eventive reading. This analysis is compatible with the assumption of two syntactic aspectual projections. In this case, *ancora* would adjoin

to the lower aspect projection, that carries information shared with the V^o .

- (27) a. Ho visto ancora il tuo quadro.
has seen ANCORA the your painting
‘I have seen your painting again’
b. Mangia ancora un panino.
eats ANCORA a roll
‘S/he eats one more roll’
c. Sta arrivando ancora.
is arriving ANCORA
‘S/he is about to arrive again’

Generally, the presence of a complement induces the reading ‘one more’. Complements offer further syntactic sites of attachment for *ancora*. Our hypothesis is that *ancora* adjoins to the argument whose denotation is a set of entities in case the predicate holds independently for each of them. In (28), *ancora* precedes the subject, the direct object and the indirect object in turn. As usual, definite NP interfere with the possibility of replacement, and the status of the sentence degrades, see (29). However, note that if example (28c) says unambiguously that I speak to two different clients, the double possible attachment of *ancora* in (30), high to the verb or low to the NP, is paralleled by semantic ambiguity. Indeed, I may speak twice to the same client in (30).

- (28) a. Ancora un cantante è salito sul palco.
ANCORA a singer is gone up on the stage
‘One more singer went on stage’
b. Ha bevuto ancora una birra.
has drunk ANCORA a beer
‘S/he drank one more beer’
c. Parlo con ancora un cliente poi vengo.
speak with ANCORA a client then come
‘I talk to another client, then I come’
- (29) *Ancora il cantante è salito sul palco.
ANCORA the singer is gone up on the stage
- (30) Parlo ancora con un cliente e poi vengo.
speak ANCORA with a client and then come
‘I talk to another client and then I come’
‘I talk to a client again and then I come’

Whenever *ancora* occurs in negative context, and there is interaction between the operator and negation, its use corresponds to ‘yet’. In this case, there is no reading variation connected with the various eventualities instantiating A, see (31). This uniformity is explained by considering that the eventuality is mapped beyond B, and the effect of continuance is expressed on the interval terminating in B. The position of *ancora* is after the auxiliary, as shown by the contrast between (31a) and (32).

- (31) a. Non sono ancora andata.
not am ANCORA gone
'I have not gone yet'
- b. Daniele non è ancora calvo.
Daniel not is ANCORA bald
'Daniel is not bald yet'
- c. Daniele non suona ancora il preludio.
Daniel not plays ANCORA the prelude
'Daniel does not play the prelude yet'
- d. Daniele non mangia ancora un panino.
Daniel not eats ANCORA a roll
'Daniel does not eat a roll yet'
- (32) *Non sono andata ancora.
not am gone ANCORA
'I have not gone yet'

Finally, there is a position from which *ancora* seems to be banned, namely right before the verbal form, see (33). This position becomes available in co-occurrence of a negation on the verb, see (34). Our hypothesis is that the positioning found in (34) aims at making explicit the scope relation holding between *ancora* and negation, i.e. *ancora* outscopes the negation, in a use that can be paralleled to the *still not* sequence. This is the case of negated A introduced in section 2. The two readings 'still not' and 'not yet' are logically equivalent, but they carry different information too, usually expressed in terms of different expectations. Since *ancora* applies to a negated proposition, the effect of continuance is expressed by the continuation of the situation as before. There is no distinction between the current interval and a previous interval where the proposition was also negated. Hence, *ancora* in preverbal position is predicted to have always the use 'still', independently from the type of eventuality, and this is the case. The gradation presented in (35) buttresses our explanation in terms of scope relations. The position of *ancora* in (35a) is not motivated by scoping effects, contrast with (35b), and the adverb can be interpreted only as parenthetic.

- (33) a. *Daniele ancora è bello.
Daniel ANCORA is handsome
- b. *Luisa ancora risiede a Verona.
Louise ANCORA resides in Verona
- c. *Daniele ancora è arrivato.
Daniel ANCORA is arrived
- d. *Daniele ancora ha mangiato un panino.
Daniel ANCORA has eaten a roll
- (34) a. Daniele ancora non è stanco.
Daniel ANCORA not is tired
'Daniel still isn't tired'

- (35) b. Daniele ancora non è arrivato.
Daniel ANCORA not is arrived
‘Daniel still has not arrived’
- a. ??Nessuno ancora è stanco.
nobody ANCORA is tired
‘Nobody is tired yet’
- b. Ancora nessuno è stanco.
ANCORA nobody is tired
‘Still nobody is tired’
- c. Non è ancora stanco nessuno.
not is ANCORA tired nobody
‘Nobody is tired yet’

6. Conclusions

In this study, we have presented semantic motivation for a unified analysis of *ancora*, whose variations in use were accounted for via composition of the meanings of the constituents of the compounds. It emerges that polarity licensing is a stipulation of little use for explaining this case of polarity sensitivity. We have put forward a case for a notion of sensitivity which goes beyond polarity, and involves the whole semantics of the item.

Acknowledgement

Thanks to Sheila Glasbey, Janet Hitzeman, Christopher Laenzlinger and Alexandra Lascarides for comments and criticisms.

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