

# Are Vietnamese kinship terms pronouns?

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## 1 Introduction

The morphosyntactic analysis of pronouns has ranged from the simplistic binary features [ $\pm$ pronoun] and [ $\pm$ anaphor] in Chomsky (1982) to the more intricate feature geometries proposed by Harley and Ritter (2002), who attempt to capture the cross-linguistic variation in pronoun feature morphology. Additionally, Déchaine and Wiltschko (2002) (henceforth D&W) have proposed that pronominals can be decomposed into three various functional levels, with each level having differences in internal syntax, distribution, semantics and binding properties.

Meanwhile, it's also been known that certain languages such as Vietnamese and Thai commonly use 'noun substitutes' rather than true personal pronouns, although the latter also exist in these languages. To quote Harley and Ritter (2002), "For languages such as Thai or Vietnamese, which may have both an open class of noun substitutes and a closed class of pronouns, we restrict our attention to the latter. Noun substitutes are typically kinship terms or titles, and in some cases they function as nouns" (pg 506). Though intuitively functioning in the same way as pronouns by substituting for an antecedent – implying either coreference or binding – these noun substitutes have been relatively ignored when compared with true pronouns.

Aside from using noun substitutes such as kinship terms in a pronominal fashion, the usage of closed class personal pronouns in Vietnamese is further reduced by the regular usage of proper names to refer to first or second person parties within the discourse. In fact, the usage of true pronouns is relatively rare in comparison to the usage of either kinship terms or proper names when referring to either the speaker or addressee. The primary issue, then, is whether or not these kinship terms and proper names are true R-expressions in Vietnamese – which would result in an apparent violation of Condition C. If not, the question is whether or not they can be considered pronouns (or one of the decomposed pronouns proposed by D&W).

It has also been known that certain languages appear, at least superficially, to violate Condition C, allowing referential expressions (R-expressions) to be bound by, or at least corefer to, their antecedents: Lee (2003) provides an analysis of antecedent copying in anaphoric R-expressions in San Lucas Quiaviní Zapotec, and Larson (2006) provides a similar analysis for Thai. Vietnamese allows for this apparent Condition C violation as well in the usage of kinship terms, but we will see that the antecedent copying approach does not appear to immediately account for the data.

In considering the usage of kinship terms in Vietnamese as pronouns, a crucial question to answer will be whether or not we want to treat the kinship terms as antecedent copies with material deleted in keeping with the idea of referential hierarchy as proposed by Lasnik (1986). The observation



- (c) Nó đang đọc sách.  
 3.SG PRES.PROG read book  
 ‘S/He is reading a book.’

As we can see, pronouns and kinship terms can both appear as pronominal arguments with identical distribution, although the reference of the kinship term is ambiguous without contextual information about the relationship of the discourse participants. As we might also expect, pronouns and kinship terms can both also appear in other argument positions:

- (5) Tâm đang đánh tôi/mày/nó/anh.  
 Tam PRES.PROG hit 1.SG.EXCL/2.SG/3.SG/KIN.older.brother  
 ‘Tam is hitting me/you/him or her or it/[dependent upon relation of discourse participants].’

These data, then, show that kinship terms and pronouns share similar distribution as arguments in a sentence. However, any noun could also share this distribution, and what we really expect to see in pro-forms is the replacement of the relevant category. Assuming a context in which Tâm is my younger brother, we can have the following:

- (6) Tâm đang đọc sách.  
 Tam PRES.PROG read book  
 ‘Tam is reading a book.’

- (a) Nó/em chưa ăn cơm.  
 3.SG/KIN.younger.sibling not yet eat rice  
 ‘He (Tam) hasn’t eaten yet.’

As we can see, either a pronoun or kinship term can serve as an anaphor, replacing its coreferential antecedent, should there be one: if a kinship term that does not apply to a discourse participant is used, it will have to refer, just as an out of the blue pronoun, to the most salient individual in the discourse that meets the correct presuppositions of gender and relational status. However, generally speaking, these data show that distributionally and functionally, there is reason to believe that kinship terms in Vietnamese are pronouns.

## 2.2 Pronominal plural morpheme on kinship terms

One detail to keep in mind is that the usage of true pronouns is socially more constrained in Vietnamese than the usage of kinship terms: whereas pronouns are normally used only with people who are at most on the same honorific level as the speaker, kinship terms automatically encode these honorific relations and are thus far more productive in cross-honorific level discourses. In fact, the usage of true pronouns in Vietnamese at all is generally seen as somewhat disrespectful.

The slight exception to this is for the first person singular pronouns, where there is also an honorific hierarchy. To borrow the non-plural Vietnamese pronoun paradigm from Nguyễn (1996), who reproduces it from Thompson (1965):

(7) Vietnamese singular pronouns :

	1ST (speaker)	2ND (addressee)	3RD (other)	GENERAL
RESPECTFUL	tôi			
SUPERIOR	ta			
FAMILIAR				mình
ABRUPT	tao	mày	nó	

It should be noted that *ta* in (7) is labelled a bit misleadingly, as Nguyễn goes on to clarify that *ta* actually refers to the speaker and the addressee. That is, *ta* is what Harley and Ritter (2002) would consider a first person inclusive singular/minimal pronoun. The fact that it is considered a singular pronoun becomes apparent not from any agreement, which Vietnamese generally lacks, but from the fact that there is a pluralizing morpheme *chúng* that can be prefixed to pronouns in Vietnamese to give the plural personal pronouns. Nguyễn (1996) clarifies the meaning of plural pronouns (I am ignoring *mình* here, as it is not relevant to the discussion):

(8) Vietnamese plural pronouns:

- 1ST: *chúng ta* = S + A + O; *ta* = S + A; *chúng tôi* = *chúng tao* = S + O  
 2ND: *chúng mày* = A + O  
 3RD: *chúng nó* = O

Specifically, we can see that the plural morpheme *chúng* makes singular pronouns plural, simultaneously showing that Vietnamese has inclusive and exclusive plural pronouns, *chúng ta* and *chúng tôi/tao* respectively, with the differentiation between the latter options being one of honorific levels. The plural marker prefixed to the second and third person pronouns gives us the meanings we expect, with *chúng mày* referring to a plurality including the addressee but not the speaker, and *chúng nó* referring to a plurality not including either speaker or addressee.

It should be noted that this plural morpheme *chúng* is not productive anywhere else in Vietnamese, and is restricted to these pronouns, and more importantly, kinship terms in Vietnamese. To reproduce (3) with the plural morpheme:

- (9) Chúng anh/\*người                      đang              đọc sách.  
 PL      KIN.older.brother/person    PRES.PROG read book  
 ‘We older brothers/\*People are reading books.’

Nguyễn (1996) explains that because *chúng* is considered disrespectful, *chúng anh* can only have the first person interpretation as seen in (9) due to its interaction with the kinship term *anh*, which carries a certain level of honorific respect. The only compatible possibility of combining the disrespectful *chúng* with the respectful kinship term *anh* is to be self-deprecating, which forces a first person interpretation.

However, what is really important in (9) is the evidence that the plural morpheme *chúng* can be combined with the kinship terms to give plural meanings. The example also shows that the plural marker *chúng* cannot go with a normal noun, such as *người*. As such, the distribution of *chúng* gives strong support to the claim that Vietnamese kinship terms are pronouns.

### 2.3 Kinship terms as bound variables

Pronouns have been shown to function as bound variables, as in the following sentence attributed to Irene Heim in Kratzer (1998):

(10) Only I got a question that I understood.

Under the sloppy reading of (10), the interpretation is that I am the only person  $x$ , such that  $x$  got a question  $x$  understood. There have been various analyses of the bound variable in these constructions: these include underspecified, or feature-deficient, pronoun approaches (Heim, 2008; Kratzer, 2008; Rullman, 2004) and feature deletion approaches (von Stechow, 2003). Regardless, either of these approaches make the same assumption that the bound variable is a pronoun.

If Vietnamese kinship terms can function pronominally, we would expect that they can also have bound variable readings. This is indeed the case:

(11) Chỉ có Đạt nghĩ là      nó/em                      sẽ      thắng.  
 only    Dat think COMP 3SG/KIN.younger.sibling FUT win  
 ‘Only Dat thinks that he (my little brother) will win.’

While the strict reading in (11) is possible, the sloppy reading is also possible, although, because the kinship term specifies a certain relationship between the speaker and the referent, the bound reading in is only possible if *Dat* is the little brother of the speaker. If this relation does not hold, then there are three possible references for *em* corresponding to the discourse participants as we saw in (3): it can be either first, second or third person.<sup>3</sup>

It is clear, then, that kinship terms in Vietnamese can also be bound variables in certain cases, lending more reason to believe that they might be some sort of pronoun. It is unclear, however, if we take the approach that  $\phi$ -features are copied onto bound variables from some antecedent, as is the general approach suggested by Heim (2008), how that can fully account for the construction of a kinship term: for one, we would have to posit that these  $\phi$ -features are being copied from the proper name, which is the antecedent. Secondly, we would have to say that besides typical  $\phi$ -features, some relational status of the discourse participants are encoded within the proper name, which then gets copied into the bound variable and spelled out as a kinship term.

As such, attempting to treat the kinship term as a bound variable pronoun might not be the correct approach at all. Despite the evidence so far that show that kinship terms have similar distributional and functional properties of pronouns, perhaps we should treat them instead as special kinds of R-expressions, along with names and epithets.

<sup>3</sup>Another possibility, which I don’t address here, is that proper names are commonly used in Vietnamese to refer to first and second person participants. This introduces two more options for the interpretation of the name in (11): first person or second person. In this case, of course, the true third person pronoun *nó* would be ungrammatical, although the kinship term could still be used if the kinship relationship between participants holds. If kinship terms are then to be considered pronouns in Vietnamese, we would have to stipulate that they are pronouns that are underspecified with respect to person.

### 3 Kinship terms as R-expressions

#### 3.1 Usage as nouns

The first observation to make about Vietnamese kinship terms in favor of their being R-expressions is that they can be used as common nouns:

- (12) Ngày mai            Minh sẽ    đi thăm 2 nhà/anh/\*chúng nó            tôi.  
 day    tomorrow Minh FUT go visit 2 house/older brother/PL-3.SG 1.SG

‘Tomorrow Minh will go visit my 2 homes/older brothers/\*them.’

In (12), we can see that the kinship term *anh* can also be used as a regular noun with a denotation that picks out older brothers. It is interesting to note that this denotative function must be contextually constrained to pick out individuals who are older brothers with respect to the speaker.

However, this does not immediately set kinship terms apart from pronouns. English pronouns, while not having any denotation, impose certain presuppositions: i.e. *he* must typically refer to an animate masculine individual, *she* to an animate female one. One could argue, then, that *anh* imposes a similar, though more stringent, presupposition that it must refer to an individual that is an older brother of the speaker, which perhaps only two individuals fulfill. Then, like an English pronoun with no antecedent, *anh* must then refer to the most salient individual within the discourse that doesn’t fail the presuppositions. As such, (12) could be seen as analogous to an English sentence, “I’ll visit the two of them tomorrow”, in a context where the two older brothers have been made salient (such as while looking at a photograph of them).

This presupposition hypothesis, however, ignores the syntactic distribution shown above, where only nouns permit counting (kinship terms are part of the exceptional class of nouns that do not require classifiers to be counted in Vietnamese) and a possessive, as we can see with the ungrammaticality when using a true pronoun such as *chúng nó*. Syntactically, the kinship term has the same distribution as a noun such as *nhà*.

#### 3.2 Bound R-expressions

Along with pronouns and kinship terms, proper names can also serve as anaphora in Vietnamese, most notably in apparent violation of Condition C:

- (13) Đạt<sub>i</sub> nghĩ là      Đạt<sub>i</sub> sẽ    thắng.  
 Dat think COMP Dat FUT win

‘Dat<sub>i</sub> thinks that he<sub>i</sub> will win.’

- (14) Đạt<sub>i</sub> đánh Đạt<sub>i</sub>.  
 Dat hit    Dat

‘Dat hits himself.’

It is of note that the repeated proper name can be bound, or at least co-referential with its antecedent, whether it is a coargument with its antecedent, as in (14) or not, as in (13). The former example is relevant as it is the opposite of the grammaticality judgements for Vietnamese presented by Lasnik (1986), where he claimed that repeated names cannot be bound/coreferential when they

are coarguments with their antecedents. My informants' and my own heritage speaker intuitions are that (14) is indeed a grammatical reflexive construction.<sup>4</sup>

Vietnamese is not the only language that allows for repeated names to be bound by their antecedents: Thai is frequently mentioned in the literature as a language that also allows for this apparent violation of Condition C (Lasnik, 1986; Narahara, 1995; Larson, 2006), and there has been at least one account of San Lucas Quiavini Zapotec (henceforth SLQZ) also allowing this phenomenon (Lee, 2003). These other languages do not seem to allow local violations of Condition C as in (14), however, and though it is extremely interesting that Vietnamese does, I will be restricting my current focus to the non-local examples of repeated R-expressions for now.

Lee (2003) and Larson (2006) both give detailed analyses of bound R-expressions in SLQZ and Thai, respectively, and both conclude that while these languages appear to violate Condition C on the surface, the repeated expression being bound is not truly an R-expression, but rather simply a copy of the antecedent. In this respect, their analyses are not unlike the pronoun construction approach of Heim (2008), except that rather than the bound variable being spelled out as a pronoun, these languages also have the option of spelling out the bound variable as a copy of its coreferential antecedent with certain constraints: for SLQZ, the spelled out 'R-expression' must be identical to its antecedent, which Lee calls the Identical Antecedent Requirement; for Thai, only the antecedent's head needs to be spelled out in the copy, which Larson calls the Head Constraint.

Although nearly identical, the reason that Larson is more concerned with having her restriction on bound variable spell out possibilities is that while Lee only talks about proper names being bound variables in SLQZ, Larson points out that Thai also allows for the antecedent of a bound variable to be any NP, so long as the head is copied. She has examples of sentences with NP or title antecedents.

- (16) Aajan<sub>i</sub> kid waa kao<sub>i</sub>/aajan<sub>i</sub> ja cha-na  
Teacher think say 3.SG.M/teacher will win

'The teacher thinks that he will win.'

- (17) (a) Aajan Sid<sub>i</sub> bɔ̀ɔk waa aajan<sub>i</sub> m̄ai waang phrungnii  
Teacher Sid tell COMP teacher not free tomorrow

'Teacher Sid said that he isn't free tomorrow.'

- (b) \*Aajan Sid<sub>i</sub> bɔ̀ɔk waa Sid<sub>i</sub> m̄ai waang phrungnii  
Teacher Sid tell COMP Sid not free tomorrow

'Teacher Sid said that he isn't free tomorrow.'

(Thai, Larson (2006))

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<sup>4</sup>A more preferred reflexive form of (14) would be

- (15) Đat tự đánh mình.  
Dat REFL hit body  
'Dat hit himself.'

As can be seen *tự* is what appears to be some kind of reflexive morpheme for verbs, and *mình* is used as a reflexive pronominal. However, I am not certain about the full distribution of these two morphemes, especially *mình*, which Nguyễn (1996) shows in the singular pronoun paradigm to be seemingly underspecified for person or number – my own personal usage of *mình* has frequently been as a first person plural pronoun.

In this regard, Thai and Vietnamese are similar if we decide to treat titles and kinship terms as being equivalent, which would be an intuitive step to make.

Analyzing coreferential R-expressions as bound variables spelling out, at the least, a copy of their antecedent head is thus a compelling analysis to extend to Vietnamese kinship terms, as we can then simply treat them as Larson treats titles in Thai. This, however, cannot fully account for the data.

### 3.3 Kinship terms as unpronounced heads

As was previously mentioned, kinship terms can act as substitutes for their anaphoric antecedents, similar to pronouns. Recall (11), reproduced here (omitting the true pronoun):

- (18)  $\text{Đạt}_i$  nghĩ là  $em_i$  sẽ thắng.  
 Dat think COMP KIN.younger.sibling FUT win  
 ‘ $\text{Đạt}_i$  thinks that  $he_i$  (my little brother) will win.’

If we wish to treat kinship terms such as *em* as bound variables that are spelled out as copies of their antecedent, then examples such as (18) present a real problem, as there does not seem to be any antecedent available to copy. In fact, Larson does not talk about the possibility of titles being noun substitutes at all for Thai; she only has examples like (17), where the name is the complement of a title head.

However, kinship terms can also precede names in Vietnamese, making them look a lot like the relevant Thai title examples<sup>5</sup> :

- (19) Em  $\text{Đạt}_i$  nghĩ là  $em_i$  ( $\text{Đạt}_i$ ) sẽ thắng.  
 KIN.little.sibling Dat think COMP KIN.younger.sibling Dat FUT win  
 ‘(My little brother)  $\text{Đạt}_i$  thinks that  $he_i$  will win.’

(19) now looks a lot like the relevant Thai data in (17), where the kinship term in the antecedent is a head that must be spelled out in the bound variable with the option of including additional material, such as the name.

If we want to use an analysis along the lines of Larson (2006), in which the non-pronominal bound variable is a copy of the antecedent (minimally the head), we would be forced to hypothesize then that there is always a kinship term head in the antecedent, which can then license the copying of just the kinship term in the bound variable as a noun substitute; we must also postulate that the kinship term in the antecedent is potentially unpronounced.

While this hypothesis looks promising, it incorrectly predicts the following example as ungrammatical:

- (20) Em  $\text{Đạt}_i$  nghĩ là  $\text{Đạt}_i$  sẽ thắng.  
 KIN.younger.sibling Dat think COMP Dat FUT win  
 ‘(My little brother)  $\text{Đạt}_i$  thinks that  $he_i$  will win.’

<sup>5</sup>The distinction between titles in Thai and kinship terms in Vietnamese may very well be a trivial one, and other words in Vietnamese that group with kinship terms in function include *ban*, ‘friend’ (though that may arguably also be an extension of kinship). I maintain the distinction between Thai titles and Vietnamese kinship terms just in case they end up to have non-trivial differences.



As the examples in (22) show, while the kinship term can bind a third person pronoun, it cannot bind a second person one. As one might expect, the second person pronoun *mày* can bind itself, though. What this seems to reinforce is the previous idea that kinship terms do not have person features. Perhaps the kinship term cannot bind the second person pronoun because it lacks person features, making it less referential. If this true, then we could hypothesize that the third person pronoun can be bound because it also lacks any person features, which would indirectly support a privative feature theory of pronouns.

Still, the hierarchy of referentiality cannot be the only story. If we were to hypothesize that Vietnamese allows for an equally referential expression to be bound by its antecedent, we would make incorrect predictions. Consider the following example, where my younger brother Dat also has the English name Ryan, which is common among Vietnamese-Americans:

- (23) *\*(Em) Dat<sub>i</sub> nghĩ là (em) Ryan<sub>i</sub> sẽ thắng.*  
 (KIN.younger.sibling) Dat think COMP (KIN.younger.sibling) Ryan FUT win  
 ‘(My little brother) Dat/Ryan<sub>i</sub> thinks that he<sub>i</sub> will win.’

In (23), we see that although both names should be of equally referentiality, we still want to have some kind of restriction in the spirit of Identical Antecedent Requirement or Larson’s Head Constraint. As such, a hierarchy of referentiality cannot be the only restriction on anaphor binding. Moreover, it also does not give any explanation into how a bound variable can be spelled out as a kinship term. Lasnik (1986) attempts to handle anaphoric epithets by adding a [ $\pm$ referential] feature, which was not only shown to be a deficient analysis of reflexives in Thai and Vietnamese by Narahara (1995), but also cannot explain why the anaphoric kinship term must be consistent with the relation of the referent and the speaker.

### 3.5 Person restrictions

As was mentioned earlier, it is common practice in Vietnamese to use both kinship terms and names when referring to discourse participants (this is also common practice in Malayalam, from personal conversation with Savithry Nambooridipad, and I am sure there are several other languages that also do this). This brings up the issue of whether or not we want to consider these R-expressions as being indexical (having person features) when they refer to either the speaker or addressee.

On the surface, this does not seem to be the case. Consider (22a) again, reproduced here without the third person pronoun, where I am speaking to my younger brother and using *em* as a second person ‘pronoun’:

- (24) *\*Em<sub>i</sub> nghĩ là mà<sub>i</sub> sẽ thắng.*  
 KIN.younger.sibling think COMP 2.SG FUT win  
 ‘You (my little brother) think that you will win.’

As mentioned before, (24) suggests that the kinship term does not have person features indexed to it from the context or otherwise, or at the very least, there is something preventing this feature from being copied or transmitted onto the bound variable. However, there is no clear way that the structure of (24) differs syntactically from any of the other examples we have seen, so attempting an analysis of blocked feature transmission does not seem to be the path to take.



In the Southern Vietnamese dialect of my informants and me, certain kinship terms, such as *anh*, alternate with another form that is restricted to third person reference only. The alternations are all consistent, and involve a floating tone morpheme: thus *anh* becomes *anḥ*.

- (28) *Anḥ*                      *đang*              *đọc sách*.  
 3.KIN.older.brother PRES.PROG read book  
 ‘\*I/\*You/He is reading a book.’ (where the referent must be salient in the discourse)

More importantly, these restricted third person kinship terms cannot be bound by non-restricted kinship terms:

- (29) *Anh<sub>i</sub>*                      *nghĩ là*              *\*anh<sub>i</sub>/anh<sub>i</sub>*              *sẽ thắng*.  
 KIN.older.brother think COMP 3.KIN.older.brother FUT win  
 ‘He<sub>i</sub> thinks that he<sub>i</sub> will win.’

On the D&W analysis, then, we can hypothesize that Vietnamese kinship terms, unlike Larson’s analysis of Thai titles, are  $\phi$  heads, allowing them to be bound. The floating tone morpheme that restricts reference to third person can then be seen as D head, which creates a true R-expression. The resulting pro-DP thus cannot be bound, which is what we observe in (29). We must additionally stipulate that the presence of the floating tone D head does not prevent the  $\phi$  head from being spelled out, possibly because it does not have enough phonological material to surface on its own. It must, however, prevent the noun from being spelled out, to prevent the name from also being spelled out:

- (30) (a) *\*Anḥ*                      *Thịnh đang*              *đọc sách*.  
 3.KIN.older.brother Think PRES.PROG read book  
 ‘(My older brother) Think is reading a book.’  
 (b) *\*Anh*                      *Thịnh<sub>i</sub> nghĩ là*              *anh*                      *Thịnh<sub>i</sub> sẽ thắng*.  
 KIN.older.brother Think think COMP 3.KIN.older.brother Think FUT win  
 ‘(My older brother) Think<sub>i</sub> thinks that he<sub>i</sub> will win.’

An immediate question may be why the kinship term cannot be omitted, with the floating tone showing up on the name itself. However, as I mentioned before, the tone can only apply to specific kinship terms anyway, so we must already posit that it only selects for certain complements. We could extend this to also prevent the floating tone from showing up on proper names, or anything besides the kinship terms we see it appear on.

Taking this one step further, we could try to account for non-restricted kinship terms by positing that they are also  $\phi$  heads that have a phonologically null D head that allows them to become R-expressions, as Longobardi (1994) claims for English and Italian proper names. For Vietnamese, we can posit that this D head can index the kinship term to either the speaker or the addressee if it is felicitous to do so.

Unfortunately, this hypothesis has two major problems. The first is that the restricted third person kinship terms can be bound, as long as they are copies of their antecedents:

- (31)  $\overset{h}{\text{Ănh}}_i$                        $\text{nghĩ là}$                        $\overset{h}{\text{ănh}}_i$                        $\text{sẽ thắng}$ .  
 3.KIN.older.brother think COMP 3.KIN.older.brother FUT win

‘ $\text{He}_i$  thinks that  $\text{he}_i$  will win.’

Positing that the floating tone morpheme is a D head that creates a pro-DP R-expression predicts that it should not be able to be a bound variable. Attempting to use the Larson analysis is also problematic, as she claims the bound variable must be a pro- $\phi$ P. The analysis that Lee (2003) proposes for SLQZ might be of some use, as it posits that non-locally bound copies are the residues of illicit A-movement. However, extending this analysis to Vietnamese requires more research into how movement works in Vietnamese.

The other problem for the above hypothesis of Vietnamese kinship terms being  $\phi$  heads in the D&W framework is that it doesn’t clearly explain why a non-restrictive kinship term with a name can be indexical to either the speaker or the addressee. The phonologically null D head that does this indexing would have to allow for the proper name N complement to be spelled out as well, something that the third-person restrictive tone prevents. This doesn’t necessarily refute the current hypothesis, but makes certain phonological spell outs constraints to be a property of certain morphemes rather than a geometric one.

## 4 Tentative conclusions

The goal of this paper has been to examine the problematic categorization of Vietnamese kinship terms: they are clearly noun-like in having denotational meanings, yet they exhibit many properties, as well as the distribution, that we see in pronouns. Specifically, kinship terms can have interpretations as bound variables. However, as we have seen, the possible antecedent-anaphor combinations do not fit previous analyses of bound variable copies for Thai and SLQZ, though they generally seem to follow the referentiality hierarchy generalization proposed by Lasnik (1986).

Essentially, we want to say that kinship terms have anaphoric properties, whether or not they have antecedents in the discourse. This is not limited to just Vietnamese, but also occurs in English:

- (32) (a) Mom sent us a care package.  
 (b) John saw Grandma at the supermarket.  
 (c) I dropped the kids off at school today.

What English generally doesn’t allow, of course, is for kinship terms and proper names to form a constituent, although in (32a-32b) the kinship terms appear to be names themselves. Because of the apparent violation of Condition C, languages like Vietnamese allow us to see that these (seeming) R-expressions can also be bound variables. Though various analyses in defense of Condition C have been proposed to account for this phenomenon in other languages, they do not seem sufficient to account for the Vietnamese data.

Furthermore, no previous account of these bound variable copies discusses the fact that R-expressions can be indexical in Vietnamese. Hopefully a better understanding of kinship terms, then, can pave the way to an analysis of how first and second person indexicality functions outside of the pronoun system.

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