Alternations between regular and athematic participles in Brazilian Portuguese  

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1. Introduction. In BP, there are three constructions where a participle can be used:

(1) a. Essa camisa foi pass-a-d-a pelo João.  
   ‘This shirt was ironed by João.’  
   Verbal passive

   b. Essa camisa está pass-a-da.  
   ‘This shirt is ironed.’  
   Adjectival passive

   c. [ Pass-a-da a última camisa ], o João pôde descansar.  
   ‘Having ironed the last shirt (Lit.: Ironed the last shirt), João could go rest.’  
   Absolute participle

In its regular form, the participle is exponed by /-d/; it is preceded by a theme vowel and followed by agreement morphology. Besides a regular participial form (leftmost column in (2)), some verbs allow for a form that lacks /-d/ and a THV (3rd column) – the same is true in other Romance languages, e.g. Italian (Calabrese:2015). These are called athematic participles (Lobato:1999; Chagas:2011; Scher et al.:2013; 2014; Nevins et al.:2014, i.a.).

(2) a. ganh-a-d-o/a(s) ‘win-T H V-PTC-AGR’  
   b. limp-a-d-o/a(s) ‘clean-T H V-PTC-AGR’ limp-o/a(s) ‘clean-AGR’

The participial constructions in (1) differ in which participle(s) they may take. Verbal passives allows for either participial form (3a), adjectival passives only allow for the athematic participle (3b), and absolute participles only allow for the regular participle (3c).

(3) a. O armário foi limp-a-d-o / limp-o (pelo João).  
   the wardrobe was clean-THV-PTC-AGR / clean-AGR (by.the João)

   b. O armário permanece/está *limp-a-d-o / limp-o.  
   the wardrobe remains/is *clean-THV-PTC-AGR / clean-AGR

   c. [ Limp-a-d-o / *Limp-o o armário ], o João foi descansar.  
   [ clean-THV-PTC-AGR / *clean-AGR the wardrobe ] the João went rest.INF

While it is not unusual for there to be more than one participle available (cf. Embick:2004, 2003), each form is usually restricted to a particular environment. Our goal is to explain why either participle is possible in verbal passives (3a) in BP, an alternation that, to the best of our knowledge, has not been addressed. (3b) and (3c) are boundary cases that the analysis must also account for.

2. Three classes of participles. Only verbal passives can license a by-phrase (3a); adjectival passives (4a) and absolute participles (4b) cannot.

   the wardrobe remains/is clean-AGR (*by.the João)

   b. [ Limp-a-d-as as gavetas (*pelo João) ], . . .  
   [ clean-THV-PTC-AGR the drawers (*by.the João) ] . . .

Absolute participles (5c) are still different from adjectival passives (5b) (and similar to verbal passives (5a)) in that they can be modified by manner adverbs.

(5) a. O armário foi limp(-a-d)-o cuidadosamente / rapidamente.  
   the wardrobe was clean-PTC-AGR carefully / quickly
b. O armário permanece/está a-ber-t-o (cuidadosamente / rapidamente). the wardrobe remains/was open-PTC-AGR (carefully / quickly)

3. Analysis. Following Oltra-Massuet:1999, i.a., I assume that theme vowels are disso associative morphemes. I propose that they are inserted to the right of the root in [+V] environments.

(6) **Theme Vowel insertion:** \( \emptyset \rightarrow \text{THV/}[-V] \) (where \( \text{THV} = \{-a, -e, -i\} \))

I propose the following system of \([\pm V(\text{ERBAL}), \pm A(\text{ADJECTIVAL})]\) features:

(7) a. Participle: \([+V,+A]\)  
b. Adjective: \([-V,+A]\)  
c. Verb: \([+V,-A]\)  
d. Noun: \([-V,-A]\)

Inspired by Kučerová:2018’s treatment of class markers in Italian, I propose that roots determine which PTC is inserted. Roots like those in (2) select for a PTC that lacks a \([\pm V]\) feature (8)-a; such a feature will be supplied by the context. Other roots select for a fully specified PTC (8)-b.

(8) a. PTC \( \rightarrow [\_,-A] / \sqrt{\text{limp}}, \sqrt{\text{ganh}}, \ldots \)  
b. PTC \( \rightarrow [+V,+A] \)

The Vocabulary Entries that expone PTC are as follows:

(9) a. \([+A]_p \leftrightarrow /\emptyset/\)  
b. \([+A,+V]_p \leftrightarrow /-d/\)

I propose that verbal passives have two object positions. The verb *perguntar* ‘ask’ can only be used in verbal passives; it cannot be used in adjectival passives nor absolute participles (not shown). I attribute this possibility to the availability of an additional object position in verbal passives. Since *a Maria* is a goal argument in (10), I assume this is a lower position (Larson:1988; cf. (11a)).

(10) A Maria foi **pergunt-a-d-a** se já foi assaltada alguma vez.

the Maria was ask-THV-PTC-AGR if already was robbed some time

I propose that verbal passives (11a), adjectival passives (11b), and absolute participles (11c) have the following structures, illustrated with *limp-a-d-a* as ‘\( \sqrt{\text{clean}}-(\text{THV-PTC})\)-AGR’:

(11) a. \( \text{VoiceP} \)  
b. \( a \)  
c. \( \text{DP}_{\text{obj}} \)
(11a), if the object occupies a lower position ($\text{DP}_{\text{obj}}$), it is this DP that supplies a $[-V]$ feature to PTC. The result is an athematic participle. If the object occupies the higher position, the closest element that can supply a $[\pm V]$ feature to PTC is $v$. In that case, PTC is going to be exponed as $/-d/$ and a THV will be inserted. The optionality between athematic and regular participles in verbal passives is the reflex of the two structures proposed for them.