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Functional Correlates of Ergativity in Aguacatec
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Aguacatec [1], like other Mayan languages, exhibits a split ergative verb agreement system and, hence, is usually classified as an "ergative language". In most cases, an intransitive "subject" (or S, employing the terminology of Dixon 1979) and a transitive "direct object" (or O,) are crossreferenced on their respective verbs by means of a set of "absolutive" prefixes while a transitive "subject" (or A,) is crossreferenced by means of a set of "ergative" prefixes, as seen in:

(1) ja kxh-u7l
    proximate past 2sAbs-ARRIVE HERE
    'you arrived'
(2) ja Ø-uul
    prox.past 3sAbs-ARRIVE HERE
    'he arrived'
(3) ja kxh-t-il
    prox.past 2sAbs-3sErg-SEE
    'he saw you'
(4) ja Ø-aw-il
    prox.past 3sAbs-2sErg-SEE
    'you saw him'

Arguments of stative, equational, and existential predicates are also crossreferenced by absolutive morphemes, whereas the ergative prefixes are used to crossreference noun possessors.

In certain types of subordinate clauses, however, S's are not crossreferenced by the customary absolutive morphemes but rather by the same ergative prefixes that crossreference A's, thus giving the appearance of a nominative/accusative verb agreement system in those environments. For this reason the verb agreement is said to be "split ergative". One environment in which this occurs is in time adverbial clauses in the "indefinite past" tense:

(5) ye aw-uul-e7n,
    THE 2sErg-ARRIVE HERE-nominalizer
    niin tzun na chin- waan
    AND THEN incompleteive 1sAbs-EAT
    'when you arrived, I was eating'
(6) ye t-uul-e7n,...
    THE 3sErg-ARRIVE HERE-nom.
    'when he arrived,...'
(7) ye t-il-col
    axh,...
THE 3sErg-SEE-active infinitive 2sPro(Abs)
'when he saw you,...'
(8) ye aw-il-ool ə...
THE 2sErg-SEE-act.inf 3sAbs
'when you saw him,...'

Here it can be seen that the verb forms found in the
adverbal clauses of (5-8) are actually derived verbal
nouns and, thus, the ergative prefixes crossreferencing
their respective S's and A's may be viewed as being
formally noun possessors. O's are still marked by the
absolutive marker ə in the third person singular (as in
8) or by one of the absolutive independent pronouns in
the other person/numbers (as in 7).

Like some, though not all, morphologically erga-
tive languages, Aguacatec also manifests syntactic
ergativity in that there is a class of syntactic rules
which make reference to the ergative/absolutive rela-
tions. For example, the rule which forms cleft sen-
tences in Aguacatec takes a constituent which normally
appears after the verb and places it before the verb.
In addition, the verb takes the form it would have in a
subordinate clause. Thus, for example, in

(9) ja ə-uul yaaj
prox.past 3sAbs-ARRIVE HERE MAN
'the man arrived'
(10) yaaj m-ə-u7l
MAN prox.past-3sAbs-ARRIVE HERE
'it was the man that arrived'

it can be seen that the S yaaj, which ordinarily fol-
lows the verb as in (9), is placed before the verb in
the clefted version (10). Furthermore, the proximate
past tense, marked in (9) by means of the particle ja,
which is used in main clauses, is marked in (10) by
means of the prefix m-, which is used in subordinate
clauses. Essentially the same thing happens when an O
is clefted in a transitive sentence:

(11) ja ə-x-tx'aj xna7n b'u7y
prox.past 3sAbs-3sErg-WASH WOMAN RAG
'the woman washed the rag'
(12) b'u7y n-ə-x-tx'aj xna7n
RAG prox.past-3sAbs-3sErg-WASH WOMAN
'it was the rag that the woman washed'

However, clefting an A is not quite so simple. In
order to do this, further changes must be made in the
verb, as in
Here the verb form is an intransitive stem derived by the suffix -oon which shows absolutive agreement with the underlying O, as seen more clearly in (14).

(14) in n-kxh-b'iy-oon
1sPro(Abs) prox.past-2sAbs-HIT-suff
'I was the one that hit you'

When the O is 3s, however, the intransitive verb form may optionally agree with the underlying A as seen in (15).

(15) in \{m- Ø-\} b'iy-oon
{\{n-chin-\}}
1sPro(Abs) prox.past-{3sAbs-} HIT-suffix
{\{1sAbs-\}}
'I was the one who hit him'

This, plus the fact that clefted A's may appear as one of the absolutive independent pronouns (as seen in 14 and 15) demonstrates that the clefted constituent in (13-15) is an "absolutive NP" [2]. Thus, it can be seen that the rule that forms cleft sentences is sensitive to the ergative/absolutive relations in that ergative NP's cannot be clefted; or, using Dixon's terminology, A's cannot be clefted unless they are first put into derived S function. What has just been seen for clefting is also true of relative clause formation and WH-question formation; as can be seen in

(16) ja Ø-w-il xna7n (ye)
prox.past 3sAbs-1sErg-SEE WOMAN (THE)
m-Ø-u7l
prox.past-3sAbs-ARRIVE HERE
'I saw the woman who arrived'

(17) ja Ø-w-il b'u7y (ye)
RAG
n-Ø-x-tx'aj xna7n
prox.past-3sAbs-3sErg-WASH WOMAN
'I saw the rag that the woman washed'

(18) ja Ø-w-il xna7n (ye)
n-Ø-tx'aj-oon b'u7y
prox.past-3sAbs-WASH-suff
'I saw the woman who washed the rag'

(19) na7 m-Ø-u7l
WHO prox.past-3sAbs-ARRIVE HERE
'who arrived?'
(20) na7 m-φ-Ø-b'iy  yaaj
    WHO prox.past-3sAbs-3sErg-HIT MAN
    'who did the man hit?'
(21) na7 m-Ø-b'iy-oon  yaaj
    WHO prox.past-3sAbs-HIT-suff MAN
    'who hit the man?'

Dixon (1979) attempts to set up a universal typological framework for explaining ergativity in the world's languages. According to this framework, morphological ergativity is just one of a number of possible ways by means of which a language can distinguish between the A and O of a transitive sentence. In Agua catec, then, A's and O's are distinguishable both by the VSO word order and the verb agreement, which crossreferences A's with ergative prefixes and O's with absolutive prefixes. The S, which occurs only in intransitive sentences, and is therefore easily distinguished from the A's and O's, is generally crossreferenced by an absolutive prefix, thus manifesting morphological ergativity. We have also seen that there are a few environments in which S's are crossreferenced by means of an ergative prefix; however, it can be seen that A's are still clearly distinguished from O's here also. Syntactic ergativity, on the other hand, depends on the notion of "pivot". According to Dixon, some syntactic rules universally treat A's and S's alike. There is, however, a class of "generalized transformations" (in the sense of Chomsky 1957), which operate to form coordinate and subordinate constructions. Depending on the language, these rules may treat S's and A's alike, in which case it is said that the rules operate on an "S/A pivot", or they may treat S's and O's alike, in which case there is said to be an "S/O pivot". A language with an S/O pivot is said to have ergative syntax. Of the rules we have seen in Agua catec, relative clause formation clearly involves the subordination of one clause to another. It was also noted that even in clefted sentences and WH-questions the verb takes the form it would have in a subordinate clause. Thus, these rules too can be viewed as cases of one clause (the one with the verb) being subordinated to another (consisting of the clefted or questioned constituent). It appears, then, that all three of these rules involve generalized transformations. It has also been seen that all three of these rules operate in terms of an S/O pivot. Agua catec, therefore, could be fit reasonably well into Dixon's framework and can be said to have ergative syntax.

In another recent treatment of ergativity, Plank (1979) attempts to support the position that ergativity
"ultimately has to be accounted for in semantic and pragmatic rather than superficial morpho-syntactic terms." (p.4). In particular he makes the admittedly speculative claim (p.15) that in an "ergative construction" the "transitive patient" (= 0) is the "grammaticalized topic", whereas in an "accusative construction" the grammaticalized topic is the "transitive agent" (= A). We shall now turn to an examination of certain functional notions in Aguacatec such as theme, contrastiveness, and given/new information. It will be seen that ergativity in Aguacatec is manifested in additional ways beyond those discussed by Dixon. Furthermore, it will be seen that these facts support Plank's position that ergativity must be accounted for in semantic and pragmatic terms. However, it will also be seen that Plank's specific claim that the 0 of an ergative construction is the grammaticalized topic does not hold for Aguacatec.

In looking at texts in Aguacatec one often finds the enclitic particle tz appended to certain words, though this particle seldom, if ever, occurs in eliciting sentences from an informant. When examples of it are pointed out to them in texts, native speakers generally claim that the particle does not have to be there but otherwise seem to be unable to explain what difference it makes if it is there. If nothing else this seems to indicate at least that this particle is optional. Though at first sight it seems to occur "scattered here and there" throughout a text, it is actually placed regularly according to a simple rule. Given that simple sentences consist of one or more of the following elements:

\[(22) (\text{PARTICLES})+\text{PREDICATE } (+\text{PARTICLES})+\{A\} \{S\} (+\text{PARTICLES}) (+0) (+\text{OTHER CONSTITUENTS})\]

the particle tz, if it occurs at all, will be appended to the rightmost element of (22) excluding "OTHER CONSTITUENTS". The appearance of being scattered here and there is due to the fact that some of the elements of (22) are optional and some may not appear overtly even if present. For example, an A, though obligatory in a transitive sentence, may be pronominalized, in which case it appears only as an agreement marker on the verb. All of this suggests that whatever the function of tz may be, it probably refers to the clause as a whole and not just to the constituent to which it is cliticized.

As a first approximation to the function of tz, consider its use in the following excerpt from a text:
Here it can be seen that the protagonist of the story, Lu7 Tzuu7 'Pedro Tecomate', is the subject of each of the principal clauses in (23a-g) (where "subject" is taken to mean 'either A or S'). Furthermore it can be seen that tz appears in each of these clauses except the first one. In (23g) the subject changes to 'the merchants' and tz does not appear. In (23h), however, the merchants are still the subject and tz reappears. Thus, it seems that tz functions as a "same subject" marker. This, in fact, accounts for most of the occurrences of tz remembering, of course, that native speakers judge its use to be optional and, thus, not every instance of same subject is marked.

There are, however, some occurrences of tz which cannot be characterized this way. For example, in the
same text, after telling how the merchants went crazy over what they saw, we find:

(24) tooke7n tzun chiyool ajpyaaj-tz ITS-ENTERING THEN THEIR-WORD MERCHANT-tz te7j ABOUT-IT
'So the merchants, starting to discuss it,...'

Here, although we continue to talk about the merchants, tz cannot be interpreted as indicating same subject because ajpyaaj is not the subject but rather the possessor of the subject chiyool, which is here introduced for the first time. This suggests that perhaps tz does not mark same subject but rather same "theme", where theme is taken, following Kuno (1976), to be something like "what the sentence is about". As might be expected, the theme is usually the subject; however, there are some cases such as in (24) where this is not the case.

Another problematical example is

(25) ej niin tzun b'een naawlooin tan AND THEN HE-WENT NAAWLOON TO je7se7n tzaaj choklaast xe ITS-BEING-RAISED HITHER CHOCOLATE IN chikoo7k ye eequm kanteel THEIR-CRATES THE CARRIER CANDLE niin kuu7 q'aag'-tz ta7n AND IT-DESCENDED FIRE-tz BY-HIM
'And so the "naawlooin" went to take the chocolate from the crates of the candle carriers, and he made a fire.'
(lit. '...fire descended by him. ')

Here the subject of the last clause is q'aag' 'fire', and tz is appended to this. However, this is the first time that the fire has been mentioned; therefore, tz cannot be marking q'aag' as same subject. However, it seems clear that the subject of the first clause, naawlooin, is the theme of that clause, and it seems likely that it continues to be thetheme of the second clause in spite of the fact that it is not the subject but rather an oblique agent. Thus, once again tz can be taken to mean same theme. Another similar example is (26) from a passage about what a beekeeper did one day when he went out to get honey.

(26) niin ook tan telse7n tzaaj, AND HE-ENTERED TO ITS-BEING-TAKEN-OUT HITHER nooje7n t-etz tzuu7-tz tan kaab',
ITS-FILLING-UP 3sErg-Gen GOURD-tz BY HONEY
'And he began to take it (honey) out, the
gourd filling up with honey,...'

Here, though the subject of the first clause is under-
stood to be the agent of the action of the second
clause, no agent is overtly expressed in that clause,
neither as a subject or as an agent. Nevertheless, the
beekeeper seems clearly to be the theme throughout the
entire paragraph from which (26) is taken. Therefore,
it does not seem unreasonable to assume that tz in (26)
indicates that the beekeeper continues to be the theme
in the second clause in spite of the fact that he is
not explicitly mentioned [3].

We might consider another possible interpretation
of these data, however. It might be that tz does indi-
cate same subject but refers to deep subject rather
than surface subject. This could perhaps account for
all of the examples we have seen as long as we assume
sufficiently abstract deep structures and rules for
deleting underlying subjects. Alternatively, we could
take tz to mean same agent. However, example (27)
should show that tz must be taken to mean same theme.

(27a) poro xhchiwutz niin ajpyaaj ye
BUT IN-FRONT-OF-THEM THITHER MERCHANT THE
jee7n xtx'aanuul tiib' t-etz chi7b'aj
ITS-ROASTING 3sErg-Gen MEAT
tzwutz ye xaaruu7;
IN-FRONT-OF-IT PITCHER
'But it was right in front of the merchants
that the meat roasted before the pitcher,'

(27b) xhchiwutz niin ye tooke7'n xtxoolii
HIS-BEGINNING-TO-LINE-IT-UP
Lu7 ye 7waj te7j xaaruu7
PEDRO TORTILLA ABOUT-IT
'it was right in front of them that Pedro
began to line up the tortillas around the
pitcher,'

(27c) xhchiwutz niin ajpyaaj-tz ye jee7n
MERCHANT-tz ITS-RISING
sib'eel t-etz 7waj tan stz'e7e7n.
ITS-SMOKE 3sErg-Gen BY-IT ITS-BURNING
'it was right in front of the merchants that
smoke came up from the tortillas from their
burning.'

Here the tz in (27c) cannot be taken to mean same sub-
ject nor same agent since ajpyaaj is neither a subject
nor an agent at any level but rather is the head of a
locative noun phrase. Nevertheless, ajpyaaj does seem
to be the theme throughout (27). Therefore, we can
conclude that there is a notion of discourse theme which is relevant to Agua catec syntax and which is distinct from, though closely related to, the notion of subject. Furthermore, we can conclude that tz is an optional marker of the fact that a clause has the same theme as the previous clause.

Even this characterization of tz is not completely correct. We should note four complications that must be dealt with in any complete treatment of the use of this particle: (1) It is not always true that tz means 'same theme as the previous clause' since certain types of clauses are typically ignored in looking back at the 'previous clause'. Some instances of this can be found in the examples we have already looked at. One type of clause that is ignored is an object complement clause. Thus, when tz appears in (23b), it ignores the preceding object complement ye teele7n  tzaaj  chichoojo7n kob'ox  ajpyaaaj in (23a) and instead refers back to the theme of the matrix clause b'een  tilool  Lu7. In the same way, "purpose clauses" such as tan k'otle7n  juun jul  tzi  b'ee7 in (23c) are ignored. Examples of this can also be seen in (23b), (25), and (26). Though adverbial clauses are generally not ignored in this way, they are ignored if they are embedded within another subordinate clause. Thus, the adverbial clause (23g) contains another adverbial clause gale7  xmuq7t ye g'aaq' embedded within it and is itself embedded within the matrix clause (23h). The tz in (23h) ignores the most deeply embedded clause in (23g) but not the less deeply embedded clause ej ma ye kyopoone7n ye e7 ajpyaaaj. All of this suggests that tz may operate under some kind of "command" type constraint such as has been used in explaining pronominal anaphora in English; however, this needs further study. (2) The second thing to note is that direct quotations are generally ignored in the same way as the clause types just discussed. (3) The third thing to note is that tz does not always refer back to the theme of the previous non-ignored clause. In some cases a clause with a particular theme may introduce a new theme near the end and then the next clause may contain tz if its theme is the same as this newly introduced theme. An example may be seen in:

(28a) niin kuu7  tq'ool-tz  wi
   AND  HE-PUT-IT-DOWN-tz ON
   txa7x  ch'im  tzwutz  ye
   GREEN GRASS IN-FRONT-OF-IT THE
   xaaruu7  xhchiwutz  e7
   PITCHER IN-FRONT-OF-THEM plural
   ajpyaaaj.
   MERCHANT
'And he put it on the grass before the pitcher in front of the merchants.'

(28b) na chitzeʔeen niin eʔ THEY-WERE-LAUGHING THITHER plural
ajpyaaj-tz teʔj MERCHANT-tz ABOUT-HIM
'The merchants were laughing at him.'

Here, tz in (28a) indicates that the theme of that clause, Luʔ Tzuuʔ, is the same as the theme of the previous clause. However, at the end of that clause, the ajpyaaj 'merchants' are reintroduced; and tz appears again in (28b) indicating that the ajpyaaj continue as the theme of that clause. (4) The fourth thing to note is the above mentioned optionality of tz. It appears that tz tends to be used more often when the possibility of ambiguity may arise and less often otherwise. Thus, it tends to be used less often in non-third person discourse than in third person discourse with two or more participants mentioned. Even in this latter situation, tz seems to be used less often when the third person participants are consistently mentioned by name than when they are consistently pronominalized.

A full treatment of these details is beyond the scope of this paper, however. For our purposes here, it is sufficient to observe that the use of the particle tz is based on some notion of theme. Then, looking at examples of the use of this particle we can note some interesting facts about the distribution of themes in Aguacatec. We have seen that in most cases themes are subjects, that is, A's and S's. We have also seen that there are some cases where the theme is not the subject but rather some other constituent such as possessor of the subject as in (24), oblique agent as in (25), and head of a locative phrase as in (27). We have also seen a case in (26) where the theme does not even overtly appear in the clause, though it is understood to be the agent. What has never been found, however, in any of the texts that I have looked at, is a case where an 0 was a theme. Therefore, given that A's and S's are included in the set of possible themes, and 0's are excluded, it can be said that themes in Aguacatec are distributed on a nominative/accusative basis. Furthermore, given that the notion of theme used here corresponds to Plank's notion of topic, it can be seen that Aguacatec does not conform to Plank's hypothesis that 0's are grammaticalized topics in ergative constructions. In fact, in Aguacatec, 0's are the one thing that can never be themes (or "topics" in Plank's terminology).

We will now turn to the examination of another morpheme, the relational noun -eet. A relational noun
is a possessed noun stem which functions much like prepositions do in some other languages to indicate, e.g., locatives, oblique agents, datives, instruments, etc. The possessive prefix is coreferential with the head NP. The basic meaning of the relational noun -eetz is 'genitive', and may occur in constructions like

(29) xh-cheej (t-etz) yaaaj
3sErg-HORSE 3sErg-Genitive MAN
'the man's horse'

(30) (q-etz) qa-cheej ~ qacheej qeetz
1pErg-Gen 1pErg-HORSE
'our horse'

As suggested by the use of parentheses in (29) and (30), -eetz is optional in these constructions. When -eetz is used it indicates contrastiveness in the same way as would adding heavy stress to the possessors in the English translations [4]. Sometimes -eetz is used without a head NP as a possessive pronoun as in:

(31) ye ka7l ya7stzun t-eetz
THE HOUSE THAT-THEN 3sErg-Gen
'the house is his'

(32) ej niin tzun jee7 tq'ool t-eetz wi txas7x ch'im
AND THEN HE-SET-IT 3sErg-Gen ON GREEN GRASS
'And he set his on the grass'

In (32), though not necessarily in (31), it seems that -eetz is also contrastive, indicating that of the possible things (in this case, pitchers) that we could be talking about, it was the one that belonged to him that he put on the grass. There are other uses of -eetz, however, that are not related to possession, as seen in

(33) ej jalchaan, niki' loc7 oor
AND DAWN WHAT dubitative HOUR
 tiky'le7n t-etz Lu7,
 HIS-HAVING-PASSED 3sErg-Gen PEDRO
 kyiky'e7n-t ky-etz
 THEIR-PASSING-particle 3pErg-Gen
 ajpyaaj
 MERCHANT
 'and at dawn (who knows at what hour Pédro moved on?) the merchants moved on'

Here tetz Lu7 cannot be understood as 'Pedro's' nor 'of Pedro'; similarly kyetz ajpyaaj cannot mean 'the merchants', nor 'of the merchants' [5]. It seems clear,
however, that the use of -eetz in (33) has one thing in common with its use in (29), (30), and (32), namely, that it indicates contrastiveness. That is, what Pedro did is being contrasted with what the merchants did. Because of this, the English translation can be appropriately read with heavy stress on 'Pedro' and 'merchants' as indicated in (33).

Stress in English has other uses, of course, besides indicating contrastiveness. For example, in

(34) We got home late last night and found our front door open.

the heavy stress does not seem to indicate contrastiveness since the door is not being compared with anything else; but since we expect the front door to be closed, our surprise at discovering this unexpected situation is indicated by the heavy stress on door. In Aguacatec, -eetz is used in an analogous way:

(35) ma kyopoone7n, qopij taane7n BUT THEIR-ARRIVING-THERE OPENED ITS-FORM t-etz jul. 3sErg-Gen HOLE 'But when they arrived, the hole was open.'

In fact, it seems that -eetz can generally be translated as heavy stress in English. However, the converse is apparently not true. For example, heavy stress can also indicate new information in English, as in

(36) Once upon a time there was a king. And (new) he lived with his family in a large castle. (given) However, -eetz is never used to introduce new information in Aguacatec unless it is specifically contrastive.

If we now examine the distribution of -eetz we find that it can be used with almost any NP. For example, we have seen -eetz used with noun possessors as in (29-30), and S's in (26) and (33). It also occurs with oblique agents, as in

(37) ...juun sweerte7j ntx' amx ONE THIS-LUCKY-THING IT-WAS-CAUGHT w-eetz wa7n 1sErg-Gen BY-ME
Examples of -eetz used with O's are extremely rare, but they do exist. One example was seen in (32), and two more can be seen in (38) and (39).

(38) niin b'aaj kyeen chitxooliil ye ky-etz AND THEY-RELATED-ALL-OF-IT THE 3pErg-Gen ky-ajb'il 3pErg-DESIRE 'and they related all of their wishes'

(39) kun piil ye w-eetz GO TRY THE 3pErg-Gen '(if you think your life is tough...) go and try mine!'

Examples of -eetz used with A's are also fairly uncommon. One example is in the following, which is a common formula for beginning a story:

(40) at-∅ jyun yool EXIST-3sAbs ONE WORD ∅-w-iit-naq w-eetz 3sAbs-1sErg-HEAR-remote past 1sErg-Gen 'there is a story that I have heard'

Here, however, it does not seem that -eetz is contrastive: it would not be appropriate for me to read the English translation with heavy stress on the pronoun 'I', singling myself out from the set of possible hearers of stories. The weetz in (40) seems to be functioning merely as some kind of non-contrastive pronoun in support of the ergative prefix on the verb. It should be remembered that the ordinary independent pronouns in Aguacatec are absolutes and are never crossreferenced by ergative prefixes. Another example is seen in

(41a) niin tzun b'e'en b'eq'ool, AND THEN HE-SWALLOWED-HIM 'And then he (the animal) swallowed him (the patron),' (41b) niin aaj junt tiirtz xe a7 chij. AND HE-WENT ANOTHER TIME-tz IN WATER quotative 'and he went back into the water, they say.' (41c) i tzun b'ene7n tilool t-etz Focus THEN HIS-SEEING-IT 3sErg-Gen mocos ye b'ene7n t-etz SERVANT THE HIS-GOING 3sErg-Gen patron tan txuk, PATRON BY-HIM ANIMAL
'when the servant saw that the patrón
had been taken off by the animal,'

(41d) niin tzun aajtz lajqe7l...
AND THEN HE-WENT-tz QUICKLY
'he (the servant) went quickly...'

In (41c) patroon is the S of the intransitive verb b'ee9e7n, and tetz is apparently used with this NP because of the unexpectedness of his being carried off by the animal. This use of -eetz, then, is like that seen previously in (35). It can also be seen in (41c) that tetz is used with moos, which is the A of the transitive verb b'ee9e7n tilool. Once again, however, the use of -eetz with this A does not seem to be for indicating contrastiveness. The servant is not being singled out from the set of possible viewers of this event; in fact, it is clear that he is the only one who could have possibly seen it. What -eetz seems to be doing here is signalling a shift to a new theme. It is clear that the animal was the theme in the preceding lines, and it appears that the servant becomes the theme in (41c) as demonstrated by the fact that the same theme marker tz appears in (41d). Not all cases of theme shift are marked by -eetz in this way (cf. the theme shift in 28), but it does seem that the majority of instances of -eetz used with A's do indicate theme shift as in (41). Whether the few other instances, such as in (40), can also be considered theme shift is not clear; however, what is clear is that -eetz never seems to be used to indicate contrastiveness with A's. If an underlying A is to be made contrastive, it must be either clefted, as in (13), or made into an oblique agent of a passive and be preceded by -eetz as in (37).

It appears, then, that unlike thematization, which operates on a nominative/accusative basis, contrastiveness as marked by -eetz operates on an ergative/absolutive basis since S's and O's are included in the set of things that can be made contrastive, while A's are excluded. It should be remembered, however, that even though O's may be contrastive, as seen in (38) and (39), there seems to be a great reluctance to do this in practice. Usually underlying O's which are to be contrastive are first put into derived S function as was seen in (41c) with tetz patroon.

We shall finally take a very brief look at the introduction of new information. New information is often introduced by means of the "existential predicate" at 'there is/are; to be in a place' followed by a quantified noun phrase. The most common quantifier is the number juun 'one', which also functions much like an indefinite article. An example of this construction was seen in (40). Arguments of at are always
crossreferenced by means of absolutive suffixes. New information can be introduced in numerous other ways, however. For example, in (23a) kob'ox ajpyaat 'some merchants' is introduced as the possessor of an S. In (23c) jüun jul 'a hole' is introduced as the possessor/S of a "passive infinitive". In (23d) q'aag' 'fire' is introduced as an O. In (25) q'aag' 'fire' is introduced as an S. What is never found, however, is new information introduced as a surface A; ergative subjects of transitive verbs are always given NPs. Thus, since S's and O's may be new, but A's never may be, it can be seen that new information, like contrastiveness, but unlike thematization, is distributed on an ergative/absolutive basis.

It has been seen, then, that if we examine functional notions such as contrastiveness and new information, we find that ergativity is manifested in Agua catec in other ways besides verb agreement and choice of syntactic pivot. Furthermore, it appears that Plank's claim that ergativity can be accounted for in pragmatic terms is true, at least in Agua catec. In this connection, it should be noted that one of the ergative syntactic rules we have seen is that which derives cleft sentences, and it is clear that clefting is another way of indicating contrastiveness. Furthermore, looking at the morphology of relative clause formation and WH-question formation, it appears that these two rules and the clefting rule are one and the same rule. This is not entirely unreasonable since cleft sentences, relative clauses, and WH-questions all deal with identifying a particular member from a set of possibilities; and this is essentially what contrastiveness is all about too. Thus, it makes sense that these rules, which all seem to involve contrastiveness, should operate on an S/O pivot since, as we saw in the discussion of -eetx, contrastiveness in general is restricted such that it can apply to S's and O's but never to A's. It is also interesting to note that the reluctance to make O's contrastive with -eetx seems to have spread to relative clause formation. We saw in (17) that O's may undergo relativization; and while (17) is a perfectly acceptable sentence, there seems to be a tendency not to use this construction but rather put the underlying 0 into derived S function before relativizing it, thus forming sentences like

\[
(4\zeta) \text{ ja } \emptyset-w-il \ b'u7y \ (ye) \ n-\emptyset-\text{tx'}aj-x \ xna7n \ \text{ prox.past-3sAbs-WASH-passive}
\]

\[
3\text{sErg-Agent WOMAN}
\]

'I saw the rag that was washed by the woman'
As for the ergative verb agreement, we might speculate that this too can be accounted for in pragmatic terms. We have seen that thematization in Aguacatec has a nominative/accusative basis, but the verb agreement system does not seem to be based on this as it apparently is in some other languages. The reason for this might be as follows: Surface A's in Aguacatec seem to be subject to numerous restrictions, as we have seen. They may or may not be themes, and they may be given, but they may never be new nor contrastive. O's may not be themes, but they may be either given or new and either contrastive or non-contrastive. Surface S's, unlike the others, seem to be under no restrictions whatsoever. They may or may not be themes, may or may not be contrastive, and may be either new or given. Thus, since O's have fewer such restrictions on them than do A's, there is a sense in which they bear a greater "family resemblance", in the sense of Rosch and Mervis (1975), to S's than do the more marked A's. And it may be at least in part for this reason that S's and O's are categorized in the same way in the verb agreement system while A's are treated differently, thus giving rise to morphological ergativity [6].

FOOTNOTES

[1] Aguacatec is spoken by about 15,000 people in the "municipio" of Aguacatán, Department of Huehuetenango, Guatemala. The sources of the examples given in the paper are: exx. (1-21, 29-31, 42) from the author's field notes; exx. (23-24, 27-28, 32-33, 35) from a text entitled "Juun Xtxoolb'íl ye Xhe'n ku7n B'anaq Lu7 Tzuu7 Tyeemp Tzaaj" collected by Gaspar Méndez López of the Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín, Huehuetenango, Guatemala; ex. (25) from an untitled text collected by Gaspar Méndez López of the PLFM; ex. (26) from a text entitled "Yi Aj Cabinl Tu Yi Umul" in McArthur (1973:12-13); ex. (37) from a text entitled "Lu7 Tzuu7 nin Paalee7" collected by Guillermo López Pérez of the PLFM; ex. (38) from a text entitled "Yi Jale'n Quipisiq E' Tx'i" in McArthur (1973:31-34); ex. (39) from a text entitled "El Hombre Y El Zopilote" in Shaw (1972:279-282); exx. (40-41) from a text entitled "Aj Ranch To'u1 Txec" in McArthur (1973:17-19). All examples are cited in a practical orthography developed by the PLFM (examples from McArthur 1973 and Shaw 1972 have been respelled to conform to this orthography). The symbols correspond to those used by most americanists with the following exceptions: b' = /ʃ/, ch = /ʃ/, j = /h/, ky = /k/,
tx = /ɔ/, tz = /ʃ/, x = /ʒ/, xh = /ʒ/, ʔ = /ʔ/, VV = long vowel, ' = glottalization of previous consonant (except in b', see above).

[2] An "absolutive NP" is one that can trigger absolutive agreement with a verb. Similarly, an "ergative NP" is one that can trigger ergative agreement with a verb.

[3] There is actually nothing strange about this considering that there are clauses in English, such as those which have undergone "EQUI-NP Deletion" among others, which are "understood" as having the same subject as the previous clause in spite of the fact that no subject is explicitly mentioned.

[4] See Chafe (1976) for a discussion of contrastiveness. Note that in (29) possession is marked both by tetz and by the possessive prefix on the possessed noun. There is another construction, similar to (29), in which -eetz is obligatory and in which there is either no possessive prefix on the possessed noun, or there is a possessive prefix which is not coreferential with the possessor of -eetz. This construction is used when the relation between the possessed noun and the genitive is not, strictly speaking, one of possession. In such cases, -eetz is not contrastive:

(i) juun maap t-etz tnum
    ONE MAP 3sErg-Gen TOWN
    'a map of the town'

(ii) na eel qa-txuum t-eetz
    IT-LEAVES OUR-KNOWLEDGE 3sErg-Gen
    'We know about it' (lit. Our knowledge of it leaves')

Note that the vowel of -eetz shortens when followed by its head noun. The use of -eetz illustrated in (i-ii) corresponds to the way its cognates are used in other Mayan languages. The use illustrated in (29-30) is apparently an innovation in Aguacatec.

[5] Actually, given that the verb forms tiky'le7n and kyiky'e7n in (33) are nominalizations, one might argue that -eetz does have something to do with possession even here. However, the nominalized verb forms in (33) result from the clefting of adverbial phrases before verbs in the indefinite past tense. If the verbs had been in some other tense, they would not have been nominalized; however, -eetz could still be used here.

[6] Farrell Ackerman has pointed out to me that, since all Mayan languages have split-ergative verb
agreement, one can not legitimately make the claim being made here unless it can be shown that other Mayan languages distribute themes, new information, and contrastiveness in the same way as Aguacatec such that these distributions can be reconstructed for Proto-Mayan. Otherwise, one would have to claim that each Mayan language developed ergative verb agreement independently for different reasons, which is not likely. My impressions of the few other Mayan languages that I know something about suggest that it is likely that these functional parameters are distributed as in Aguacatec. However, further investigation is obviously required to resolve this issue.

REFERENCES


