

**Born to be bound: A unified account
for the logophoric, reflexive, and first-person uses of Vietnamese *mình***

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Abstract

Languages around the world can have different, dedicated forms for reflexives, logophors, and independent pronouns. However, *mình* in Vietnamese has all of these three uses, and in certain contexts, it can be three-way ambiguous. First, *mình* can be used logophorically like West African logophoric pronouns (e.g. Edo *ireṇ*, Ibibio *imọ*, Yoruba *òun*, and Abe *n-pronoun*) and East Asian long-distance reflexives (e.g., Japanese *zibun*, Mandarin *ziji*, Korean *caki*). Second, *mình* can be a dedicated reflexive that takes antecedents of any ϕ -features, resembling the East Asian local reflexives. Third, it can also be used as a first-person pronoun, interchangeably with *tôi*_[1SG]. This use is exclusively found in Vietnamese *mình* and not in the West African nor East Asian analogs.

I propose that these three uses are not accidental but all emerge as a result of *mình*'s anaphoricity. *Mình*, across all its uses, is uniformly bound by a null Logophoric Operator (LogOp). This LogOp is controlled or bound by a different antecedent, yielding corresponding interpretations of *mình*. For first-person *mình*, LogOp is bound by a silent Speaker operator. When *mình* is logophoric or reflexive, LogOp is instead controlled by an overt antecedent. I further propose that LogOp has two possible merge sites in Vietnamese: Spec,TP when *mình* is first-person or logophoric, and Spec,VoiceP when *mình* is a local reflexive.

An intermediate LogOp is required in all three cases due to a mismatch between *mình*'s $[+log]$ feature and its antecedent's $[-log]$ feature. According to Feature Compatibility (Baker, in progress), binding fails when two DPs carry conflicting features (e.g., $[+F]$ vs. $[-F]$) and holds when they have non-distinct feature values. The intermediate LogOp mediates the mismatch, allowing *mình* to enter a relation with its antecedent in the licit sequence *Antecedent... LogOp... mình*. This (in)compatibility-based analysis not only yields a unified account of *mình*'s three uses but also captures cross-linguistic (a)symmetries between Vietnamese and West African and East Asian languages.