In this presentation we propose a new morphosyntactic analysis of Anti-Agreement (AA henceforth) in Amazigh languages, known as the participle in the linguistic literature. The phenomenon of AA refers to situations where there is lack of agreement between the subject and the verb. In Amazigh, it occurs in three types of sentences all of which involve an A-bar subject extraction as illustrated with the Kabyle examples below, namely wh-questions as in (1a); relativized subject in (1b) and clefted subject as in (1c).

(1)  a.  Anta i y-ldi-n tawwurt?
    Who.f.pl. comp pref-opened-suff door
    Who opened the door?

   b.  Taqcict-nni i y-ldi-n tawwurt ṭruḫ
    girl.f.sg comp pref-opened-suff door left
    The girl who opened the door has left

   c.  D nettat i y-ldi-n tbburt
    Cop me Comp pref.-open-suff. door
    It is me who opened the door

In all the examples above the participial form y-ldi-n (or its phonological variant i-ldi-n³) is invariable with respect to person, number, and gender. The participial form is characterized by the suffix y- and the prefix -n. It contrasts with regular verb inflection which agrees with the subject in person, number and gender.

So far, studies on AA in generative Grammar has been analyzed as verb agreement driven by syntactic constraints (Ouhalla 1995, 2005; Ouali 2008, 2011; Baier 2018, among others). The originality of the present study lies in the view that the participial form is derived by means of the demonstrative deictic head -n, which acts as a syntactic head. Indeed, without the demonstrative n, the extracted argument will be interpreted as the object of the sentence as evidenced by the sentence in (2a), to be contrasted with (2b) where the extracted argument is interpreted as the subject.

(2)  a.  D netta i y-wwet
    Particle 3f.sg. Comp 3f.sg.hit-perfective
    It is her that she hit / he hit HER

1 The transliteration system adopted in this article stands in conformity with the Kabyle standardized system.

2 Unless otherwise specified, the examples are from the Kabyle variety.

3 Generally speaking, the initial morpheme 3 masculine singular is realized as y when preceded or followed by a vowel and as i elsewhere. Where this difference is irrelevant, I use the variant y---n to refer to the participle pattern.

4 The relation between the demonstrative particle n and the participial suffix –n as a relative marker has already been suggested by Greenberg (1960)
The first question that needs to be addressed is why the extracted argument in (2a) is always interpreted as the object rather than as the subject. It is this risk of misinterpretation, I believe, that constrains the insertion of the suffix $n$ in order to derive the subject interpretation shown in (2b). Lacking $\varphi$-features, the participial form in (2b) will not be able to delete the exponents on the functional category T or C (to be determined). Chomsky (2000, 2001) proposes that the T involved in participial constructions is defective $T_{\text{def}}$ because it does not inherit $\varphi$-features from C nor does it have an EPP feature. Moreover, $T_{\text{def}}$ does not have the capacity to assign Case because the latter is a configurational off-product that results from $\varphi$-feature elimination. Chomsky (op. cit.) further suggests that in this case, $T_{\text{def}}$ is not selected by C or $v^\ast$, which constitute a strong phase, but the category $V$ which lacks the EPP feature and which constitutes a weak phase. Based on these theoretical assumptions and adopting the conclusion achieved by Achab (2003) that the morpheme $y$- in (2a) is a pronoun incorporated onto $v$, we argue that C (or T) probes the person (or EPP) feature on $y$- getting its Case feature checked as a consequence, thus licensing little pro. The extracted object forms a chain with its trace in its original site where it was assigned inherent accusative Case. Unlike (2a) where the argument nettat is assigned accusative case in its original site, in (2b) the extracted argument nettat and the morpheme $y$- compete for the same nominative (structural) case as they may both serve as target to be probed by C (or T) to check the person (or EPP) feature. Because only one nominative Case is available and the person (EPP) feature can only get checked once, the verb stem is selected by a Demonstrative (following the DP Hypothesis) rather than T, which makes the verb stem a DP rather than a TP. Demonstratives have number and gender but not person, the T selecting the resulting DP must be defective (i.e. lacking person feature).

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$^5$ See Ouali (2006) for an alternative proposing that $T_{\text{def}}$ is selected by C although it does not inherit its features.
References