

An evidential marker in Sardinian: *nanca* in Santa Maria Navarrese

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1. Introduction

This article aims to describe and account for the syntax of the evidential marker *nanca* in the Sardinian dialect of Santa Maria Navarrese.

For a linguistic description of the dialects spoken in Baunese and S. Maria Navarrese, I refer the reader to Secci (2003, 2006). Relevant data are reported also in Calia's (2010) descriptive grammar of Baunese and are assumably valid also for S. Maria Navarrese, given the strict linguistic and historical links between the two localities. However, the author does not mention explicitly S. Maria Navarrese, as the place has become inhabited only recently¹ while Calia's (2010) data were collected before 1979. In addition to this, the variety of S. Maria Navarrese might² undergo some external influence.

Before presenting and analysing the data, I list here some phonological features that are useful to understand the following data. Similarly to what occurs in other part of Sardinia, a number of phenomena affect initial and final consonants in S. Maria Navarrese and Baunei: *lenition*, *assimilation*, addition of *epenthetic vowels* and *s-rhotacism*. Very intuitively, a

¹ In 2012, S. Maria Navarrese had 1652 inhabitants (Vigna 2013:166), to the extent that many public services of Baunei had to be reduplicated: S. Maria Navarrese has its own postal office, its elementary school and its own *carabinieri* police station. In 2001, S. Maria Navarrese had a population of 1450 and the nearby Tancau had 223 (Istat 2001). However, a former inhabitant of S. Maria Navarrese (now living in Tancau, which belongs to the municipality of Lotzorai), reported that around the year 1964 only 54 people lived in S. Maria Navarrese. In 1970, S. Maria Navarrese had a population of 396 (Vigna 2013:166) and the threshold of 1000 inhabitants was reached in 1985 (Porcu, p. 20). Calia died in 1979.

² S. Maria Navarrese is closer to other coastal villages (about 4.4 km from the centre of Lotzorai and 6.8 km from Girasole) than to the centre of Baunei (approximately 9.0 kilometres by car). It is also contiguous to Tancau, which is part of Lotzorai, a municipality where Sardinian has typical Campidanese features (e.g. *-us* masc. plural nouns, *is* plur. def. article for both masculine and feminine). Nevertheless, as far as I could observe, the inhabitants of S. Maria Navarrese usually call their Sardinian variety «Baunese».

number of features locate the Sardinian spoken in Baunei and S. Maria Navarrese at an intermediate stage between the Logudorese and Nuorese varieties of the north and the Campidanese variety of the south³. Other features reported in Secci (2006a, 2006b) and Calia (2010) and relevant for a better understanding of this article are the following. The form *aux + p.participle* corresponds to both present perfect and simple past. The auxiliary is *èssere* ‘to be’ or *àere* ‘to have’, depending on the thematic structure of the lexical verb. Finally, negation is realized by means of the particle *no* ‘not’, which becomes *non* before a consonant. The accusative of [+human] nouns is marked by the preposition *a*, which also marks dative and locative arguments.

This article is based on data that I have collected during different stays in S. Maria Navarrese. These data are then compared with data of Baunei taken from Calia (2010).

2. The evidential marker *nanca*

Examples (1) and (2) display a word, *nanca*, for which I will not propose a translation, at first, as its meaning depends on its function and status, which I will attempt to determine step-by-step throughout this article. At first sight, *nanca* is not necessary to get the general meaning of the sentence. Omitting this word does not affect the grammaticality of the sentence.

(1) Mariu *nanca* ist andau a dommu
 Mario *nanca* is gone to house
 ‘Mario *nanca* went/has gone home’

(2) Nanca at bìdiu unu silbone
nanca has seen a boar

³ S. Maria Navarrese and Baunei, however, do have a number of words with peculiar features. These words include, for instance: *lugge* ‘light’ in contrast to northern *luke* (Lepori 2001:15) and southern *luxi* (Lepori 2001:15); *figgiu* ‘son’ in contrast to *fidzu* (Jones 1993:33) and *fillu* (Lepori 2001:3); *plus* ‘more’ and *dulce* ‘sweet’ in contrast to *prus* (Jones 1993:23.173; Lepori 2001:14) and *durke/durci* (Lepori 2001:19). Another peculiarity worth being mentioned is that the plural of *-u* nouns takes either *-os* or *-us*, depending on whether the stem contains the vowel *o/e* (*contos* ‘tales’, *isteddos* ‘stars’) or the vowel *a/i/u* (*cantus* ‘songs’, *istiddus* ‘drops’, *murus* ‘walls’). I have observed that the ending *-os* is associated with a specific realisation of the *e/o* vowel (pron. **ɛ/ɔ**) contained in the stem. Further research is necessary to go into the details of this phenomenon.

‘*nanca* (s)he saw/has seen a boar’

One might argue that *nanca* is a contracted form: *nanca* = *na(ra)n(t)* + *ca* ‘they say that’. Indeed, some Sardinian varieties do use the short present plural form *nan(t)* in place of the plural *naran(t)* ‘they say’ and the participle *nau* in place of *narau* ‘(been/has) said’. Moreover *ca* is a complementizer widely employed in Sardinian. Finally, according to the translations given by my informants, *nanca* indicates something that is not sure, something that is alleged, said to have occurred. Calia (2010:56) too, suggests that *nanca* is related to *narant* and states that *nanca* introduces an indirect speech. As we will see, the meaning of *nanca* is indeed very close to ‘they say/it is said that...’, but the word has evolved into a specialized functional element that marks reported, not directly witnessed information. Various remarks support this.

2.1 *Nanca cannot be split into a complementizer and a verb*

In Baunese/S. Maria Navarrese Sardinian, the verb ‘they say’ must appear in the long form *naran(t)* as in (3a). More precisely, in this Sardinian variety *nan(t)* cannot be used as a verbal form that agrees with the 3rd person plural subject *Antoni e Maria* and precedes the complementizer *ca*, as shown in the ungrammatical *S-V-Compl-Subord* sequence (3b). Nor is it possible to employ in this position a contracted form *nanca*, as shown in (3c): even though it might be subdivided into *nan+ca* (possibly <*nant+ca*>), the word *nanca* fails to agree with the plural subject.

- (3) a. Antoni e Maria naran(t) ca Mariu ist andau a dommu
b. Antoni e Maria *nan(t) ca Mariu ist andau a dommu
c. Antoni e Maria *nanca Mariu ist andau a dommu
Anthony and Mary say that Mario is gone to house
'Anthony and Mary say that Mario went/has gone home'.

Notice that in his grammar of Baunese, Calia (2010:56) translates *nanca* into Italian with singular verbal forms as *dice* ‘says’ and *sostiene* ‘maintains’, despite the fact that *narant* means ‘they say’. Although *nanca* is likely to have developed in relation to the verb + complementizer sequence *narant+ca* in the past, the fact that *nanca* cannot always replace *naran(t) ca* and the fact that even just *nan(t)* is not a valid contraction of the verb *naran(t)*

suggest that the word *nanca* does not contain any contracted verb in present-day Sardinian of S. Maria Navarrese and Baunei. The fact that *nanca*, in contrast to *naran(t)*, fails to agree with a 3rd person plural subject further shows that it does not contain any verb. In other words, present-day *nanca* cannot be split into a verb and a complementizer, as partially confirmed by the fact that *nanca* always appears as a whole word in Calia (2010). Therefore, *nanca* must have a status of its own.

2.2 *Nanca cannot be negated*

While Sardinian verbs can be negated by means of a preceding negative particle, *nanca* cannot. Compare the negated verb *no + ist* ‘not is’ in (4a,4b) with an ungrammatical negated form *no + nanca* in (4c). In particular, (4b) shows that *nanca* can only be followed by the negative particle *no*, which however precedes and negates the verb *ist andau* ‘is gone’.

- (4) a. Mariu no ist andau a dommu
 Mario not is gone to house
 ‘Mario didn’t go/hasn’t gone home’
- b. Mariu nanca no ist andau a dommu
 Mario *nanca* not is gone to house
 ‘Mario *nanca* didn’t go/hasn’t gone home’
- c. *Mariu no nanca ist andau a dommu
 Mario not *nanca* is gone to house

The fact that *nanca* cannot be negated is a further clue that this word is not a verb and does not contain any verb.

2.3 *Nanca occurs where *narant ca* does not*

The form *nanca* is able to occur in positions where a verb-complementizer sequence of the type ‘they say that’ is excluded. For example, the word *nanca* is successfully comprised between the particle⁴ *po* ‘for/to’ and the infinitive verb in (5a), while it is not possible to

⁴ The particle *po* (or *pro* in other Sardinian varieties) precedes nouns and pronouns as in *po me* ‘for me’ and also verbs as in *po aggiudare* ‘to help’. I do not discuss its status here. It is similar to Ital. *per* and Sp. *para*.

replace this *nanca* with *narant ca* ‘they say that’. Rewriting (5a) with *narant+ca* instead of *nanca* gives rise to ungrammaticality, as shown in (5b).

- (5) a. Mariu at béndiu sa dommu po *nanca*aggiudare a babbu suu
 Mario has sold the house for *nanca* help-INF ACC-PERS father his
 ‘Mario (has) sold his house to *nanca* help his father
- b. Mariu at béndiu sa dommu po **narant(t) ca*aggiudare a babbu suu

The fact that *nanca* is able to occur in positions where verbs cannot strengthens the hypothesis that neither it is nor it contains a verb. At the same time, however, (5a) shows that *nanca* is strictly related to verbs because it is able to appear between the infinitive *aggiudare* and the particle *po* which introduces such verb.

2.4 *Nanca is an evidential marker*

The previous observations about the behaviour of *nanca* show that it cannot always appear where the verb-complementizer sequence *narant+ca* occurs, it fails to agree with 3rd person plural subjects unlikely the verb *narant*, it cannot be negated unlikely verbs in general. On the contrary, *nanca* does appear in positions where a verb-complementizer sequence *narant+ca* does not. Yet, the meaning of *nanca* appears to be indeed related to verbs of the type ‘allege, say that’, as perceived by informants and confirmed by Calia (2010). Thus, while examples (3a-3c), (4a-4c) and (5a-5b) exclude the hypothesis that *nanca* is just a contracted form *verb+complementizer*, they are perfectly compatible with the hypothesis that *nanca* is a grammaticalised invariable functional element that precedes and modifies the verb in order to mark reported, not witnessed information. To a first approximation, I render the meaning of this marker with English ‘allegedly’. In the analysis that follows, however, I will deal with the distribution of this evidential marker, rather than translating it.

3. The position of *nanca* with respect to auxiliaries, modals and negation

On the basis of a wide range of data, Cinque (1999, 2006) proposes a universal hierarchy of functional projections in which Evidentiality is located higher than modal and

aspectual projections. He assumes an antisymmetric structure à la Kayne, in which higher projections are to the left of lower projections. I report here a part of Cinque’s hierarchy:

(6) MoodP_{speechact} > ... MoodP_{evidential} > ModP_{epistemic} > TP_{past} > TP_{future} > ... ModP_{alethic} > AspP_{habitual} > ... ModP_{volition} > ... AspP_{perfect} > ... ModP_{obligation} > ... ModP_{ability} > ... V. (from Cinque 2006:175-176)

Cinque also discusses Turkish data arguing that there is a negative projection located somewhere between alethic modals (modals for “pure possibility”) and modals for ability:

(7) ModP_{alethic} > NegP > ModP_{ability} (Cinque 2006:176)

Taken together, (6) and (7) entail that evidentiality is located higher than negation:

(8) ... MoodP_{evidential} > ... ModP_{alethic} > ... NegP ...

In the following sections, I will try to establish the ordering of evidential markers with respect to other functional elements by analysing the distribution of *nanca* in the Sardinian variety of S. Maria Navarrese.

3.1 Position of *nanca* with respect to auxiliaries and finite verbs

Evidential *nanca* precedes (finite) auxiliaries and past participles, with *evid* - *aux_{agr}* - *verb_{past.part.}* word order. This patterns with Baunese data by Calia (2010):

(9) Antoni *nanca* *ist* *torrau* a *dommu*
 Antony EVID is gone back to house
 'Antony has allegedly gone back home'

(10) Issu *nanca* ‘r’ *bénniu*⁵ (Calia 2010:56)

⁵ *Nanca* ‘r’ *bénniu* is the pronunciation of *Nanca* (*i*)*s*(*t*) *bénniu* with elision of *i* and *t*, followed by *s*-rhotacism of the remaining *s* before the voiced consonant *b* (*nanca* ‘s’ *bénniu* > *nanca* ‘r’ *bénniu*). Contraction of *ist* and *s*-rhotacism are both usual in Baunese and S. Maria Navarrese speech.

He EVID is come
 'He allegedly came/ He has allegedly come'

- (11) Nanca at bìdiu unu silbone (repeated from (2))
 EVID has seen a boar
 'S/He has allegedly seen a boar'

In general, *nanca* precedes the finite verb, with ordering *evid - verb_{agr}*:

- (12) Maria nanca allegat inglesu
 Maria EVID speaks English
 'Maria allegedly speaks English'

In addition to agreeing with the subject, Sardinian finite verbs and auxiliaries are tensed, in that they inflect for past tense: compare, for instance, the 3rd person singular forms *ist(e)* 'is' vs. *fut(i)* 'was', *at* 'has' vs. *iat* 'had' and *allegat* (stress on *e*) 'speaks' vs. *allegàt* (stress on *à*) 'spoke'. Thus, preceding finite verbs and auxiliaries means preceding also tense marking (in addition to subject agreement). Consequently, evidential *nanca* preceding finite verbs and auxiliaries is also compatible with Cinque's hypothesis that evidentiality is encoded higher than TP in the structure. The word ordering *evid - aux/verb* observed in (9-12) is compatible with the hierarchy in (6).

3.2. Position of *nanca* with respect to the modal *pòdere* 'can/be able'

Nanca also must precede the modal *pòder(e)* 'can/be able' with a sequence *evid-mod-V* as in (13a). A sequence *mod-evid* as in (13b) is ungrammatical.

- (13) a. At béndiu sa dommu po nanca pòder(e) aggiudare a babbu suu
 S/he has sold the house for EVID can-INF help-INF ACC.PERS. father his/her
 'S/he (has) sold her/his house to be able to help her/his father'
- b. *At béndiu sa dommu po pòder(e) nanca aggiudare a babbu suu

The hierarchy of functional projections proposed by Cinque contains distinct structural positions for ability modals ('being able') and alethic modals (pure possibility). In Sardinian, I have not been able to distinguish the two type of modals as both 'can' and 'be able' translate as *pòder(e)*. However, example (13a) shows that evidential *nanca* precedes the modal. More precisely, although it does not bring definite evidence concerning the different types of modals, the obligatoriness of the ordering *evid – modal* shown by (13a) and (13b) is compatible with hierarchy (6).

3.3 Position of *nanca* with respect to negation

As previously discussed in (4a-4c), *nanca* cannot be preceded by the negative particle *no* 'not' that negates verbs. In fact, evidential *nanca* must precede the negative particle with an ordering *evid – neg – aux – verb*, as shown in (14a). A sequence *neg – evid* as in (14b) is not grammatical.

- (14) a. Mariu *nanca* no ist andau a dommu (repeated from (4b))
 Mario *nanca* not is gone to house
 'Mario *nanca* didn't go/hasn't gone home'
- b. *Mariu no *nanca* ist andau a dommu (repeated from (4c))
 Mario not *nanca* is gone to house

The evidential *nanca* preceding the negative particle *no* is compatible with the hierarchy hypothesized in (8), where evidentiality is encoded higher than negation and to its left. More specifically, the obligatoriness of the ordering *nanca – neg* proven by (14a, 14b) is compatible with Cinque's hierarchies (6) and (7), which, taken together, entail (8).

4. Conclusions

The behaviour of the word *nanca* in the Sardinian variety of S. Maria Navarrese is compatible with the hypothesis that it has the status of an invariable evidential marker, although it may have evolved in the past via grammaticalisation from the verb *narant* and the complementiser *ca*. The data about S. Maria Navarrese match Calia's (2010) data about Baunei, the town from which the settlers of S. Maria Navarrese came. The data from S. Maria Navarrese further show that the distribution of *nanca* is compatible with and straightforwardly

derivable from Cinque's (1999, 2006) universal hierarchy of functional projections and an antisymmetric syntactic tree structure à la Kayne (1994), in which Evidentiality is encoded higher than (and to the left of) the functional projections for Past Tense, Negation and Modality.

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