



## Generalized Binding in Chinese

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## GENERALIZED BINDING IN CHINESE

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0. Presentation.\*

In Government-Binding, the distribution of variables -i.e. of non-overt expressions coindexed with a wh-element- is essentially accounted for by the Empty Category Principle (ECP). In Aoun (1981), it is argued that the Empty Category Principle may be dispensed with. There, the distribution of variables is accounted for by a generalized version of the binding theory. For instance, in the latter theory, which will be referred to as Generalized Binding, it follows that variables- like anaphoric reciprocals and reflexives- obey the Nominative Island Condition which is subsumed under the binding theory. In a theory where the ECP is maintained, variables do not obey this Condition. Thus, in Generalized Binding, both (1a) and (1b) violate the Nominative Island Condition:

1-a)\* they<sub>i</sub> said [that themselves<sub>i</sub> left]

b) who<sub>i</sub> did they say [that x<sub>i</sub> left]

In an ECP framework, on the other hand, sentence (1a) violates the Nominative Island Condition and sentence (1b), which illustrates a \*that-t-effect, violates the Empty Category Principle.

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With respect to a language where the Nominative Island Condition does not apply, the two theories make different predictions. Generalized Binding predicts that both (1a) and (1b) will be grammatical in this language. A theory incorporating the Empty Category Principle, on the other hand, predicts that only (1a) will be grammatical. In case (1b) turns out to be grammatical, it will be so for independent reasons. The language in question is Chinese. The Nominative Island Condition is irrelevant in this language: both (1a) and (1b) are grammatical. We claim that this state of facts represents a significant generalization which can only be captured in a framework incorporating the generalized binding theory.

### 1. Generalized Binding.

In a given domain, anaphors -such as reciprocals, reflexives, NP-traces- must be bound, i.e. must be c-commanded by an antecedent in an argument position (A-position). In the same domain, pronouns must be free, i.e. must not be c-commanded by an antecedent in an A-position. Roughly, an A-position is a position which receives a grammatical function (subject, object...). An  $\bar{A}$ -position (non-argument-position), on the other hand, does not receive a grammatical function. According to this characterization, COMP position is an  $\bar{A}$ -position. Thus, consider the following sentences:

- 1-a) John<sub>i</sub> likes himself<sub>i</sub>.  
 b)\* which<sub>i</sub> man<sub>i</sub> does himself<sub>i</sub> like t<sub>i</sub>.

In (1a), the anaphoric relation between the reflexive himself and the name John is licit since the antecedent is in an A-position. In (1b), the anaphoric relation between the reflexive and which man is illicit since the wh-element is in an  $\bar{A}$ -position.

The opaque domain referred to above in which an anaphoric element must be bound and a pronominal free

is defined by the binding theory in terms of governing category. A governing category may, informally, be characterized as the minimal clause or noun phrase containing the anaphoric expression or the pronominal and a subject -this is the so-called Specified Subject Condition- or an agreement marker which happens in English to occur in tensed clauses only -this is the so-called Nominative Island Condition. To illustrate, consider the following sentences:

- 2-a) John wants [PRO<sub>i</sub> to see himself<sub>i</sub>]  
 b)\* John wants [PRO<sub>i</sub> to see him<sub>i</sub>]

In (2a) and (2b), the governing category contain-

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ning the anaphoric element in (2a) or the pronominal element in (2b) and the subject -PRO- is the embedded clause in which these elements appear. Thus, himself must be bound in this category, which it is. But him must be free, which it is not. Sentence (2b) will violate the binding requirements. Consider, now, the

- 3-a)\* they<sub>i</sub> said that each other<sub>i</sub> AGR left  
 b) they<sub>i</sub> said that they<sub>i</sub> AGR left

In (3a-b), the grammaticality judgments are reversed as expected. The minimal clause containing the reciprocal in (3a) or the pronoun in (3b) and the agreement marker is the embedded clause. In this governing category, the anaphor each other must be bound, which it is not and the pronoun must be free, which it is. Thus, (3a) -but not (3b)- will violate the binding requirements formulated in (4):

## 4-Binding Principles:

A-An anaphor must be bound in its governing category

B-A pronominal must be free in its governing category

To the above principles, we should add a principle which applies to names and to empty elements coindexed with wh-phrases (wh-traces or variables). It requires these elements to be free:

4-C-An R-expression must be free

It is to be noticed that this principle is distinct in its formulation from the first two principles (4 A-B) in that it is not formulated in terms of governing category. Actually, there are proposals which dissociate this principle from the other binding principles. They question its existence as an independent principle in the grammar and try to derive its effects from various rules and considerations; cf. Chomsky (1982) and Higginbotham (1983). As it will become clear in the subsequent discussions, it is the effect of this principle rather than its status which will concern us. To use the current terminology, it is irrelevant for our purpose to characterize this principle as an axiom or a theorem. As a consequence of this principle, neither the name in (5a) nor the variable in (5b) may be construed as coreferential with the pronoun he:

5-a) he said John likes beer

b) which man<sub>i</sub> did he say x<sub>i</sub> likes beer

The binding principles, thus, constrain the distribution of the various nominal expressions discussed so far. Furthermore, a subset of these nominal expressions- NP-traces and wh-traces- is constrained by the Empty Category Principle (ECP) which requires these empty elements to be properly governed. Roughly, an empty element is properly governed if it is a complement of a lexical cate-

gory, such as V or if it is c-commanded by a local antecedent. In (6), for instance, the variable is properly governed by the embedded predicate:

6- who<sub>i</sub> do you think that Bill saw x<sub>i</sub>

Similarly, in (7a), the variable is properly governed by a local antecedent -the empty element in COMP-:

7-a) who<sub>i</sub> do you think [<sub>S</sub> t<sub>i</sub> [<sub>x</sub> AGR left ] ]

However, in (7b), the presence of that prevents the empty element in COMP from properly governing the variable. The representation will be ruled out by the ECP:

7-b)\* who<sub>i</sub> do you think [<sub>S</sub> t<sub>i</sub> that [<sub>x</sub> AGR left ] ]

For variables, the antecedent relevant to the binding theory is different from the one relevant to the ECP. The binding theory requires variables to be A-free -i.e. not to have a c-commanding antecedent in an A-position. The ECP requires these variables to be a complement of a lexical category or to be c-commanded by an antecedent in an  $\bar{A}$ -position. More generally, the binding theory is a theory of A-binding. It is solely concerned with antecedents in A-positions. A more accurate formulation of these principles is given in (8):

8-Binding Principles:

A-An anaphor must be A-bound in its governing category

B-A pronominal must be A-free in its governing category

C-An R-expression must be A-free

In Aoun (1981), various empirical and conceptual inadequacies of the theory sketched above are discussed and it is pointed out that these inadequacies may be traced back to the ECP. This principle, thus, is eliminated and its effects are derived from various grammatical principles. In particular, it is shown that there are two kinds of anaphoric relations: the anaphoric relation which holds between an anaphor and an antecedent in an A-position (A-anaphor) and the anaphoric relation which holds between anaphor and an antecedent in an  $\bar{A}$ -position ( $\bar{A}$ -anaphor). Two anaphoric systems, thus, are distinguished: the A-anaphoric system whose members are A-anaphors and the  $\bar{A}$ -anaphoric system whose members are  $\bar{A}$ -anaphors.

It, also, is indicated that the distribution of A-anaphors and that of  $\bar{A}$ -anaphors is constrained by the binding theory which thus is generalized from a theory of A-binding to a theory of A- and  $\bar{A}$ -binding:

9-Generalized Binding Principles:

A-An anaphor must be X-bound in its governing category

B-A pronominal must be X-free in its governing category

C-An R-expression must be A-free

(where X = A or  $\bar{A}$ )

There are  $\bar{A}$ -anaphors such as the reciprocals in Italian and the French ne...personne constructions which are subject to principle A of the generalized binding theory. As such, they must be  $\bar{A}$ -bound in their governing category;

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cf. Aoun (1981). Variables are considered to be  $\bar{A}$ -anaphor subject to principles A and C of the binding theory. More precisely, as in Government Binding, variables are treated as name-like expressions subject to principle C as illustrated in (5a-b). Generalizing the definition of anaphors to include all empty elements, they will also be treated as anaphors subject to principle A of the binding theory. Obviously, both principles can be satisfied because variables are  $\bar{A}$ -anaphors and not A-anaphors they need a c-commanding  $\bar{A}$ -antecedent in their governing category. To illustrate, consider once again sentences (7a-b) repeated for convenience:

- 7-a) who<sub>i</sub> do you think [ $\bar{S}$  t<sub>i</sub> [ $x_i$  AGR left ] ]  
 b)\* who<sub>i</sub> do you think [ $\bar{S}$  t<sub>i</sub> that [ $x_i$  AGR left ] ]

The governing category for the variable in subject position is the embedded clause: it is the minimal clause containing the variable and an agreement marker -AGR-. In (7a), the variable is  $\bar{A}$ -bound by the trace in COMP. In (7b), however, the presence of that prevents the trace from binding the variable which will be free in its governing category; thus, violating the binding principle A.

In the previous paragraph, we illustrated how the generalized binding theory may account for the so-called \*that-t effect (cf. Chomsky and Lasnik 1977) explained in terms of the ECP in Government Binding. Let us turn now to variables in object position. As illustrated in (10 a-b), the presence of that is irrelevant for these variables:

- 10-a) who<sub>i</sub> [do you AGR think [ $\bar{S}$  t<sub>i</sub> that [Bill AGR likes  $x_i$  ] ] ]  
 b) who<sub>i</sub> [do you AGR think [ $\bar{S}$  t<sub>i</sub> [Bill AGR likes  $x_i$  ] ] ]

The grammaticality of (10 a-b) is straightforwardly accounted for by the generalized binding theory. To show how, we need to explain in more detail how the binding theory works. In Government-Binding, it is assumed that AGR and the subject to which it is related are coindexed. This may be thought of as a mean of encoding the agreement rule at work between these two elements. Moreover, a notion of accessibility is introduced to characterize governing categories. Consider (11), for instance:

- 11- \* [for each other to win] AGR would be unfortunate  
 As we said earlier, in a given clause, the subject and AGR are coindexed. If, now, AGR were to function as an accessible element defining an opaque domain -Chomsky (1981) speaks of accessible SUBJECT-, we would have a situation where the well-formedness condition  $i$ -within- $i$  is violated: AGR would be coindexed with the subject and each other<sup>2</sup>. In brief, AGR cannot function as an

accessible SUBJECT for the variable. But the governing category for an element  $\alpha$  is defined as the minimal clause or NP containing an accessible SUBJECT and  $\alpha$ .<sup>3</sup> However, in (11) we have no accessible SUBJECT for  $\alpha$  -the reciprocal-. Following a suggestion of N.Hornstein, it is assumed in Chomsky (1981) that the root clause counts as the governing category for an anaphoric element with no accessible SUBJECT; cf. Chomsky (1981) for a more detailed discussion. Now in (11), the governing category for the reciprocal which has an accessible SUBJECT is the root clause. In this clause each other does not have an antecedent, therefore the sentence will be ruled out by the binding theory.

Beyond all the details of the machinery, the intuitive content of the proposal is clear. Elements such as anaphors must be bound; they are bound in a local domain defined in terms of accessibility. When there is no domain definable in such a way, consider the whole root clause as the local domain. With this in mind, let us turn to (10 a-b). In both sentences, the variable does not have an accessible SUBJECT. AGR of the embedded clause cannot count as an accessible SUBJECT. Recall that AGR is coindexed with the subject it is related to. Suppose it were to count as an accessible SUBJECT for the variable; since it is coindexed with the subject which is in A-position Bill, the variable would end up A-bound by Bill. Being subject to principle C, variables have to be A-free. Thus, if AGR were to count as an accessible SUBJECT for the variable, we would have a violation of principle C. A similar reasoning will show that AGR of the matrix clause cannot count as an accessible SUBJECT for this variable either. We, thus, are in the situation mentioned in the previous paragraph where an anaphoric element -the variable- has no accessible SUBJECT. Therefore, the root clause will count as the governing category for the variable in (10 a-b). In this governing category, the variable is  $\bar{A}$ -bound by who; thus, satisfying principle A of the binding theory. To sum up, variables are subject to principles A and C of the binding theory. When a variable is in subject position, the governing category for this variable is the clause in which it is subject (cf. 7 a-b). When it is in non-subject position, the governing category is generally the root clause (cf. 10 a-b). This amounts to saying that variables are subject to the Nominative Island Condition (NIC),<sup>4</sup> but not to the Specified Subject Condition (SSC)<sup>4</sup> in the generalized binding framework suggested in Aoun (1981). In a framework incorporating the ECP,

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variables are neither subject to the NIC nor to the SSC; the so-called NIC effects illustrated in (7 a-b) are accounted for in terms of the ECP:

- 12-a) In Generalized Binding:  
variables: (+NIC), (-SSC)
- b) In an ECP framework:  
variables: (-NIC), (-SSC)

The predictions of each theory are quite clear. Let us consider the \*that-t-effect discussed above; cf. (7 a-b). In the Generalized Binding framework, it is accounted for by the NIC and in Government Binding by the ECP. Suppose, now, that for some reasons, the NIC is irrelevant in some language. According to (12 a), variables will not display a \*that-t-effect in this language. According to (12 b), the fact that the NIC is irrelevant in the putative language will have no impact on the \*that-t-effect. That is, the \*that-t-effect is expected to hold in this language despite the irrelevance of the NIC and if it doesn't hold, its absence will be accidental; it will not be possible to trace it back to the irrelevance of the NIC. It is to these considerations that we will turn in the next section. Chinese, as it will appear, is a language where the NIC is irrelevant. As predicted by (12 a), the \*that-t-effect is irrelevant for variables in Chinese. In-so-far that it is not possible to draw any correlation between the absence of the NIC and the absence of the \*that-t-effect in (11 b), we will claim that a significant generalization is missed in a framework incorporating the ECP. Chinese, thus, will provide evidence for (12 a) over (12 b).

### 2. A significant generalization in Chinese: the absence of the NIC.

Consider the following sentence:

- 1- \*John<sub>i</sub> said that himself<sub>i</sub> AGR will come  
The governing category for the reflexive himself in (1) is the embedded clause: it is the minimal clause containing the accessible SUBJECT -AGR- and the reflexive. In this governing category, the reflexive is free; thus, violating the binding requirement. Surprisingly enough, the Chinese counterpart of this sentence is grammatical:

- 2- Zhangsan<sub>i</sub> shuo [ziji<sub>i</sub> hui lai ]  
say self will come

"Zhangsan said that himself will come"

As Huang (1982) indicates, whether a clause is finite in Chinese or not, its INFL does not contain

(AGR). It therefore follows that an element in subject position has no accessible SUBJECT in its own clause. Thus, an anaphor may occur in the subject position of a clause and have an antecedent outside the clause in which it occurs as in (2) or (3). In brief, the NIC is irrelevant in Chinese:

- 3- Zhangsan<sub>i</sub> shuo [<sub>S</sub> [<sub>S</sub> ziji<sub>i</sub> you mei you qian  
mei guanxi ]  
say self have not have money  
not matter  
"\*Zhangsan said that whether himself has money  
or not didn't matter"

Recall, now, the discussion of the previous section where a comparison between Generalized Binding and Government Binding was outlined; cf. (12 a-b). In the Generalized Binding framework, we expect no \*that-t-effect since the NIC is irrelevant. In an ECP framework, no such correlation is expected: the \*that-t-effect -accounted for by the ECP- should not be suspended and if it is, this will be merely accidental. The fact is that the \*that-t-effect is suspended in Chinese. To show this we need to briefly discuss the status of the ECP which subsumes the \*that-t-effect in Government Binding.

The ECP does not only constrain gaps generated by syntactic movement but also gaps generated by LF movement -i.e. movement which takes place in the LF component-. This can be illustrated in (4):

- 4-a)\* I don't remember which man said that which woman left  
b) I don't remember which man said that John loves which woman  
c)\* what did who see?  
d) who saw what?

The contrast between (4 a) and (4 b) or between (4 c) and (4 d) may be accounted for by assuming that every wh-element which has not been raised in syntax to COMP -henceforth wh-in situ- is subject to an LF movement rule which adjoins this wh-element to a COMP already filled by a wh-element; cf. Chomsky (1973), Kayne (1981), Aoun, Hornstein and Sportiche (1981). Thus, the LF-representation of (4 a-b) will be (5 a-b) respectively (irrelevant details omitted):

- 5-a)\* I don't remember [<sub>S</sub> which woman<sub>j</sub> which man<sub>i</sub>  
[x<sub>i</sub> said [<sub>S</sub> that x<sub>i</sub> left ] ]<sub>j</sub> ]  
b) I don't remember [<sub>S</sub> which woman<sub>j</sub> which man<sub>i</sub>  
[x<sub>i</sub> said [<sub>S</sub> that John loves<sub>j</sub> x<sub>j</sub> ] ] ]

It is clear, now, that the ungrammaticality of (4 a/5 a) may be traced back to a \*that-t-effect which can be accounted for by the ECP in Government Binding and by the binding theory in Generalized

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Binding.

As for the contrast between (4 c) and (4 d), it is accounted for in Aoun, Hornstein and Sportiche (1981) as follows: it is assumed there that the COMP becomes a proper-governor (or an A-binder) of an empty category in subject position by virtue of the following COMP indexing rule which is taken to apply at S-structure in languages such as English:

COMP indexing rule:

$$[\text{COMP} \dots \bar{x}_i \dots] \longrightarrow [\text{COMP}_i \dots \bar{x}_i \dots]$$

iff COMP contains i-indexed  
elements only

At S-structure, (4 c) and (4 d) will have the following representation after the application of the COMP indexing rule (irrelevant details omitted):

- 4-c)\*  $[\text{COMP}_i \text{ what}_i ] [ \text{who}_i \text{ saw } x_i ]$   
 d)  $[\text{COMP}_i \text{ who}_j ] [ x_j \text{ saw what}_i ]$

At LF, after wh-Raising, (4 c) and (4 d) will have the following representations:

- 5-c)\*  $[\text{COMP}_i \text{ who}_i \text{ what}_i ] [ x_j \text{ saw } x_i ]$   
 d)  $[\text{COMP}_i \text{ what}_i \text{ who}_j ] [ x_j \text{ saw } x_i ]$

In (5 d) -but not (5 c)- the empty category in subject position has a proper-governor or an A-binder. As a consequence, (5 c) will be ruled out by the ECP or the generalized binding theory. We will refer to the facts discussed in (4 a-d) as \*that-t-effects.

From the above examples, it appeared that there are two components where wh-elements can be raised: in Syntax and in LF. In English an element must be raised in Syntax to COMP unless this given COMP is already filled by another wh-element. In the latter case, the wh-in situ will be raised in LF. In Chinese, however, as indicated in Huang (1982), wh-movement is restricted to LF: Syntactic wh-movement does not exist. This is illustrated in (6-8). All the following Chinese examples as well as the previous ones are from Huang (1982):

- 6- [Zhangsan wen wo [shei mai-le shu ]  
     ask I who buy-ASP book  
 "Zhangsan asked who bought books"
- 7- [Zhangsan xiangxin [shei mai-le shu ] ]  
     believe who buy-ASP book  
 "who does Zhangsan believe bought books?"
- 8- [Zhangsan zhidao [shei mai-le shu ] ]  
     know who buy-ASP book  
 a) "who does Zhangsan know bought books?"  
 b) "Zhangsan knows who bought books"



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asymmetry -cf.(4 a-b)- is observed. The well formedness of (12 a) shows that the ECP is violated.

Similarly, consider the following sentence which may be construed as a direct question on either the two embedded unmoved wh-elements:

- 13- [ni xiang -zhidao [shei mai-le sheme] ]  
       you wonder                    who buy-ASP what  
 a) "what is the thing x such that you wonder who bought x?"  
 b) "who is the person x such that you wonder who bought x?"

The LF representations of the two possible readings of (13) are (14) and (15): irrelevant details omitted

- 14- [<sub>COMP<sub>j</sub></sub> sheme<sub>j</sub>] [<sub>s</sub> --- [<sub>s</sub> [<sub>COMP<sub>i</sub></sub> shei<sub>i</sub>] [<sub>t<sub>i</sub></sub> mai-le t<sub>j</sub>]]]  
 15- [<sub>COMP<sub>i</sub></sub> shei<sub>i</sub>] [<sub>s</sub> --- [<sub>s</sub> [<sub>COMP<sub>j</sub></sub> sheme<sub>j</sub>] [<sub>t<sub>i</sub></sub> mai-le t<sub>j</sub>]]]

The LF representation (15) which corresponds to the reading (13 b) violates the ECP since the trace in subject position t<sub>i</sub> is not properly governed.

In an ECP framework, one must resort to an ad hoc analysis to account for the grammaticality of (12 a) and (13). Thus, it is possible to claim that INFL in Chinese has much more lexical content to it than the INFL in English: aspect markers in Chinese are derived from lexical categories and may be used as independent lexical items; cf. Huang (1982). According to this characterization, INFL in Chinese, but not in English, would be a proper-governor. Thus, the empty category left by the LF extraction of the wh-subject in sentences such as (12 a) or (13) would be properly governed. In short, in Chinese, both subjects and objects would be properly governed.

While the characterization of INFL as a proper-governor may descriptively solve the problem raised by (12 a) and (13) for the ECP, it surely is not able to relate the grammaticality of (12 a) and (13) to that of (2). In other words, in a government-binding framework where the ECP is maintained, one is forced to claim for Chinese that the NIC is irrelevant because there is no AGR -hence the grammaticality of (2)- and that there is no \*that-t-effect because INFL is a proper-governor -hence the grammaticality of (12 a) and (13)<sup>6</sup>.

In the Generalized Binding framework, the phenomena illustrated in (2), (12 a) and (13) fall under a unique generalization: the absence of AGR -i.e. the irrelevance of the NIC- in Chinese accounts for the grammaticality of (2), (12 a) and (13). At the beginning



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## FOOTNOTES

\*This is a slightly modified version of a paper read at the Conference on Complementation held in Brussels (June 1983). I wish to thank N.Chomsky, J. Huang and A.Li.

<sup>1</sup>  $\alpha$  properly governs  $\beta$  iff  $\alpha$  governs  $\beta$  and  $\alpha$  is lexical, cf. Chomsky (1981).

Roughly the notion of government is that of head-government:

$\alpha$  governs  $\beta$  iff the first maximal projection dominating  $\beta$  dominates  $\alpha$ ; cf. Aoun and Sportiche (1981)

<sup>2</sup>  $\alpha$  is accessible to  $\beta$  iff  $\beta$  is in the c-command domain of  $\alpha$  and coindexing of ( $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ) would not violate the well-formedness condition i-within-i; cf. Chomsky (1981):

\* [ ... e ... ]  
i i

<sup>3</sup>  $\beta$  is a governing category for  $\alpha$ , iff  $\beta$  is the minimal category containing  $\alpha$ , a governor of  $\alpha$  and a SUBJECT accessible to  $\alpha$ .

For ease of exposition, we will omit any reference to the governor of  $\alpha$  in our characterization of governing category.

<sup>4</sup> In Aoun (1981), some SSC effects for variables inside noun phrases are discussed. This, however, is irrelevant for our discussion. Similarly in Aoun (to appear), it is argued that the proposal according to which a root clause counts as a governing category for a governed anaphor with no accessible SUBJECT may be dispensed with. These considerations, however, are not directly relevant to our discussion.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. also Huang (1982) for arguments showing that the COMP indexing rule applies at LF in Chinese. In Aoun (to appear), the difference between Chinese where COMP indexing applies at LF and English where it only applies at S-structure is traced back to the level where selectional restrictions are satisfied. Lack of space prevents us from considering the behavior of wh-adjuncts in Chinese; the reader is referred to Aoun (to appear).

<sup>6</sup> In Lasnik and Saito (1983), it is argued that there is an LF process of that deletion. Assuming that this process may be extended to the complementizer gen (with) in Chinese, the LF representation (16) will be as in (i):

i- [ shei<sub>i</sub> [zhejian shi [<sub>S</sub> [COMP t<sub>i</sub>] [<sub>S</sub> lai]]  
zui guanxi ] ]

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In (i), nothing prevents COMP indexing from applying to the embedded COMP; thus allowing this COMP to properly govern the variable in subject position. This analysis, however, cannot account for the grammaticality of (15) where complementizer deletion is irrelevant; cf. Aoun (to appear) for an extensive discussion of Lasnik and Saito's analysis.

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