

Chapter Five

Conclusion

In this thesis I presented a revised version of Antecedent-Seeking Mechanism based on Hu and Pan (2002) and demonstrated that such a competition-based approach can treat long-distance binding and binding to sub-commanding NPs uniformly. I showed that subject orientation and its absence follow from competition between each candidate and the next. I argued that the mechanism is a syntactic operation because it is both local and upward like movement. For the mechanism, the notion of locality can be defined only by a combination of structural notions, i.e. c-command, dominance, containment, and paths. Moreover, the mechanism crucially relies on the animacy hierarchy. The latter's relevance to prominence competition manifests itself not only in the reference resolution of non-local *ziji*, but also in the blocking effect: Chapter Four offered a competition-based approach to blocking which employs two variants of the animacy hierarchy. I concentrated on how the proposal along with the differential animacy hierarchy predicts the dialectal/idiolectal variation with respect to whether an intervening third-person subject blocks the reference of *ziji* to a first/second-person pronoun in matrix subject position. I also discussed how the blockerhood competition mechanism, aided by Keenan and Comrie's (1977) NP accessibility hierarchy, helps to characterize cases where the blocking effect is weakened. Furthermore, following Huang and Liu (2001), I believe that pivots play a role in certain cases of blocking. The two types of blockerhood competition were shown to be necessary, if we want to cover all the cases of blocking reported in the literature.