Abstract The present study deals with the spectrum of intra-paradigmatic configurations that the Latin verbal infix -I/ESC- acquired in modern Romance standard and dialectal varieties. It proposes an in-depth analysis, both of the so-called ‘patterned’ and ‘non-patterned’ Romance infix-distributions: patterned Romance infix-distributions find response in parallel and recurrent stem-allomorphic conjugational alternations; non-patterned infix-distributions are morphologically unique and do not have allomorphic distributional counterparts in other, non-infixed, verbs. While patterned infix-distributions benefit from the ‘morphomic’ approach (cf. Aronoff 1994, Maiden 2003), it will be shown that ‘non-patterned’ infix-distributions can be predicted only by taking into account several (co-)conditioning forces, e.g. stress, thematicity and modality.

Keywords Romance contrastive linguistics · Dialectology · Verbal morphology · Infix -I/ESC- · Inflectional versus lexical infix · Allomorphy · Conjugation-patterns

Caelum nitescere, arbores frondescere,
Vites laetificae pampinis putescere
Rami bacarum ubertate incurvescere.
(Cicero, Tusc. I. 69)
1 Introduction

The verbal paradigm of nearly all Romance languages is characterized by the presence of remnants of the well-known Latin infix\(^1\) -\(I/ESC\)-. In the evolution to the Romance languages, the phenomenon of verbal -\(I/ESC\)- infixation poses a twofold ‘distributional’ problem: (1) How to explain the intra-paradigmatic distribution of the infixes in the modern Romance languages? While the infix appears in all Romance languages, its distribution ‘inside’ the verbal paradigm is not everywhere the same; (2) How to explain the lexical distribution of the infix? Which factors determine whether a particular verb is conjugated with or without the infix?

In the present study we will focus on the first issue. It is remarkable that the infix does not appear in all Romance languages and dialects in exactly the same tenses and moods of the verbal system. We find clusters of distributional infix-configurations, shared by several Romance varieties, but also very ‘local’ infix-distributions, particular to one single (sub)dialect. In what follows, we will try to shed some light on the factors that in the evolution from Latin to Romance have given rise to the genesis of novel intra-paradigmatic infix-distributions, unprecedented in Latin. The organization of this paper is as follows: Sect. 2 presents a brief outline of the ancient (Proto-Indo-European, Classical Greek and Latin) backgrounds of the infix; in Sect. 3, we will glance through two general paradigmatic reorganizations of the infix, which are presumed to have taken place in a Late-Latin/Proto-Romance stage; in Sect. 4, we will examine two infix-distributions that are recurrent from a twofold perspective: they recur cross-dialectally and cross-morphologically, which implies on the one hand that these infix-distributions are shared by a group of (not necessarily neighboring) Romance varieties, and on the other hand that these infix-configurations meet with parallel allomorphic patterns that are displayed in other, non-infixed, verbs (cf. Maiden 2003); in Sect. 5, we will take a closer look at infix-distributions that, at first sight, seem arbitrary in that they cannot be reduced to or associated with recurrent allomorphic patterns. Within the context of Sect. 5, we will argue that aberrant infix-distributions may acquire some transparency by embedding them in a cross-conjugational framework. The theoretical goal of this study is to show that a single, isolable linguistic change, such as the intra-paradigmatic restructuring of the verbal infix -\(I/ESC\)- in the evolution from Latin to Romance, can hardly be captured by one universal explanatory factor. Especially from a contrastive/comparative perspective, the analysis of the Romance

\(^{1}\) We will use here the term ‘infix’, although we must admit that this is a rather random terminological choice, which is in a certain sense even improper, since commonly the label ‘infix’ is understood to mean the consonantal elements inserted into roots, e.g., nasal /\(ml\)/, /\(n\)/ in Latin pres.ind. RU-M-PERE ‘break’ versus perf.ind. RUPI, VI-N-CERE ‘win’ versus perf. VICI). Other terms in use are ‘suffix’, ‘affix’, ‘interfix’ (Malkiel 1958, 1973/1974), and augment (Maiden 2003, 2005a/b), the latter being probably the most neutral (cf. Maiden 2003, p. 2, fn. 1), but for the sake of Romance historical grammatical convenience (Meyer-Lübke 1974; Tekavčić 1972; Rohlfs 1966–1969 use ‘infix’) however, we have opted here for the term ‘infix’.