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## THE ANTIPASSIVE AND JACALTEC

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In recent years, Mayan languages have been at the center of most discussions of the phenomenon of ergativity. Among Mayanists, the topic that has drawn most attention is that of the antipassive constructions. Three papers dealing with the Mayan antipassive have provided the background, framework, and impetus for this paper.

In "The Mayan Antipassive: Some Facts and Fictions," Smith-Stark (1978) summarized the then "current state of knowledge of antipassive-like phenomenon in Mayan languages" and took note of the fact that Jacaltec would deserve special attention since it did not seem to fit the pattern of other highland languages. The article placed the investigation of the antipassive in a synchronic and comparative framework and established the terminology which will be used here.

The present article was first written in response to the call for a more complete analysis of all antipassive forms found in the Mayan family, analysis without which all attempts at the reconstruction of proto Mayan syntax will remain fragile speculations.

The reconstruction of proto Mayan antipassive rules was the topic on which Norman and Campbell (1978) focused their attention in "Toward A Proto Mayan Syntax: A Comparative Perspective on Grammar." The article placed the investigation of the antipassive in a diachronic and comparative perspective and provided an incentive to speculate on the impact of the Jacaltec data on the reconstruction of a Mayan historical process.

In "¿Es el Antipasivo Siempre Una Voz?", Ayres (1977) first raised in writing the issue of the appropriateness of grouping together rather different constructions under the label of antipassive for the analysis of Ixil. This position supported similar conclusions arrived at for the analysis of Jacaltec (Craig 1975, 1977).

The purpose of this paper is primarily to establish clearly what the facts about the antipassive-like phenomenon are for Jacaltec, and to place them in a Mayan perspective in order to underline the contribution that Jacaltec can make to the general discussion of antipassive in Mayan, and ergative languages in general.

The first part consists of a description of the absolutive and incorporative antipassive constructions; the second part is devoted to the agentive construction and is aimed at establishing that the construction is not an instance of antipassive voice. A concluding section offers a comparative sketch of the agentive construction across the family to

suggest that Mayan languages can be placed on a continuum of increasing analogical "antipassivization" of the agentive construction.

## I. THE ANTIPASSIVE VOICES OF JACALTEC

0. Two antipassive constructions will be considered in this section. Following Smith-Stark's terminology, they are referred to as the absolute antipassive and the incorporative antipassive.

### 1. The Absolute Antipassive

#### 1.1.

The construction under consideration is that of example (2) below which is given in contrast to the transitive construction of example (1).<sup>1</sup>

(1) xc-ach s-col naj  
asp.-A<sub>2</sub> E<sub>3</sub>-help he

'he helped you'

(2) x-∅-col-wa naj t-aw-ih  
asp.-A<sub>3</sub>-help-suff. he aug<sup>t</sup>-E<sub>2</sub>-to

'he helped you'

Example (2) is an illustration of the absolute antipassive voice which is characterized, in Jacaltec, by the inflection of the subject as an absolutive marker (A), the suffixation of the verbs with -wa, and the oblique NP with the relational noun -ih.

The label "antipassive" comes from the structural similarity of this construction to the passive one with which it shares the absolutive subject marking, the suffixation of the verb and the oblique NP, as shown in example (3):

(3) Antipassive            xc-ach col-wa        y-ih    naj  
                              asp-A<sub>2</sub> help-A.P.    E<sub>3</sub>-to    him

'you helped him'

Passive                    xc-ach col-lax        y-u        naj  
                              asp-A<sub>2</sub> help-PASS    E<sub>3</sub>-by    him

'you were helped by him'

#### 1.2.

The absolutive antipassive is a voice in that it corresponds to a change in the grammatical relations of the two NPs of the transitive verb. What was a two-argument verb in a basic transitive construction has become a one-argument verb; the ergative subject has become an absolutive subject and the absolutive object has been demoted to the status of an oblique NP.

It is assumed, of course, that the switch from ergative marking to absolutive marking corresponds to a switch of grammatical relations (i.e., that the functions of subject of transitive and subject of intransitive represent distinct grammatical relations in ergative languages).<sup>2</sup>

To say that the construction has changed from an active two-argument verb to an antipassive one-argument verb is to say in essence that the verb has changed from transitive to intransitive.

1.3.

Three arguments can be given for the intransitivity of the verb of the absolutive antipassive construction. They consist of (a) the absolutive subject marker, (b) the -wa verbal suffixation, and (c) the application of the rule of Equi-NP deletion.

- (a) The first argument speaks for itself. Only intransitive verbs take an absolutive marker to cross-reference a subject.
- (b) The second argument requires more comments. The suffix -wa is a compounding of two suffixes, -w + a#. -w is an intransitivizing suffix found in examples of lexical derivation such as: (Day 1973:42)

- (4) tul "a dice" → tul-w-i "to play at dice"  
cañal "a dance" → cañal-w-i "to dance"  
añ "a medicine" → añte "cure"  
→ añte-w "to cure" ("be a curor")

The stem-final vowel -i# found in the examples of derived intransitive verbs shown in (4) above, is also used for radical intransitive verbs (toy<sub>i</sub> "to go"), and for derived intransitive verbs, whether they are the product of lexical derivation, such as the verbs in (4) or of syntactic derivation, such as the passive verb of (5b):

- (5) (a) xc-ach w-il-a  
asp.-A<sub>2</sub> E<sub>1</sub>-see-TR#  
'I saw you'
- (b) xc-ach il-lax-i  
asp.-A<sub>2</sub> see-PASS-INTR#  
'you were seen'

However, this stem-final vowel -i#, which is characteristic of intransitive verbs, fails to appear in the absolutive antipassive construction. In its place, one finds a stem-final vowel -a#. The only other suffix to which this -a# suffix could be related in the language is the stem-final vowel of radical transitive verbs, an example of which was given in (5a) above.

Whether or not this -a# suffix which is found in the absolutive anti-passive voice is to be positively identified as a transitive marker, the fact remains that the verb fails to take the clearly intransitive marker -i#, which other intransitivized verbs acquire (such as the passive verbs).

(c) The third argument--the application of Equi-NP Deletion--requires some explanation first. Jacaltec has a rule of Equi-NP Deletion (Craig 1977:311-327) which is restricted to subjects of intransitive clauses, as shown by the ungrammaticality of \*(7a):

(6) (a) ch-oh to                    cahalw-oh  
asp.-A<sub>1</sub>pl.-go    DEL    dance-suff.

'we are going (there) to dance'

(b) \*ch-oh to                    cu            cahalw-oh  
asp.-A<sub>1</sub>pl.-go    E<sub>1</sub>pl.    dance-suff.

'we are going (there) to dance'

(7) (a) \*ch-oh to                    hach        col-n-oh  
asp.-A<sub>1</sub>pl.-go    A<sub>2</sub>        DEL help-suff.-suff.

'we are going to help you'

(b) ch-oh to                    hach cu-col-n-oh  
asp.-A<sub>1</sub>pl.-go    A<sub>2</sub>    E<sub>1</sub>pl.-help-suff.-suff.

'we are going to help you'

The restriction has to be stated in terms of subject of intransitive because in the environment in which Equi-NP Deletion applies--which is in an aspectless embedded clause--all subjects are cross-referenced with an ergative marker, following a nominative/accusative system of case assignment. This case assignment is illustrated below with an example of a complex sentence in which the main verb does not trigger Equi-NP Deletion:

(8) (a) x-Ø-aw-il-we            hin ha-col-ni  
asp.-A<sub>3</sub>-E<sub>2</sub>-try    A<sub>1</sub>    E<sub>2</sub>-help-suff.

'you tried to help me'

(b) x-Ø-aw-il-we            ha cahalwi  
asp.-A<sub>3</sub>-E<sub>2</sub>-try    E<sub>2</sub>    dance

'you tried to dance'

Following this pattern of case assignment, the subject of an absolutive antipassive verb embedded in an aspectless clause is marked ergative:

- (9) x- $\emptyset$ -aw-il-we    ha col-wa    y-iñ    naj  
 asp.-A<sub>3</sub>-E<sub>2</sub>-try    E<sub>2</sub> help-A.P.    E<sub>3</sub>-to    him  
 'you tried to help him'

The point is that, whenever an absolutive antipassive clause is embedded under a verb which commands Equi-NP Deletion, its subject is deleted, providing an argument for analyzing the absolutive antipassive construction as an intransitive one. Example (10) shows an instance of Equi-NP Deletion in an absolutive antipassive clause:

- (10) ch-ach to    DEL    col-wa-l    y-iñ    naj  
 asp.-A<sub>2</sub>-go    DEL help-A.P.-Nom.    E<sub>3</sub>-to    him  
 'you are going (there) to help him'

- \*ch-ach to    ha-col-wa-l    y-iñ    naj  
 asp.-A<sub>2</sub>-go    E<sub>2</sub>-help-A.P.-Nom.    E<sub>3</sub>to    him  
 'you are going (there) to help him'

All instances of Equi-NP Deletion are marked with a change in the verb suffixation. The antipassive verb takes a nominalizing suffix -l while the active verbs take the irrealis suffix -oj.

#### 1.4.

In the absolutive construction, the patient is expressed in an oblique NP which is characterized by (a) its obligatory presence, (b) its animacy, and (c) its non-dative relational noun.

(a) Unlike what happens in most other Mayan languages, the patient is still obligatorily expressed in Jacaltec. Its presence seems to maintain, at the semantic level, the transitivity of the construction. Both the presence of the transitive-looking -a suffix mentioned above and the obligatory use of the patient mark the antipassive construction as one which is not entirely intransitive. This is said in contrast to the passive construction in which the verb morphology is thoroughly intransitive, and the oblique NP of the agent is most commonly not used.

(b) While the oblique NP may be in any of the three persons, it is semantically restricted to animate NPs.<sup>3</sup> The Jacaltec absolutive antipassive is not a freely productive process. The verbs which were found in this construction are listed in their nominalized form below:

- |            |                                 |
|------------|---------------------------------|
| (11) a7wal | "to accompany, put on the road" |
| bajwal     | "to insult"                     |
| colwal     | "to help"                       |
| cujwal     | "to teach"                      |
| etzwal     | "to mimic"                      |
| ilwal      | "to look at"                    |
| iptzewal   | "to request of"                 |
| k'anwal    | "to solicit, to ask"            |

|          |                   |
|----------|-------------------|
| mak'wal  | "to hit"          |
| saywal   | "to look for"     |
| talewal  | "to take care of" |
| tzab'wal | "to grab"         |

The high frequency of use of these constructions contrast with their limited productivity.

(c) The relational noun used with the oblique NP is not the dative one.<sup>4</sup> Dative is expressed in Jacaltec with the relational noun -et as in:

- (13) x-∅-aw-a7            ch'en melyu    w-et        an  
 asp.-A<sub>3</sub>-E<sub>2</sub>-give    the money     E<sub>1</sub>-DAT    1  
 'you gave me the money'

The multi-purpose relational noun -iH, which can have temporal, spatial, comitative meanings among others, is used instead.<sup>5</sup>

### 1.5.

To summarize, the absolutive antipassive of Jacaltec is a voice category which is characterized by the following change of grammatical relations:

subject: ergative → absolutive  
 object: absolutive → oblique NP (-iH)

The construction is intransitive, although not entirely. It is intransitive in that the verb is a one-argument verb, with the subject cross-referenced with an absolutive. Furthermore, the verb takes the intransitivizing suffix -w- and the subject may undergo Equi-NP Deletion, an operation restricted to subject of intransitive clauses. However, the verb also takes a transitive stem-final vowel -a#, and is obligatorily followed by the patient in an oblique NP. The syntactic demotion of the object does not therefore correspond to any semantic de-emphasizing of the patient and the construction remains at least partially transitive.<sup>6</sup>

This last characteristic of the Jacaltec absolutive antipassive is to be viewed in the light of definitions such as the one given by Smith-Stark (1978:170): "the absolutive antipassive is found when there is no mentioned or implied patient of transitive verbs."

## 2. The Incorporative Antipassive

### 2.1.

The construction under discussion is that of example (15) which is presented in contrast to the transitive construction of (14):

- (14) ch-in ha-col-o  
 asp-A1 E2-help-TR  
 'you help me'

- (15) ch-ach col-wi : ámma  
asp-A2 help-A.P. people

'you help people'

2.2.

The incorporative antipassive is a voice in that it represents a change of grammatical relations: the ergative subject becomes an absolutive subject while the absolutive object bears no more grammatical relation to the verb.

2.3.

The verb of the incorporative construction is thoroughly intransitive. As is the case with the verb of the absolutive antipassive, the subject is cross-referenced with an absolutive, and it undergoes Equi-NP Deletion in an aspectless embedded clause, as shown in (16):

- (16) (a) xc-ach to il-o7 kiñ  
asp.-A<sub>2</sub> go DEL see-A.P. fiesta

'you went to watch the fiesta'

- (b) \*xc-ach to haw-il-o7 kiñ  
asp-A<sub>2</sub> go E<sub>2</sub>see-A.P. fiesta

'you went to watch the fiesta'

As already discussed, the applicability of Equi-NP Deletion, a rule restricted to subjects of intransitives, is an argument for analyzing the construction as intransitive.

A side effect of the application of Equi-NP Deletion is that the verb suffix changes from -wi to -o7.<sup>7</sup> A parallel change to a form of nominalization was already observed under the same circumstances with the absolutive antipassive (see example 10 above).

The compound suffix -wi of the incorporative voice is entirely intransitive: -w- is the same intransitivizing suffix found in the absolutive antipassive, and -i# is the stem-final vowel of intransitive verbs.

2.4.

The incorporated object must be generic. Instances of object incorporation always refer to activities routinely carried out by members of the community. The construction is therefore non-productive in the sense that only a specified number of common activities are expressed through it in Jacaltec. Examples of such activities are:

- (17) ilo7 k'iñ "to watch the fiesta"  
ilo7 ámma "to watch people"  
ilo7 txitam "to watch the pigs" (be a shepherd)  
potxo7 txitam "to kill pigs" (be a butcher of pigs)  
colo7 ámma "to help people"

7

|               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| poho7 si7     | "to cut wood"    |
| chak'o7 ch'en | "to pound metal" |
| lok'o7 ixim   | "to buy corn"    |
| ijo7 ha7      | "to carry water" |

The incorporated object immediately follows the verb.

While specific determiners such as noun classifiers, possessives, and demonstratives may not be used in the object incorporated construction, adjectives which express inherent or predictable characteristics of the incorporated object may accompany that object. This fact was first discussed by Maxwell (1976) for the incorporative antipassive construction of Chuj, a Kanjobalan language close to Jacalteco.

### 2.5.

To summarize, Jacalteco has an incorporative antipassive construction which is distinct from the absolutive antipassive. Smith-Stark (1978:179) analyzes the opposition of the two antipassive forms in Jacalteco and Chuj as an innovation of the Kanjobalan branch of the Mayan family, and postulates that the incorporative voice is an innovation based on the proto-Mayan \*(V)w absolutive antipassive suffix.

The construction is considered a voice in that it exhibits the following changes of grammatical relations:

subject = ergative → absolutive  
 object = absolutive → no grammatical relation

Unlike the absolutive antipassive construction, the incorporative antipassive construction is thoroughly and clearly intransitive with respect to verb morphology, at least in finite clauses. As expected, the incorporated object must be a generic noun.

### 3. The Jacalteco Antipassives

Jacalteco has both an absolutive and an incorporative antipassive voice and exhibits more variety of form than most other Mayan languages. A characteristic of both antipassive voices of Jacalteco is their limited productivity, which is to be contrasted to the syntactic productivity of the Quichean antipassive processes, for instance. Both constructions are found in Jacalteco only with a certain set of verbs expressing daily chores and common activities. Both constructions are also partly lexicalized, with the antipassive verb exhibiting a derived meaning as shown in (18) and (19):

- (18) (a) k'ana 'to ask' → k'anwal 'to solicit, to petition'  
 (b) iptze 'to force' → iptzewal 'to request of'

- (19) (a) x-∅-aw-il ix / no7 txitam  
 asp-A<sub>3</sub>-E<sub>2</sub>-see her / the pig  
 'you saw her / the pig'

6



(b) xc-ach il-wa y-iH ix  
asp-A2 see-A.P. E<sub>3</sub>-to her

'you looked for her'

(c) xc-ach to il-o7 kiH / txitam  
asp-A2 go see-A.P. fiesta / pig

'you went to watch the fiesta / the pigs  
(or to take care of the pigs)

It is also interesting to note the mixed transitive/intransitive status of the constructions. In the absolutive voice, the patient is obligatorily present and is not restricted to the third person as is the case in other Mayan languages, and there seems to be no semantic demotion of the patient to match its syntactic demotion. This does not parallel the syntactic and semantic demotion of the agent in a passive construction, agent which is restricted to third person in addition. Furthermore, a transitive-like verb stem-final -a appears on the verb, making it morphologically mixed.

Campbell and Norman (1978) attribute the morphological variations of the antipassive voices in Mayan, including the mixed transitive/intransitive morphology of the verb in several languages, to the fact that the antipassive was a process and not a set of morphological constructions in proto-Mayan. If this were the case, one should view the Jacaltec antipassive constructions as the result of processes which have lost their productivity to become morphological constructions at a stage of incomplete intransitivization.

## II. THE AGENTIVE CONSTRUCTION

0. The construction under consideration is one which exhibits many variant forms across the languages of the Mayan family (Smith-Stark 1978:181). The purpose of the first part of this section is to demonstrate that the Jacaltec agentive construction is very different in nature and form from the absolutive and incorporative constructions of the preceding section. The purpose of the second part is to analyze the agentive construction as the result not of a change of voice but of a syntactic process of extraction, and to place Jacaltec in perspective with other Mayan languages.

1.

The following characteristics of the agentive construction of Jacaltec will be considered:

1. the syntactic environments of the construction
2. the syntactic status of the patient
3. the syntactic status of the agent
4. the verb suffixation
5. the obligatoriness of the construction
6. the word order

1.1.

The agentive construction is found in the syntactic environments of wh-question, focus, and relativization<sup>8</sup> and is triggered by any operation applying to the subject of a transitive verb (Craig 1967;1977; chapters 6 and 4).

Because of the intricate interaction of several morphophonemic rules in the verb form (involving deletion of ergative markers and verb initial glottal stops), examples are given in two levels of transcription whenever the identification of ergative and absolutive markers is necessary. Examples are first given in their surface forms (a, b, c) and then in their underlying morphemic form (a', b', c')--the parenthesis convention indicates morphophonemic deletions.

(20) wh-questions

- (a) xil maj ix  
 (a') x-∅-(y)-(7)il naj ix  
 asp-A3-E3-see he her  
 'he saw her'
- (b) mac x7ilni ix  
 (b') mac x-∅-7il-ni ix  
 who asp-A3-see-suff. her  
 'who saw her?'
- (c) mac xil naj  
 (c') mac x-∅-(y)-(7)il naj  
 who asp-A3-E3-see he  
 'whom did he see?'

(21) Focus

- (a) xlok' ix hune7 txitam  
 (a') x-∅-(s)-lok' ix hune7 txitam  
 asp-A3-E3-buy she a pig  
 'she bought a pig'
- (b) ha7 ix xlok'ni hune7 txitam  
 (b') ha7 ix x-∅-lok'-ni hune7 txitam  
 Foc. she asp-A3-buy-suff. a pig  
 'it is she who bought a pig.'

- (c) ha7 hune7 txitam xlok'  
 (c') ha7 hune7 txitam x-∅-(s)-lok' ix  
           a pig asp-A3-E3-buy she

'it is a pig that she bought'

(22) Relativization

- (a) xmak' naj ix  
 (a') x-∅-(s)-mak' naj ix  
       asp-A3-E3-hit he her

'he hit her'

- (b) wohtaj naj xmak'ni ix  
 (b') ∅-w-ohtaj naj x-∅-mak'ni ix  
       A3-E1-know him asp-A3-hit-suff her

'I know the man who hit her'

- (c) wohtaj ix xmak' naj  
 (c') ∅-w-ohtaj ix x-∅-(s)-mak' naj  
       A3-E1-know her asp-A3-E3-hit he

'I know the woman that he hit'

In the (b) examples which correspond to sentences in which the subject of a transitive verb has undergone either movement or deletion the verb form has changed. On the surface, the changes consist of the reappearance of the initial glottal stop of the verb roots which is due to the absence of ergative marker, and of the suffixation of -ni#.

1.2.

The patient never undergoes demotion to an oblique NP function similar to the demotion found in the absolutive antipassive. Instead, it is cross-referenced on the verb with an absolutive marker, just as it is in transitive constructions. In the pair of examples below, the absolutive (-ach:A2) corresponds to the second person patient, cross-referenced as an object:

- (23) (a) xcach yil naj  
       (a') xc-ach y-(7)il naj  
           asp-A2 E3-see he

'he saw you'

- (24) (a) mac xcach ilni  
 (a') mac xc-ach 7il-ni  
 who asp-A3 see-suff  
 'who saw you'

The fact that there is no restriction on the person of the patient in Jacaltec answers clearly the question of which NP is cross-referenced by the absolutive marker of the agentive construction. The absolutive marker always cross-references the object in the Jacaltec agentive construction, unlike the situation found in Quichean languages in which the absolutive marker may cross-reference either the subject or the object; or the situation found in Pocomam and Tzotzil in which the constraint that both subject and object be third person (A3=∅) makes it impossible to tell which one is cross-referenced on the verb (Smith-Stark 1978).

1.3.

Once it is established that the absolutive marker always refers to the object, it is obvious that the construction lacks any cross reference for the subject, as indicated by the absence of the ergative y- E3 in (24) above. This lack of ergative marker in agentive verbs has been analyzed as a result of a deletion process which follows the rule of case assignment in Craig (1977; chapter 7).

In addition to Jacaltec, at least two other languages exhibit the same pattern of ergative deletion with the absolutive marker cross-referencing the patient. They are Ixil and Yucatec:

- (25) Ixil, Focus (Ayres, 1977)

in kat q'os-on-axh  
 I asp hit-suff-A2

'I hit you'

- (26) Yucatec, wh-question (Bricker, same volume)

máaš 7il-∅-en  
 who see-subjunctive-A1

'who saw me?'

In all three languages, Jacaltec, Ixil, and Yucatec, the absolutive can be shown to cross-reference the object because unlike what happens in most other Mayan languages, the objects of such constructions are not restricted to third person.

The most common situation in Mayan languages, however, is for both agent and patient to be restricted to third person, which makes it impossible to determine whether the absolutive of the agentive verb corresponds to the agent or the patient. In this ambiguous situation, Smith-Stark (1978:182) opted for analyzing the absolutive (A3=∅) as cross-referencing the agent.

In Jacaltec, although there is no restriction on the person of the patient, there is a restriction on the person of the agent which must be third person (as in the canonical passive constructions). If the agent is a first or second person, then no agentive construction is used, as shown in (27b):

- (27) (a) xawil naj  
 (a') x- $\emptyset$ -aw-(7)il naj  
 asp-A3-E2-see him  
 'you saw him'
- (b) hach xawil naj  
 (b') hach x- $\emptyset$ -aw-(7)il naj  
 you asp-A3-E2-see him  
 'it is you who saw him'
- (c) \*hach x7ilni naj  
 (c') \*hach x- $\emptyset$ -7il-ni naj  
 you asp-A3-see-suff him  
 'it is you who saw him'

1.4.

The verb takes the suffix -n-, a reflex of PM \*(V)n which appears as a widespread marker of antipassive construction in the family. The presence of this cognate suffix -n- is the main reason why the Jacaltec agentive construction has often been referred to as an antipassive. It is the suffix of agentive antipassive voice in several other Mayan languages such as Kekchi, Mam, Pocomam, Quiche, Tzotzil (Smith-Stark, 1978:177-8).

The suffix -n- is followed by one of two intransitive suffixes, either the stem final vowel of intransitive verbs -i# shown in (28), or the intransitive irrealis suffix -oj# shown in (29).

- (28) xcach wayi "you slept"  
 xcach cahalwi "you danced"  
 xcach mak'laxi "you were hit"
- (29) chach wayoj "you will sleep"  
 chach to cahalwoj "you are going to dance"  
 chach mak'laxoj "you will be hit"

The change from transitive to intransitive suffixation (a  $\rightarrow$  i; 7  $\rightarrow$  oj) in the agentive construction is illustrated below:

- (30) (a) xc-ach hin-mak'-a  
asp-A2 E1-hit-TR  
  
'I hit you'
- (b) mac xc-ach mak'-n-i  
who asp-A2 hit-suff-INTR  
  
'who hit you?'
- (31) (a) slok'o7 naj no7 cheh  
(a') x-∅-(s)-lok'-o-7 naj no7 cheh  
asp-A3-E3-buy-TR-Tr.irr. he the horse  
  
'he will buy the horse'
- (b) wohtaj naj xlok'noj no7 cheh  
(b') ∅-w-ohtaj naj s-∅-lok'-n-oj no7 cheh  
A3-E1-know him asp-A3-buy-suff-INTR.irr. the horse  
  
'I know the man who will buy the horse'

Finally, the agentive construction is therefore intransitive--it takes one pronominal marker, which is absolutive, and intransitive suffixes. However, two arguments may be advanced for the transitivity of the construction. They are the unambiguous object cross-reference of the absolutive already discussed, and the use of the -n- suffix in other syntactic environments which are clearly transitive.

One such construction is the transitive aspectless embedded clause. Aspectless embedded clauses are found in one type of complement sentences (32), in the progressive aspect (33), and in the sequential aspect (34):

- (32) ch-∅-aw-oche hin ha-col-n-oj  
asp-A3-E2-like A1 E2-help-suff-suff  
  
'you like to help me'
- (33) laʔan hin s-col-n-i naj  
prog. A1 E3-help-suff-suff he  
  
'he is helping me'
- (34) ch-oʔ wa7i cat ∅ cu-tx'ah-n-i cu-munlabal  
asp-A1-l eat and A3 E1pl-wash-suff-suff E1pl-dishes  
  
'we eat and then we wash our dishes'

Another construction is the transitive coordinated clause common in narratives:

(35) (a) yul mohilal sonli heb' naj winaj chanicoj heb' ix  
ix sat meʔa

(a') y-ul mohilal ʔ-∅-sonli heb' naj winaj  
E3-in wedding asp-A3-play marimba pl the man  
ch-∅-(y)-(7)a-ni-c-oj heb' ix ix s-sat meʔa  
asp-A3-E3-put-suff-INT-dir-irr pl the woman E3-on table

'at weddings, the men play the marimba and the women set  
the table'

(The above type of narrative coordination has no intransitive equivalent.)  
In examples (32) to (35), the suffix -n- co-occurs with the ergative markers of the transitive subjects.

On one hand, the suffixation of -i/-oj after -n- argues that -n- is an intransitivizing suffix since it determines the further choice of intransitive suffixes; on the other hand, -n- is found in several instances of transitive clauses, which argues that it has come to be neutralized in certain environments.

The combination of ergative deletion and suffixation of a reflex of PM \*(V)n is shared by Ixil, although Ixil differs from Jacaltec in that -n- is not followed by any intransitive suffixation (intransitive stem final vowel or intransitive irrealis).

As already noted, Yucatec exhibits the ergative deletion (Bricker: same volume) but no suffixation of a reflex of an antipassive marker, although the deletion of the ergative is accompanied by a switch from indicative to subjunctive suffixation (see example 26 above).

#### 1.5.

The operation of ergative deletion and suffixation of -n- is obligatory in Jacaltec whenever the subject of a transitive verb is the target of a rule of deletion or movement. Jacaltec seems to stand out among the Mayan languages with respect to the obligatory use of the agentive construction since it is more common for the construction to be optional, or obligatory under certain limited conditions which have not been systematically explored in the literature yet.<sup>9</sup>

There are two types of exceptions to the obligatory use of the agentive construction in Jacaltec, both considered in detail in Craig (1976a; 1977:217-226). On one hand, the agentive construction cannot be used if the object or the possessor of the object is coreferential with the subject; on the other hand, it is only optionally used in embedded constructions if the selectional restriction of the verb are such that each NP can unambiguously be identified as subject or object.

It is the identification of these two types of exceptions which justifies the analysis of the disambiguating function of the agentive construction in Jacaltec: all the exceptions are cases where no possibility of ambiguous reference of NPs could arise.