

Functional Correlates of Ergativity in Aguacatec

Author(s): Thomas W. Larsen

Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society (1981), pp. 136-153

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- THE 3sErg-SEE-active infinitive 2sPro(Abs)
 'when he saw you,...'
 (8) ye aw-il-ool Ø,...
 THE 2sErg-SEE-act.inf 3sAbs
 'when you saw him,...'

Here it can be seen that the verb forms found in the adverbial 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 Ø 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 ergative languages, Aguacatec also manifests syntactic ergativity in that there is a class of syntactic rules which make reference to the ergative/absolutive relations. For example, the rule which forms cleft sentences 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 Ø-uul yaaj
 prox.past 3sAbs-ARRIVE HERE MAN
 'the man arrived'
 (10) yaaj m-Ø-u7l
 MAN prox.past-3sAbs-ARRIVE HERE
 'it was the man that arrived'

it can be seen that the S yaaj, which ordinarily follows 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 Ø-x-tx'aj xna7n b'u7y
 prox.past 3sAbs-3sErg-WASH WOMAN RAG
 'the woman washed the rag'
 (12) b'u7y n-Ø-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

"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:

$$(22) (\text{PARTICLES}) + \text{PREDICATE} + (\text{PARTICLES}) + \left. \begin{matrix} \text{A} \\ \text{S} \end{matrix} \right\} \\ (\text{PARTICLES}) (+0) (+\text{OTHER CONSTITUENTS})$$

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:

- (23a) b'een tilool Lu7 ye teelee7n tzaaj
 HE-SAW-IT PEDRO THE ITS-LEAVING HITHER
 chichcojc7n kob'ox ajpyaaj.
 THEIR-PAY SOME MERCHANT
 'Pedro saw some merchants(travelling salesmen)
 receiving their pay.'
- (23b) xe7te7n tzun-tz tan xtxumle7n
 HIS-STARTING THEN-tz TO ITS-BEING-THOUGHT
 juun tajtzaa7q1,
 ONE HIS-IDEA
 'So starting to have an idea,'
- (23c) niin tzun b'een ii7-tz tan k'otle7n
 AND THEN HE-WENT HE-tz TO ITS-BEING-DUG
 juun jul tzi b'ee7;
 ONE HOLE AT-EDGE ROAD
 'he went to dig a hole at the side of the road;'
- (23d) niin kyaaj kyeen tq'ool q'aaq'-tz tk'u7l jul
 AND HE-LEFT-IT FIRE-tz IN-IT HOLE
 'and he left a fire inside the hole;'
- (23e) kyaaj kyeen tq'ool sii7-tz;
 HE-LEFT-IT FIREWOOD-tz
 'he left firewood;'
- (23f) niin tzun paqxij-tz.
 AND THEN HE-RETURNED-tz
 'and then he returned.'
- (23g) ej ma ye kyopoone7n ye
 AND WHEN THE THEIR-ARRIVING-THERE THE
 e7 ajpyaaj gale7 xmuqe7-t
 plural MERCHANTS WHERE IT-WAS-BURIED-particle
 ye q'aaq',
 THE FIRE
 'And when the merchants arrived where the
 fire had been buried,'
- (23h) niin tzun e7kuu7-tz
 AND THEN THEY-DESCENDED-tz
 'they sat down.'

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) tocke7n tzun chiyool ajpyaa-j-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 ajpyaa-j 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 naawloon tan
 AND THEN HE-WENT NAAWLOON TO
 je7se7n tzaaj choklaat xe
 ITS-BEING-RAISED HITHER CHOCOLATE IN
 chikoc7k ye eeum kanteel
 THEIR-CRATES THE CARRIER CANDLE
 niin kuu7 q'aaq'-tz ta7n
 AND IT-DESCENDED FIRE-tz BY-HIM
 'And so the "naawloon" 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'aaq' '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'aaq' as same subject. However, it seems clear that the subject of the first clause, naawloon, is the theme of that clause, and it seems likely that it continues to be the theme 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 cck 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 understood 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 indicate 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 xaaru7;
 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 tocke7n xtxooliil
 HIS-BEGINNING-TO-LINE-IT-UP
 Lu7 ye 7waj te7j xaaru7
 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 subject 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 Aguacatec 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 chichocjo7n kcb'ox ajpyaaj in (23a) and instead refers back to the theme of the matrix clause b'een tilocl 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 qale7 xmuqe7t ye q'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 kyopooone7n ye e7 ajpyaaj. 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'col-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
ajpyaaj.
 MERCHANT

- 'And he put it on the grass before
 the pitcher in front of the merchants.'
 (28b) na chitze7een niin e7
 THEY-WERE-LAUGHING THITHER plural
 ajpyaaj-tz te7j
 MERCHANT-tz ABOUT-HIM
 'The merchants were laughing at him.'

Here, tz in (28a) indicates that the theme of that clause, Lu7 Tzuu7, 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 O was a theme. Therefore, given that A's and S's are included in the set of possible themes, and O'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 O's are grammaticalized topics in ergative constructions. In fact, in Aguacatec, O'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 -eetz. 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) yaaj
 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 txa7x 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, niky' 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 Pedro 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,

'(look at)...this lucky thing that I caught'

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 chitxcooliil 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-Ø juun yool
 EXIST-3sAbs ONE WORD
 Ø-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 absolutives and are never crossreferenced by ergative prefixes. Another example is seen in

- (41a) niin tzun b'een b'eq'oocl,
 AND THEN HE-SWALLOWED-HIM
 'And then he (the animal) swallowed him
 (the patrón),'
- (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'eene7n tilcool t-etz
 Focus THEN HIS-SEEING-IT 3sErg-Gen
 moos ye b'eene7n t-etz
 SERVANT THE HIS-GOING 3sErg-Gen
 patrón tan txuk,
 PATRÓN 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'eene7n, 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'eene7n tilcol. 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

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 Xtxoclb'il ye Xhe7n 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 Quipisio' 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 Tc'u'l Txuc" 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' = /b/, ch = /ç/, j = /h/, ky = /k/,

tx = /ɣ̃/, tz = /ʃ̃/, x = /ɣ̃̃/, xh = /ɣ̃̃̃/, ʔ = /ʔ/, VV = long vowel, ' = glottalization of previous consonant (except in b', see above).

- [2] An "absolute NP" is one that can trigger absolute 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.

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