

Dealing with perfect passive participles

Perfect passive participles show up in a number of constructions:

1. the passive perfect: Laudātus est “He was/has been praised.”
2. as an adjective: Vir laudātus domī est “The praised man is at home.”
3. for a noun: Laudātus in ecclēsiā intrat. “The praised man enters the church.”
4. for an adverbial: Ā ministrō laudātus intrat. “Having been praised by the minister, he enters.”

As you can see, the Latin perfect passive participle is always translated by an English past participle following the pattern [done/having been done].

Since participles function as adjectives, they decline as such throughout the case system:

1. Domum laudatī ministrī videō “I see the house of the praised minister.” (genitive)
2. Laudatae ancillae benedīcam “I will speak well of the praised maidservant.” (dative)
3. Laudatam videō “I see the praised woman.” (accusative)
4. Viā laudatā ad ecclēsiā vēnī “I came to the church by the praised road.” (ablative)

A characteristic and common Latin construction is the **ablative absolute**, a special usage of the participle in the ablative. What is ‘absolute’ about this construction is that it has no direct syntactic relationship to either subject or object: it is its own non-finite clause, and translates into English as an adverbial subclause. Its most basic form is a noun and a (perfect passive) participle, both of which are in the ablative, while also agreeing in gender and number. The textbook translation is typically “with X having been Y-ed”:

- Missā cantatā, populus domum vēnit “With Mass having been sung, the people went home.”
- Mysteriō vīsō, Deum laudāmus “With the mystery having been seen, we praise God.”

Note that the action in the ablative construction need not be carried out by the subject of the main clause, although this is often the case:

- Ūniversā creatūrā dēlētā, terra vacua erat. “With all creation having been destroyed, the land was empty.”

Instead of the somewhat stiff “with X having been Y-ed”-construction, you can often use such formulations as “when/since/after X had been Y-ed,” or, when the subject of the main clause *is* the agent, “having Y-ed the Z”:

- Vīnō bibitō, in domum intrāvit. “Having drunk the wine, he/she entered the house.”

However, it is important to recognize that the above translation is not strictly warranted by the grammar—it is an interpretative paraphrase. Also, here as with other constructions, there is no harm in providing literal translations so as to demonstrate that you understand how the construction works.