Snaturalitè in Ruzante and the Venetian Prefix *S-*

Author(s): Edward F. Tuttle

Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society (1982), pp. 117-126

Please see “How to cite” in the online sidebar for full citation information.

Please contact BLS regarding any further use of this work. BLS retains copyright for both print and screen forms of the publication. BLS may be contacted via <http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/bls/>.

The Annual Proceedings of the Berkeley Linguistics Society is published online via [eLanguage](#), the Linguistic Society of America's digital publishing platform.

Snaturalitè in Ruzante and
the Venetian Prefix *S-*

Edward F. Tuttle
UCLA

Un bon snaturale s'è miegio assè ca gento slibrassòn.

"A straight natural style is better by far than a hundred weighty tomes."--Ruzante, ap. Zorzi 1967: 1229

While the Italo-Romance dialects can boast a nearly millennial written record, it was not half so long ago that something approaching accurate transcription of ordinary vernacular speech was undertaken. Earlier medieval records were subject to rhetorically or stylistically motivated deformation, and only with the Renaissance taste for more mimetic representations of plebeian characters can one begin to form a sharper image of ordinary spoken usage. An outstanding example of this new taste and its effect upon the linguistic record is provided by Angelo Beolco, nicknamed Ruzante (1502-1542), one of the most brilliant Renaissance playwrights, who has left copious testimony for the rustic Veneto dialect of the Paduan countryside. Easily one of the most striking features of Ruzante's Paduan is its exuberant prosthesis of *s-*. Yet, notwithstanding the fact that Ruzante has of late become the object of intense critical discussion (Milani 1970, Prosperi 1970, Baratto 1977, Padoan 1978a), this capital feature of his language has received no searching historical or semantic analysis. What was the source and meaning of this *s-*? Was it a characteristic of 16th-C. Paduan which Ruzante simply mirrored on stage, or was it a more personal idiosyncrasy of the comedian? If the latter, why should Ruzante have settled upon this feature in preference to others?

Initial *s-* abounds in modern rural Paduan and in neighboring dialects in much the same conditions in which it is found in Ruzante; although it may occur in rustic speech less insistently and extravagantly than in Ruzante's stage dialect, it is still sufficiently frequent to be remarked by speakers themselves as distinguishing this dialect group from its neighbors. A superficial glance at Veneto *s-* might suggest it to be roughly identical with the homophonous *s-* prefix (and prefixoid) of Tuscan and consequently of Standard Italian. Compare the following Veneto-Tuscan correspondences:

scambiar(e) : *scambiare* 'to exchange', *scavezar(e)* : *scapezzare* 'to pollard, top', *scompissar(e)* : *scompisciare* 'to wet (pants)', *sco(d)-er(e)* : *scuotere* 'to shake', *scortegar(e)* : *scorticare* 'to flay, skin', *scorlar(e)* : *scrollare* 'to shake', *sgrafar(e)* : *sgraffiare* 'to scratch', *spendre* : *spendere* 'to spend'.

However, the Tuscan prefix most often possesses a negative or privative value which is largely absent from Veneto *s-*; e.g.,

sbianchezar(e) [Tusc. imbiancare] 'to whitewash', sbrodolar(e) [imbrodolare] 'to spill (soup)', sco(n)vegnir(e) [convenire] 'to be suitable', scontrar(e) [incontrare] 'to meet', sgionfar(e) [gonfiare] 'to swell', sgrandir(e) [ingrandire] 'to enlarge', sgualivar(e) [agguagliare, adeguare] 'to even', smaltar(e) [intonacare] 'to plaster'.

Instead, the semantically kindred Veneto prefix of negation crops up as des-, e.g.,

desbalar(e) [Tusc. sballare] 'to unpack', desbendar(e) [sbendare] 'to remove bandages', descalzar(e) [scalzare] 'to remove shoes', descargar(e) [scaricare] 'to unload', descio(d)ar(e) [schiodare] 'to remove nails', descolpar(e) [scolpare] 'to remove blame', descomodar(e) [scomodare] 'to make uncomfortable', desconzar(e) [sconciare] 'to disorder, mess up', descoragir(e) [scoraggiare] 'to discourage', desgranar(e) [sgranare] 'to shuck, remove grains', deslatar(e) [spoppare] 'to wean', deslazzar(e) [slacciare] 'to unlace'.

Seeking a grip on the problem from a diachronic perspective opens up another series of questions--these, at least, more familiar to Romanists. Still, an adequate history of the Italian prefix s- and its relations to the prefix dis- remains to be written.¹

For close to a century, Romance linguists have discussed the origin of Tuscan s-, but without ever directly confronting the possibility that it might represent a true amalgam, both semantically and phonologically, of the Latin prefixes DIS- and EX- which stand as its clear antecedents. A growing semantic convergence between Latin DIS- and EX- had been remarked, giving rise in Later Latin to interchanges or *Präfixwechsel*, but no one paused to entertain the possibility of a formal convergence between them as well. Such a two-fold convergence is what I intend to propose today. An account which incorporates an eventual phonologic congruence between the putative bases has the signal advantage of eliminating the need to make recourse to analogic substitutions on so massive a scale as has been implicitly required heretofore in treating Tuscan s- and Veneto or northern Italian des-. Furthermore, this account will explain why reduced s- triumphed south of the Apennines while the fuller form des- carried the day to the north.

Disagreement about this aspect of the prefixes' history may begin this morning. There has already been disagreement, however, about their earlier history. Some authorities would see the immediate source of s- or des- as twofold, while for others it is threefold. All agree that there were three remote Latin sources, DIS-, EX-, and DĒ-; however, whether all three maintained sufficient productivity to be directly relevant in the matter at hand is open to debate. Without presuming to have found a definitive answer to the question, I wish to present some data worthy of review. To begin with the two non-controversial bases, DIS-² expressed separation or privation, originally by movement away from a locus (thus its derivatives are often flanked by an antonym in CUM-, opposing gathering to scattering), while EX-³ arrived at a similar meaning through expulsion or a movement out of an original or proper locus. E. g.,

DISCURRERE 'to run in different ways, to and fro' (cf. CONCURRERE)	EXCAUĀRE 'to hollow out'
DISIUNGERE 'to disjoin, disunite' (cf. CONIUNGERE)	EXTERMINĀRE 'to banish out- side borders, exile'
DISTORQUERE 'to twist different ways'	EXTORQUERE 'to twist out'
DISTRAHERE 'to pull asunder'	EXTRAHERE 'to draw out'

Both came to acquire a more general meaning, negating or reversing the action of the primitive, which Ronjat 1937: III, 444 termed dé-causatif. E.g.,

DISCOOPERĪRE 'to remove cover, uncover'	EXANIMĀRE 'to deprive of breath, wind, life'
DISCINGERE 'to ungird'	EXARMĀRE 'to disarm'
DISSUĀDERE 'to dissuade'	EXHONORĀRE 'to deprive of honor'
DISPLICERE 'to displease'	EXHEREDĀRE 'to disinherit'

Eventually both were added for emphasis to verbs already possessing a negative connotation, and thence even to rather neutral verbs:

DISCUPERE 'to crave inordinately'	EXACERBĀRE 'make very bitter'
DISCRUCIĀRĪ (-E) 'to torment, tor- ture violently'	EXCRUCIĀRE 'to torment, tor- ture violently'
DISPERERE 'to go to ruin complete- ly, be utterly undone'	EXHORR(ESC)ERE 'to tremble greatly (from fear)'
DISQUIRERE 'investigate carefully'	EXCOLERE 'to tend carefully'

Such semantic blurring prepares one for the later pairs of derivatives which seem to have existed as near-synonyms, e.g., DISCALCE-ĀRE/EXCALCEĀRE 'to remove shoes', DISCERNERE/EXCERNERE 'to sift, discern', DISPANDERE/EXPANDERE 'to spread', DISPENDERE/EXPENDERE 'to spend', DISPLODERE/EXPLODERE 'to burst', DISTENDERE/EXTENDERE 'to spread'.

Between these two poles, whose growing use in later Latin is well attested, certain scholars (Darmesteter 1874 et al.) have sought to reconstruct a third, intermediate base, a parasynthetic prefix composed of DĒ-, which also indicated separation, added before EX-. Jules Ronjat 1937: III, 443 may have been the first to call into question the plausibility of such a compound, observing that "DIS- rend compte de tous les ex[emples] que je connais, aucun ne postule DĒ-EX-." A greater obstacle seems raised by the declining vitality of the key ingredient, DĒ-, which, as implicit in this hypothesis, speakers would have called upon to reinforce a semantically weakened EX- in such compounds. At the vernacular level, at least in analyzable derivatives, DĒ- appears to have been replaced by DĪ- (see n. 2) and DIS-, e.g., DĒFATĪGĀRE : DIFFATĪGĀRE, DĒMINUERE : DĪMINUERE, DĒMOUERE : DĪMOUERE and DISMOUERE. The Romance heirs to derivatives in DĒ- attest to its ebbing fortunes and to the growing productivity of DIS-; for example,

DĒCADERE (+DĒCIDERE) 'to fall down (from)' → OSp. de-/des-caer OProv. desca(z)er [mod. descaire], Ven. descazer (It. scadere and Rum. scădea are not explicit as to a descent from DIS- or EX-); DĒ-DIGNĀRI (-E) 'to scorn' → OSp. desdeñar, OProv. desdenhar, OFr. desdaigner, Ven. desdegnar; DĒFORĀRE 'to deform' → OSp., OPtg., OProv. desformar, OFr. desformer, Ven. desformar, It. difformare (-ff- < -sf-); DĒLUMBĀRE 'to cut, wound in loins' (model for *dērēnāre 'to wound in kidneys') → OSp. deslomar & desrenar/derrenar (-rr- < -sr-), OProv., Ven. desrenar (Ven. desnombolarse, Bresc. desmombolâ 'to be vitiated'); DĒNŪDĀRE 'to strip' → OSp., OProv. desnudar, OFr. desnuer, Ven. desnuar; DĒUIĀRE 'to wander' → OSp., OProv., Ven. desviar, OFr. desvoier, OAbuzz. desbiare; etc.

The decline of DĒ- was gradual, logically beginning in clearly analyzable derivatives,⁴ but gathering more momentum to penetrate progressively even wholly opaque forms with little more than an initial de- to have prompted the substitution; e.g., OVen. & OPad. descreti 'decrees' [Tusc. decreti], desleg(u)ar 'to flee, slip away' [Tusc. dileguare], desmentegar(e) 'to forget' [dimenticare], desmestegar(e) 'to tame' [dimesticare], despuò ~ daspuò 'after' [DĒ+POST, cf. Sp. despues]. Given the evident weakening of DĒ-, it seems more prudent not to postulate a requickened life for it as reinforcement for EX- (through a putative compound DĒ-EX-) and to depart, instead, from two rather than from three bases in tracing the subsequent evolution of Tusc. s- and northern Italian des-.

Without offering any explanation, historical or otherwise, Gerhard Rohlfs 1969: 350 notes that "in many instances northern formations in des- correspond to Tuscan derivatives in s-, such as Milanese desmett 'to cease' [Tusc. smettere], desbottonâ 'to unbutton' [sbottonare], desvidâ 'to unscrew' [svitare], desfiorî 'to fade, wither' [sfiorire]...". The list could be expanded a hundred-fold⁵ and extended to northern dialects from the Adriatic to the Val d'Aosta (and, of course, points beyond). There is a second set of correspondences--these diachronic--that could be added to Rohlfs': just as many northern derivatives in des- harken back to a Latin source in EX-, so numerous Tuscan derivatives in s- imply a source in DIS-. For the latter sort, compare the following correspondences:

DISCO(O)PERĪRE : scoprire (REW 2659), as against Sp. descubrir, OProv. descobrir, Ven. descovrir (OPad. descroire); DISPERTĪRE : spartire (REW 2679), Sp., OProv., Ven. despartir, Roum. despărți; DISPLICERE : spiacere, Sp. desplacer, OProv. desplazer, Ven. dispiaser; DISCAR(R)ICARE (Late, Venan. Fortunatus): scaricare, Sp., OProv. Ven. descargar, Roum. descăreca; DISCALCEUS (var. DISCULCEUS, REW 2662) : scalzo, Sp. descalzo, OProv. descaus, Ven. descolzo, Roum. descult (vrb. desculța); *dis-fibul-āre : sfibbiare (REW 2668), OProv. desfiblar, OFr. desfubler, Mil. desfibbiâ, Bergam. desföbiâ, Ven. desfiubar.

Inversely, for Veneto forms in des-, a source in EX- is often suggested, not merely by the presence of a Latin derivative or a consensus among cognate languages, but internally by a paired antonym formed with IN-, the prefix semantically opposed to EX-, e.g.,

EXCARNĀRE : descarnar, cf. Port., OProv. escarnar, OFr. escharner; EXCŌLĀRE (Pallad., Vulg.) : descolar(se), cf. OSp., OProv. escolar, OFr. escouler, Srd. iskolare; EXCURRERE : descorer, OSp. escorrer/escurrir, OProv. escorer, Srd. iskurrere, Roum. scurge; EXFOLIARE (Apicius, REW 3007a), Port., OProv. esfolhar, Fr. effeuiller; desbarcar, cf. inbarcar; desborsar, cf. incassar; descaenar, cf. incaenar; descati(g)ar, cf. incati(g)ar; des'cio(d)ar, cf. incio(d)ar; despirar, cf. inpirar; destrigar, cf. intrigar; descolpar, cf. incolpar; desfornar, cf. informar; despigolar, destegolar, destrigolar, descartossar 'to hull, husk, shuck, take out of shell, pod, etc.'; desniar 'to take from nest'; destantar, cf. intantar and desmussar, cf. imussar 'to take out of ill humor, bad mood' versus 'to put in a bad mood'.

On their very surface, such neatly-opposed Veneto-Tuscan discrepancies seem to suggest some developmental opposition. The most immediate problem they pose is quantitative: if one were to assume that Tusc. s- represents the sole phonologically legitimate heir to EX- (as against dis-, the only direct descendant of DIS-), it would be necessary to postulate a vast number of analogic *Präfixwechsel* in order to account for the host of s- formations such as those cited above. If, instead, one can affirm that s- may also be a possible phonologic result of DIS-, the problem vanishes. An inverse, but strictly analogous, difficulty arises for the northern derivatives in des- for which a source in EX- seems most plausible. In identical fashion, this difficulty may be laid to rest if one assumes a phonologic merger occurred between the heirs of EX- and DIS- to the north just as to the south of the Apennines.

What are likely to have been the mechanics of such phonologic mergers of DIS- and EX-, prefixes which were converging semantically to an ever greater degree in Late Spoken Latin? For both Veneto and Tuscan one must discover some point of phonologic neutralization between them, perhaps initially through contextually determined phonosyntactic or morphophonologic variants in which a surface distinction may have become blurred. In the case of DIS- and EX-, become *des-/dis- and *es-/is-, erosion of the former's occlusive onset would have sufficed for such a merger. Weakening of intervocalic occlusives, especially of the voiced series, so well known in Transapennine Romance dialects, also occurs within the Italo-Romance group proper, yet here it often remains within the ambit of phonostylistic variation. The several stages of weakening (spirantization and eventual deletion) may never achieve phonemic status or be re-analyzed as underlying forms, with the result that they tend to be very poorly documented. The conditions of consonant weakening in Tuscan, for example, have only recently been clarified by Gianelli and Savoia 1978: 44ff. However, diligent descriptions of the spirantization and loss of d, as well as g, b, and, above all, v, were already being recorded by historically-oriented dialectologists at the beginning of this century. Given the durability of final vowels in Subapennine Romance, word boundary plays a vastly reduced role in the weakening process when compared with its decisive effect in, say, Gallo- or Ibero-Romance.

At Subiaco, in the hills behind Rome, for example, Anton Lindsström 1907: 237-300 recorded forms such as la ecina 'ten' [of an item], la emà 'the next day' (versus demà 'tomorrow'), ju ente 'tooth', la ife-sa 'defense', la ote 'dowry', la uttrina 'doctrine', etc. Thirty years ago, Rohlfs 1966: 203ff could refer matter-of-factly to the weakening of initial d- "in vast areas of Southern Italy" and "in the dialects of Corsica." In central Italian dialects "d- may be lost entirely." Unfortunately, for Old Florentine, the interchanges of v, d, and g which occur word medially are not documented word-initially; however, structurally parallel phonologic changes do occur across word boundaries and therefore imply that at the level of rapid, careless speech the same process is likely to have gone on. Such substitutions imply neutralization to zero, e.g., adulterio/avolterio 'adultery', biada/biava 'oats', biado/biavo 'bluish', codardia/covardia 'cowardice', lódoro/lógoro 'bird-call', padiglione/paviglione 'tent', radunare/ragunare 'to join together', etc. Before yod in Tuscan dialects, this point of neutralization is attested word-initially, e.g., diaccio (ghiaccio) 'ice', diécolo (var. ghiécolo) 'cradle' < UEHICULU, or, inversely, ghieci (dieci) 'ten', ghievolo (diavolo) 'devil', ghietro (dietro) 'behind'. In short, against this background, it does not seem unwarranted to postulate two surface realizations for dis-/des- in a negligent speech register: a fuller form postconsonantly and a weakened, reduced form after vowels. In the schema which follows, rule la hypothesizes the earliest phase of the alternation for both Veneto and Tuscan; lb presents the Tuscan vowel-raising tendency to produce early attested Florentine forms:

- (1a) /des-/ → [des-] / ~~ɬ~~ ____ (C)V [Spirantization and
[es-] / ~~v~~ ____ (C)V deletion of voiced
intervocalic stops]
- (1b) (* /des-/ →) /dis-/ → [dis-] / ~~ɬ~~ ____ (C)V [Florentine & West
[is-] / ~~v~~ ____ (C)V Tuscan vowel-raising]

Thus the weaker variant of des-/dis- came to coincide with the result of EX-, also es-/is-. A tendency towards aphaeresis thereafter operated on Veneto-Tuscan [es-/is-], from both sources, as in 2a and 2b:

- (2a) /des-/ → [des-] / ~~C#~~ _____(C)V /es-/ → [es-] / ~~C#~~ _____(C)V
 [s-] / ~~V#~~ _____(C)V [s-] / ~~V#~~ _____(C)V
- (2b) /dis-/ → [dis-] / ~~C#~~ _____(C)V /is-/ → [is-] / ~~C#~~ _____(C)V
 [s-] / ~~V#~~ _____(C)V [s-] / ~~V#~~ _____(C)V

Accepting this reconstructed merger, the next question to be answered is why the weakened allomorph [s-] was generalized for /dis-/ in Tuscan while the fuller form [des-] predominated in the Veneto. The answer seems to lie in the fact that the relative frequency of their contexts did not remain the same. Word-final vowels have become increasingly frequent in Tuscan, where early medieval apocope has tended to retreat and inherited forms with etymologic final consonants have been integrated into a vowel final canon. Thus the more frequent allomorphs in s- were amalgamated with the semantically kindred descendants of EX- under a single underlying form s-. In the Veneto, instead, apo-

cope was gaining ground in the medieval period,⁶ as was initial-vowel deletion, e.g., bandonar 'to abandon', catar 'to find' (It. accattare), cusar 'to accuse', rivar 'to arrive'. The combined effect of these trends was to eliminate [es-] from alternation with [s-] among the heirs to EX- at the same time as fuller [des-] in alternation with [s-] was raised to greater relative frequency. The semantic proximity of DIS- and EX- descendants must have occasioned a growing reanalysis of any s- formation which speakers identified as possessing a negative or privative meaning as being a post-vocalic weakened variant of a fuller des- derivative. Such reanalysis based upon semantic criteria had two implications. On the one hand, all clearly negative formations were integrated under des-, which eventually became their sole realization. On the other, from the point of view of the residue of s- formations that did not possess so sharp a semantic profile, it came to represent a process of elimination, depriving s- of its negative, privative value and thus of its genuine prefixal status. S- occurred in a number of words, more preponderantly nouns now, rather than verbs as before, with a slightly negative or pejorative connotation. Thence it could be extended to other semantically kindred nouns to confer an emphatic or more expressive nuance. It is as a noun prefixoid, expressing a vaguely contemptuous attitude on the part of the speaker towards his designanda, that s- is used by Ruzante's peasant characters; e.g., sbalduria (sbampuria in 1553) = baldoria 'revelry', sbardasso = bardasso 'rogue', sberlengo = berlengo 'cross-eyed' (also sguerzo), sberzeffo = bizzeffe 'large quantity', sbirro = birro 'bravo, henchman', scolgera = colgera 'quilt', sfigiolame = figiolame 'quantity of children', sfranze = franze 'fringe', smogenighe (var. smozanighi) = mocenighi 'ducats' coined by Mocenigo, smoné 'money', smorbeza 'bizarre behavior'. Learned terms are integrated into peasant dialect with this s- of contempt or suspicion, e.g., sgardenale 'cardinal', sletran 'literate, learned person', smatafisica 'metaphysics', snobele 'noble', sperciso 'precise', sperfetto 'perfect', sprolico 'discorse'.⁷ While certain of these formations in s- may be accounted original coinage of the playwright, others are too broadly attested to not form part of a vernacular usage. The question remains, then, as to why the Veneto peasants should have had such frequent recourse to this expressive, vaguely pejorative prefixoid.

Inasmuch as Ruzante may be considered to have sought not merely a linguistic mimesis on the stage, perhaps his characters in their fuller psychology can provide part of the answer. Recent critics have observed how Ruzante, inheriting the burlesque figure of the peasant of the mariazi and the satire del villano, along with the more benevolent representations (somewhat Uncle Tom-like) of pro-Venetian propaganda pieces,⁸ endowed his peasant with far greater tensions, both poetic (as part of a naturalistic rebellion against an artificial literary tradition dubbed "fiorentinesca") and socio-political (in the wake of the disillusion and famine which followed defeat by the League of Cambrai).⁹ Ruzante appears to enter deeply into his character, as of the peasant-militiaman, passing in the words of Baratto 1977: 123 "a un approdondimento interno del personaggio, che lo porta ad agire sulla scena, e a scrivere, con la logica

del personaggio stesso, e non più con la logica dell'intellettuale che usa il personaggio a scopo precipuo di divertimento. Ed è una logica che viene dalla vita reale, da un'assunzione delle componenti sociali, mentali, culturali propri del contadino." From his experience of the miserable and even desperate state of the Veneto peasantry in the first quarter of the 16th Century, Ruzante developed a far darker and more bitter stage representation of the rustic than any which had gone before. Already twenty years ago, Cesare Segre 1963: 396 noted that "nelle migliori commedie del Ruzante si passa dall'arlecchinata alla tragedia: i personaggi sono dei vinti, la loro furberia e le loro smargiassate nascondono un eterno insuccesso; se poi essi reagiscono, è la tragedia, l'assassinio, atto di disperazione che sfoga un odio ma non rinnova una vita." It seems likely Segre had in mind the Bilora, the only Italian Renaissance play in which a peasant protagonist kills his bourgeois rival. Yet even in the Prima Orazione, a celebration of naturalism and the natural resources of the Paduan countryside, oppression of the peasantry is an omnipresent background motif, bursting to the fore as class hatred at the very moment the rustic speaker proposes better relations between peasants and burghers:

"...i citaini de Pava...se magnesson del cuore...e se a' foessam cusi nu de sora con gi è igi, bao, babao, bao, cope, fiorin! A' no ghe dureràvegi una ora in le man." Padoan 1978b:215 ['the burghers of Padua...we eat our hearts for them...but if we were on top the way they are, bim, bam, slam! they would not last an hour in our hands.'] Disdained, but also disdainful, Ruzante's peasants are filled with rancor and contempt directed towards their exploiters and yet also towards themselves. "I ghe dise, a nu containi, 'villani,' 'marassi,' 'ragani,' e nu a ghe digomo a igi 'cacariegi,' 'can,' 'osolari,' 'magna-sangue de poveriti'." Padoan loc. cit. ['They say to us peasants: "bumkins," "worms," "toads;" and we say to them: "turds," "dogs," "usurers," "blood-suckers of the poor folk."'] One of the more notable effects of miseria is to bring down a veil of disdain over everything touching one's life, oneself no less than one's oppressors. Playing upon the medieval formula associating villani 'rustics' with villany as much as with rural ville 'farms', Ruzante comments "we are villani because we are wretchedly poor." Such a *Weltanschauung* may explain the vast extension of the vaguely pejorative prefixoid s- in 16th-century Veneto.¹⁰ As an explanation it would also account for Ruzante's seizing upon it as a stylistic means for expressing a prime psychological constant of his peasant protagonists.

* * *

Notes

1. Devoto 1939 traces the semantic ingredients of modern Italian s- with reference to its several Latin sources; Brøndal 1940-1 and Marchand 1953 hew to a synchronic structuralist analysis.

2. DIS- had an allomorph DĪ-, originally produced before voiced consonants, and an assimilated allomorph DIF-, occurring before F-; both

tended to be replaced in Late Spoken Latin and in the early Romance dialects: e.g., DILŪCERE : Sp. deslucir (Nebrija); DĪMINUĪRE : Sp. disminuir (semi-learned), OProv., Ven. desminuir; DĪRUMPERE : OSp. derromper (*des-romper with assimilation), OProv. desrompre, Fr. dérondre (not derondre); DIFFAMĀRE (var. DEFAMĀRE) : OSp., OProv. desfamar, Fr. défamer, Ven. desfamar; DIFFERENTIA : Ven. desferenzia (and -ar vrb.); DIFFICILIS : Sou. Itl. 'disfacile' (e.g., Abr. dəsfécələ), Bergam. desfassel; *diffidare : OSp. desfiar (recomposed desafiär), OProv. desfi(z)ar, Ven. desfidar.

3. EX- developed an allomorph Ē- before voiced consonants and an assimilatory allomorph EF- (also EC-) before F-; both tended to be substituted by EX- through a form of recomposition, e.g., EXBIBERE (Plautus) for EBIBERE, EXDORSUĀRE (Plautus, Apul.), EXFODERE for EFFODERE, EXFUTUERE (Cato) for EFFUTUERE, EXLEX, EXLIDERE for ĒLIDERE, EXMOUERE for ĒMOUERE, EXUAPŌRĀRE for EUAPŌRĀRE, EXUEHERE for ĒUEHERE, and, at the Romance level, cf. ĒLEUĀRE : OProv. eslevar, OFr. eslever; ĒLIGERE : OSp. esleer/(d)esleir, OProv., OFr. eslire, OVen. aslezer; EMENDARE : Cat. esmenar, OProv. esmenar, OFr. esmen-der; EMULGERE : OSp. esmucir, cat. esmunyir, Ven. smólzer/smónzer, Roum. smulge/zmulge (Macedo-Roum. zmuldzire), etc.

4. The process advanced more rapidly in some dialects than in others. Commenting on the spread of des- at the expense of de- in medieval Ibero-Romance, Yakov Malkiel 1949: 202f observed that "the prefix de- [was] not necessarily learned in the earliest texts...although steadily retroceding...before its rival des- from the 12th to the 14th Century." In Italy, south of the Apennines, once the joint heir to DIS- and EX- became stabilized as s- (see below for explanation), the descendants of DĒ- and DĪ- suffered less substitution. Or, stating the matter inversely, to the north, with the predominance of des-, the process of intrusion or "recomposition" could continue; thus not a few northern derivatives in des- have Subapennine cognates in di-; compare Poles. desboscare : Tusc. diboscare, desgradare : degradare, desfamare : de-/dif-famare, desfarenziare : differenziare, desformare : de-/dif-formare, desgrassare : digrassare, desgrossare : digrossare, desmagrire : dimagrire, desmostrare : dimostrare, desvario : divario, desviziare : divezzare, etc.

5. Cf. Cherubini 1839: II, 21ff for examples.
6. Cf. Tuttle 1982 for detailed discussion of Veneto apocope.
7. Cf. Tuttle 1983 for detailed commentary.
8. Cf. Padoan 1978a: 102ff, Prosperi 1970: 20ff, Zorzi 1967: xxxiii.
9. Besides authors cited above, n. 8, see Baratto 1977: 122ff.
10. In modern Veneto dialects, the prefixoid has lost its original nuance and carries only a connotation of rusticity.

Bibliography

- Baratto 1977 Mario Baratto, La commedia del Cinquecento, Vicenza, 2nd ed.
- Bröndal 1940-1 Rosaly Bröndal, "La signification du préfixe italien s-," AL(Haf.), II, 151-164.
- Cherubini 1839 Francesco Cherubini, Vocabolario milanese-italiano, Milano.
- Darmesteter 1874 Arsène Darmesteter, Traité de la formation des mots composés en français, Paris, 1st ed.
- Devoto 1939 Giacomo Devoto, "Il prefisso s- in italiano," Mélanges...Charles Bally, Geneva, 263-9, rpnt. in Scritti minori, Firenze, 1972, III, 30-38.
- Gianelli and Savoia 1978 Luciano Gianelli & Leonardo M. Savoia, "L'indebolimento consonantico in Toscana (I)," RID, II, 23-58.
- Lindsstrom 1907 Anton Lindsstrom, "Il vernacolo di Subiaco," StR, V, 237-300.
- Malkiel 1949 Yakov Malkiel, "Latin IACTĀRE, DĒIECTĀRE, AND Ē-IECTĀRE in Ibero-Romance," BF, X, 201-214.
- Marchand 1953 Hans Marchand, "The Question of Derivative Relevancy and the Prefix s- in Italian," StLing., VII, 104-114.
- Milani 1970 Marisa Milani, "Snaturalità e deformazione nella lingua teatrale del Ruzante," Lingue e strutture del teatro italiano del Rinascimento, Padova, 109-202.
- Padoan 1978a Giorgio Padoan, Momenti del Rinascimento veneto, Padova.
- Idem. 1978b Ruzante, La Pastoral, ed. G. P., Padova.
- Prosperi 1970 Mario Prosperi, Angelo Beolco nominato Ruzante, Padova.
- Rohlf s 1966-69 Gerhard Rohlf s, Grammatica storica della lingua italiana e dei suoi dialetti, revised transl., Torino. [German original 1949-54, Bern]
- Ronjat 1937 Jules Ronjat, Grammaire istorique [sic.] des parlers provençaux modernes, Montpellier, vol. III.
- Segre 1963 Cesare Segre, Lingua, stile e società, Milano.
- Tuttle 1982 Edward F. Tuttle, "Un mutamento linguistico e il suo rovescio," RID, V.
- Idem 1983 "Snaturalità e la s- iniziale pavana: qualche considerazione storica e stilistica," SMLV.
- Zorzi 1967 Ludovico Zorzi, ed., Angelo Beolco detto il Ruzante: Teatro, Torino.