The specifics of Portuguese Morphology

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It is a well established fact that Portuguese, like Rumanian, for instance, is a romance language.

We have learned that, in a quite systematic way, from Friedrich Diez, in its *Grammatik der romanischen Sprachen*, published for the first time between 1836 and 1843, and from Meyer-Lübke’s grammar (bearing the same title as its predecessor), published between 1890 and 1902.
A huge amount of monographic research work has been produced since then (not to mention previous insights), but it is also pretty obvious that romance studies are not a fashionable subject matter for contemporary linguistics.

Consequently, the information sources that we still consider in this field are mature books nowadays.


On the other hand, contemporary mainstream linguistics deals mainly with English and it also pays some to the so-called ‘exotic’ languages. Romance languages are, thus, not a priority.

However, we can pinpoint some shortcomings both in the state of the art of romance linguistics and in theories that are built upon English only, particularly if we consider morphology.
So, what I like to do, when I do linguistics, is to relate historical analysis to a formal synchronic approach and to isolate peculiar phenomena in the morphology of Portuguese.

abundant verbs

border shifting suffixes
**Abundant verbs** are verbs that have 2 past participle forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>eleger</th>
<th>elegido</th>
<th>eleito</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

This is a quite unpredictable situation that affects randomly a considerable amount of verbs, and it is etymologically driven, at least in its origins.

In Latin, the nominal root upon which both the past participle and the supine were formed was obtained by the adjunction of a suffix –*t* to the infinitive stem of verbs belonging to the 1\textsuperscript{st} or the 4\textsuperscript{th} conjugations.
This verbs were called weak verbs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>domin-a-re</th>
<th>domin-a-t-us</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aud-i-re</td>
<td>aud-i-t-us</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of strong verbs, either the nominal root was formed upon the infinitive root or an allomorph or a suppletive form showed up:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>leg-e-re</th>
<th>lec- -t-us</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>refer-re</td>
<td>relat-us</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Portuguese adopted the algorithm of the weak verbs:

| domin-a-re | domin-a-t-us |
| domin-a-r | domin-a-do |

And it generalised it for most verbs of the three available conjugations:

| domin-a-r | domin-a-do |
| beb-e-r | beb-i-do |
| dorm-i-r | dorm-i-do |
However, Portuguese also borrowed from Latin a certain number of strong participles, some of which are verb forms, others are just used as adjectives and some other are nouns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb</th>
<th>noun</th>
<th>adjective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dizer</td>
<td>dito</td>
<td>*dizado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>colher</td>
<td>colheita</td>
<td>colhido</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cingir</td>
<td>cinto</td>
<td>cingido</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- dizer: to say
- dito: said
- *dizado: past participle
- erudito/a: learned
- colheita: harvest
- colhido: harvested
- cinto: belt
- cingido: belted
This is why Portuguese sometimes ends up with two cognate past participles for the same verb, that Portuguese speakers have to learn, verb by verb.

Prescriptive grammars list a variable set of abundant verbs and they state that the distribution is syntactically determined:

- ter+weak PP (compound verb forms)
- ser+strong PP (passive construction)
- estar+strong PP (predicative construction)
A production survey proves otherwise.

The verb that keeps closer to the prescription is *sujeitar*:

*ter+weak PP (compound verb forms)*

*O professor tem sujeitado os alunos a difíceis provas – 78,8%*

*ser+strong PP (passive construction)*

*Os alunos foram sujeitos a difíceis provas – 75,6%*

*estar+strong PP (predicative construction)*

*Os alunos estão sujeitos à vontade do professor – 85,6%*
Most verbs, however, depart from the prescription, showing one the following three tendencies:

1. The weak PP tends to disappear:

O professor **tem expulsado** alunos todos os dias – 42,5%
Os alunos **foram expulsos** pelo professor – 88,1%
Os alunos **estão expulsos** até amanhã – 84,4%
2. The strong PP tends to disappear:

- *O professor* **tem concluído** a aula a horas – 90,0%
- *O trabalho* **foi concluído** a tempo – 13,1%
- *O trabalho* **está concluído** – 9,4%

3. Weak and strong PPs are in an equivalent distribution:

- *O professor* **tem impressido** todos os trabalhos – 68,8%
- *O trabalho* **foi impresso** a tempo – 58,1%
- *O trabalho* **está impresso** – 47,5%
Apparently then, we are trying to solve this surplus of PP forms. But against all odds, the story continues.

Although the difference between weak and strong verbs does not apply in Portuguese, the fact is that we seem to like the short strategy (root based) for the formation of PP:

- **entreg-a-r**
- **entreg-a-do**
- **entreg-e**

- **aceit-a-r**
- **aceit-a-do**
- **aceit-e**

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How did Portuguese came up with this novelty?

It is worth noting that, in Latin, a large number of deverbal nominal roots, just as if they were adjectives, was used to form new verbs:

\[
\text{accip}_\text{RV} \rightarrow \text{accep}_\text{RV t]}_\text{nominal root}
\]

\[
\text{accept}_\text{nominal root} \rightarrow \text{acceptāre}_\text{V}
\]

\[
\text{firm}_\text{RADJ} \rightarrow \text{firmāre}_\text{V}
\]
This same strategy was also inherited in Portuguese:

The corollary of this whole reasoning is to be found in short participles that have no etimological pedigree and that the norm of Portuguese does not accept:

Quando o árbitro o expulsou, já o Benfica tinha *marco* (*marcado*) o primeiro golo.

Ontem, ele já tinha *compro* (*comprado*) o carro.
Border shifting suffixes

The Portuguese noun-forming suffix –ção is quite productive.

It attaches to verb stems, even to newcomers to the Portuguese lexicon, such as eucaliptização (meaning ‘the action of planting eucalyptus massively’).
This suffix subcategorizes for a specific type of verb stem, which is the stem that occurs in the formation of the past participle.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{continu- } & \text{a- } r_{\text{Vinf}} & \text{continu- } & \text{a- } do_{\text{PP}} & \text{continu- } & \text{a- } \text{ção} \\
\text{perd- } & \text{e- } r_{\text{Vinf}} & \text{perd- } & \text{i- } do_{\text{PP}} & \text{perd- } & \text{i- } \text{ção} \\
\text{defin- } & \text{i- } r_{\text{Vinf}} & \text{defin- } & \text{i- } do_{\text{PP}} & \text{defin- } & \text{i- } \text{ção}
\end{align*}
\]
The selection of the past stem by –çaõ may be related to the properties of the Latin suffix that originated it, that is –ION (eg. *DOMINATIO*).

–ION selects a deverbal noun root (eg. *DOMINAT*–), generally referred to as the supine root), that also forms the past participle and the supine (eg. *DOMINAT-US*).
Latin –ION nouns thus exhibit the stem alternation of the verbs from which they derive:

MISSIO < MITTERE, MISSUS

TRANSLATIO < TRANFERRE, TRANSLATUS
Portuguese has inherited some of these deverbal action nouns and exempted itself from its regular derivation:

**MOVERE, MOTUS > mover, movido** (cf. remoto)

**MOTIO > moção** (cf. *movição*)

**VERTERE, VERSUS > verter, vertido** (cf. inverso)

**VERSIO > versão** (cf. *vertição*)

**REFERRE, RELATUS > referir, referido** (cf. relato)

**RELATIO > relação** (cf. *referição*)
Exceptionally, Latin –ion nouns were replaced, in Portuguese, by regularly derived nouns in –ção:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{DESTRUERE, DESTRUCTUS} & \rightarrow \text{destruir, destruido} \\
\text{DESTRUCTIO} & \rightarrow *\text{destrução (cf. destruição)} \\
\text{DIMINUERE, DIMINUTUS} & \rightarrow \text{diminuir, diminuido (cf. diminuto)} \\
\text{DIMINUTIO} & \rightarrow *\text{diminuição (cf. diminuição)}
\end{align*}
\]
We may thus conclude that the selection of the past stem by the suffix –ção traces back to the selection of the past participle root in Latin.

Curiously, in the process of transition to Portuguese, the phonetic vicinity of the suffix initial vowel [i] to the final root [t] caused a softening of this consonant into [s] and ultimately led to the suppression of the vowel, forcing the border between the suffix and its base to move leftwards, since there is no verb form that might fit the opposite output (eg. *dominaç-).
The specifics of Portuguese Morphology
In other romance languages, a border shift also occurs. Although the output shape of the suffix may be somewhat different, the commonality points towards the location of this change before the differentiation of these romance languages, eventually in Vulgar Latin.

- Cast. admira-ción
- Fr. admir-ation
- It. admira-zione
- Rm. admirație
Thank you for your attention.
The Latin affiliation and heritage

Romance languages inherited a huge amount of Latin words that we can track back to a well documented and preserved Classical Latin. They did not preserve Classical Latin syntax in a similar way, but even so they exhibit a considerable syntactic homogeneity.

We know why: the relevant comparison is not between romance languages and Classical Latin, but Vulgar Latin.
The Latin affiliation and heritage

This gives rise to a new sort of paradox:

How could some significant changes, such as the loss of duration contrasts for vowels (and all of its consequences
Ancestry problems

The consequences of the loss of duration contrasts for vowels occurred before the split of Vulgar Latin into different Romance Languages (politically induced by the emergence of different countries) were only really dealt with after the split up.

Otherwise, the solution should be more homogeneous then it is.