

**WHO'S THE PAD THAI? THAT WOULD BE ME.
A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF NONCANONICAL EQUATIVES**

GREGORY WARD
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

Most studies of marked syntactic constructions have focused on constructions that employ noncanonical word order as the basis for identifying the markedness of those constructions. However, word order is not the only indicator of a marked construction. In this talk, I examine two copular constructions in English whose marked status does not derive from word order variation: DEFERRED EQUATIVES and EPISTEMIC *WOULD* EQUATIVES.

- (1) a. [context: Server at Thai restaurant to group of customers]
A: Who ordered the Pad Thai and who ordered the Nam Sod?
B: I'm the Pad Thai.
[OP: X CORRESPONDS TO Y]
- b. A: What did Chris order?
B: That would be the Pad Thai.
[OP: CHRIS ORDERED X]

☛ Claims:

- both types of equatives are focus-presupposition constructions, requiring a salient OPEN PROPOSITION (OP) for felicity (Prince 1986);
- they differ in the number of OP variables being instantiated as foci;
- the two arguments of deferred equatives correspond to the two (non-deferred) instantiations of the OP (Ward 2004), while the subject of epistemic *would* equatives corresponds to the unique variable of the OP (Birner, Kaplan, and Ward 2007);
- the constructions formally mark a salient OP yet what marks them so is not word order.

Part I: Deferred equatives

DEFERRED REFERENCE (Nunberg 1979, 1995): the metonymic use of an expression to refer to an entity not denoted by the conventional meaning of that expression.

- (2) a. [server to co-worker in deli]
The ham sandwich is at table 7. [=Nunberg's (1995) ex. (19)]
- b. [restaurant patron handing car key to parking valet]
This is parked out back. [=Nunberg's (1995) ex. (1)]
- c. Yeats is still widely read. [=Nunberg's (1995) ex. (49)]
- d. The table is made of oak. [=Nunberg's (1995) ex. (24)]

Related work: REGULAR POLYSEMY (Apresjan 1974), SEMANTIC TRANSFER RULES (Leech 1974), METONYMY (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), SENSE TRANSFER (Sag 1981), ACTIVE ZONES (Langacker 1984), LEXICAL NETWORKS (Norvig & Lakoff 1987), LEXICAL IMPLICATION RULES (Ostler & Atkins 1991), REFERENTIAL/PREDICATIVE METONYMY (Stallard 1993), CONNECTORS (Fauconnier 1994), MEANING TRANSFER (Nunberg 1995), CONSTRUCTIONAL POLYSEMY and SENSE EXTENSION

(Copestake & Briscoe 1995), LOGICAL METONYMY (Pustejovsky 1995, Verspoor 1997), ENRICHED COMPOSITION (Jackendoff 2002), *inter alia*.

Some naturally-occurring data:

- (3) a. [customer to server holding tray full of dinner orders at a Thai restaurant] I'm the Pad Thai.
[BL, in conversation, 8/10/02]
- b. Samir Abd al-Aziz al-Najim is the four of clubs.
[*Chicago Tribune*, 4/19/03, p. 5.]
- c. [physician assigning interns to patients] You and you are shortness of breath. You and you take vertigo. And last but not least, knee pain.
[*ER*, 4/25/03]
- d. DJ: Are you Cubs or White Sox?
Caller: I'm Cubs.
[WGN Radio, AM 720, 6/20/03]
- e. [request to unplug out-of-reach laptop power cable]
A: Hi, can you unplug me?
B: Sure, which one are you?
A: I'm the one on the end.
[Conversation, 12/12/06; token courtesy of Robert Daland]

1. Previous studies

MEANING (SENSE) TRANSFER: “[t]he name of a property that applies to something in one domain can sometimes be used as the name of a property in another domain, provided the two properties correspond in a certain [noteworthy] way” (Nunberg 1995:111).

Two mechanisms for meaning transfer: predicate (VP) transfer and common noun (N) transfer.

- (4) a. Predicate transfer
I'm parked out back. ⇒ ‘I'm the owner of a car parked out back.’
[=Nunberg's (1995) ex. (2)]
- b. Common noun transfer
The ham sandwich is at table 7. ⇒ ‘The ham sandwich orderer is at table 7.’
[=Nunberg's (1995) ex. (19)]

- (5) I am the ham sandwich and I'd like it right now. [=Nunberg's (1995) fn. 13, ex (i)]

☛ Claim: Unlike deferred non-equatives, deferred equatives involve no transfer of sense or reference; rather, the two NPs of deferred equatives retain their literal meanings with the copula interpreted as expressing a noteworthy correspondence between the referents of those NPs.

2. Deferred equatives and open propositions

OP = a proposition with 1+ variables, corresponding to that aspect of information structure that constitutes backgrounded or presupposed information (i.e., that which is not ‘at issue’).

- (6) a. I plan to discuss several topics. What I'll discuss first is the notion of political correctness.
b. OP: I'LL DISCUSS X FIRST.
c. FOCUS: the notion of political correctness

- (7) a. I'm not really into sports. Baseball I like, but more for the scene at Wrigley Field than the actual game.
 b. OP: I HAVE DISPOSITION X TOWARDS {SPORTS}.
 c. FOCUS: like
- (8) a. My father-in-law is visiting this weekend. #Baseball I like, so at least we'll have something to talk about.
 b. My father-in-law is visiting this weekend. I like baseball, so at least we'll have something to talk about.

The packaging of information into an open proposition and a focus corresponds closely to the focus/presupposition (or focus/focus frame) distinction of Chomsky (1971), Jackendoff (1972), Rochemont (1986), Vallduví (1992), Lambrecht (1994), Kiss (1998), Gundel & Fretheim (2004), *inter alia*. For further discussion of OPs and the constructions that are sensitive to them, see Prince 1986; Ward 1988; Birner & Ward 1998; Birner, Kaplan, and Ward 2007; *inter alia*.

3. Deferred equatives and copular coercion

For deferred equatives, the relevant OP contains two variables, corresponding to the two sets from which the instantiations of these variables are drawn.

- (9) a. I'm the Pad Thai.
 b. OP: X MAPS ONTO Y (where X is a member of the set {customers} and Y is a member of the set {orders}).
 c. FOCI: I, the Pad Thai

☛ Claim: For deferred equatives, no sense or reference transfer applies; what makes (9a) 'deferred' is the shift in the interpretation of the copula from *be* to *correspond to*, a case of copular coercion.

Copular coercion with concomitant reference transfer:

- (10) A: Which guy over there ordered what?
 B: The red shirt is the Pad Thai. The blue backpack is the Nam Sod.
 (a) the red shirt → the guy wearing the red shirt
 (b) the guy with the red shirt is a member of the set {customers}

In the absence of a salient double-variable OP, deferred equatives are infelicitous:

- (11) A: [on cell phone] Sorry to interrupt your lunch. How is it?
 B: Delicious! #I'm the Pad Thai.
- (12) A: Sorry to interrupt your lunch. How is it?
 B: Delicious! I ordered the Pad Thai.

Non-deferred equatives ('identity clauses') are not subject to this constraint:

- (13) a. That guy that you were just talking to is my neighbor Sam Miller.
 b. That building on your left is the Sears Tower.
 c. This painting is the same as the one hanging in the Louvre.

4. Deferred equatives as non-deferred

For deferred equatives, the two copular NPs retain their non-transferred meanings.

- (14) a. # John is the Pad Thai, who drives a Rolls Royce.
 b. John is the Pad Thai, which looks delicious.
 c. John is talking to the Pad Thai, who drives a Rolls Royce.
- (15) a. # The Pad Thai, who drives a Rolls Royce, is John.
 b. The Pad Thai, which looks delicious, is John.
 c. The Pad Thai, who drives a Rolls Royce, is talking to John.
- (16) a. Let’s see... You’re what, the Pad Thai or the Nam Sod?
 b. # Let’s see... You’re who, the Pad Thai or the Nam Sod?
- (17) a. Tell me honestly, who do you like more, the Pad Thai or the Nam Sod?
 b. # Tell me honestly, what do you like more, the Pad Thai or the Nam Sod?
- (18) a. What I am is the Pad Thai, not the Nam Sod.
 b. # Who I am is the Pad Thai, not the Nam Sod.
- (19) a. Dude, who you should be checking out is the Pad Thai, not the Nam Sod.
 b. # Dude, what you should be checking out is the Pad Thai, not the Nam Sod.
- (20) a. John’s the Washington Post. ⇒ ‘John’s a reporter for the Washington Post’.
 b. # John’s a Washington Post.
- (21) a. John’s the morning paper. ⇒ ‘John’s a reporter for the morning paper’.
 b. # John’s a morning paper.
- (22) a. John’s Newsweek. ⇒ ‘John’s a reporter for Newsweek’.
 b. # John’s a Newsweek.
- (23) [examples due to Betty Birner]
 a. The Pad Thai is Chris, isn’t it?
 b. The Pad Thai is a big tipper, isn’t {#it/he}?
 c. The Pad Thai is called Chris, isn’t {#it/he}?

5. Summary, Part I

Deferred equatives:

- encode a pragmatic correspondence between members of sets of discourse entities with the copula expressing a correspondence – rather than literal identity – between those entities;
- require a contextually salient open proposition.

Part II: Epistemic *would* equatives (joint work with Betty Birner and Jeff Kaplan)

- ☛ Claims: Functionally, use of an epistemic *would* equative: (1) conveys a speaker’s high level of commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed; (2) marks the postverbal constituent as (containing) the focus of a contextually salient OP.

Some naturally-occurring data:

- (24) a. Dad: Uh... Who’s that boy hanging out in our front yard, Danae?
Danae: That would be Jeffrey, my not-so-secret admirer.
[“Non Sequitur” comic, *Chicago Tribune*, Sunday, 3/3/02, sec. 9, p. 3]
- b. Q: Can you tell us if you recognize this clothing?
A: That would be our standard attire, correct.
[Simpson transcripts, 2/7/95]
- c. I need to talk to Andy to see if he’s interested in going to a departure lunch for a Zenith employee this Friday at Little Villa – the employee would be myself.
[message left on BB’s answering machine, 9/21/00]

1. Epistemic *would* equatives and epistemic modality

Epistemic modality marks the speaker’s estimation of the likelihood that a certain state of affairs is true (or false) in the context of the possible world under consideration. (Nuyts 2001)

Previous accounts of epistemic *would*:

Perkins (1983) and Palmer (1990): conveys tentativeness

Coates (1983): indicates predictability

Sweetser (1982): is part of an implicit conditional with a suppressed antecedent

Empirical evidence: Ward *et al.* (in prep.) show that subjects are significantly more likely to rate epistemic *would* utterances (e.g. *That would be Chris*) presented aurally (but not visually!) as conveying certainty than the corresponding utterances with main verb *be* alone (e.g. *That’s Chris*).

Of all the epistemic modals, *would* conveys the strongest degree of speaker commitment:

- (25) a. That would be Jeffrey.
b. That must/should be Jeffrey.

2. Epistemic *would* and OPs

- ☛ Claim: Epistemic *would* equatives require a salient OP for felicity.

Corresponding to the examples in (24) are the OPs in (26):

- (26) a. THE BOY HANGING OUT IN THE FRONT YARD IS X.
b. THE CLOTHING IS X.
c. THE ZENITH EMPLOYEE FOR WHOM THERE IS A DEPARTURE LUNCH IS X.

In the absence of a salient OP, only epistemic *would* is infelicitous:

- (27) [context: B is engrossed in reading the newspaper in the family room while A enters the room holding up an envelope and, while B is still reading, utters:]
a. # This would be my new VISA card.
b. This must/should be my new VISA card.
c. This might/could be my new VISA card.

3. Reference to the instantiation of the variable of the OP

☛ Claim: The combination of a salient OP and the equative construction produces the possibility of using a demonstrative subject to refer deictically to the instantiation of the variable of the OP, and identifying it, via the equative construction, with its postcopular focus.

- (28) a. A (holding cup): Whose is this?
 B: That would be my son. My youngest son, to be exact.
 [conversation, 2/4/01]
 OP: THIS CUP BELONGS TO X.
- b. GW: What is the per minute charge to Italy?
 Operator: Do you have the one-rate plan?
 GW: I'm not sure – can I find out through you?
 Operator: No, that would be... 1-800-466-3728.
 [conversation with AT&T operator, 6/23/01]
 OP: YOU CAN FIND OUT THROUGH X.
- c. A: The pot's light.
 B: That would be me. [tosses in a chip]
 [poker game, 1/31/03]
 OP: THE PERSON WHO FAILED TO ANTE IS X.

Reference to the instantiation of the variable of the OP as a form of discourse deixis (Lyons 1977, Levinson 1983, Webber 1988):

- (29) I bet you haven't heard this story.
 [=Levinson 1983:85, ex. 88]
- (30) A: I've never seen him.
 B: That's a lie.
 [Lyons 1977:668, cited in Levinson 1983:87]

The focus need not exhaust the postverbal NP:

- (31) G: Two things. (1) As a life member, Paul's membership doesn't expire, so why the expiration date of 2009? (2) Whether or not the date should be there, shouldn't it be in proper LSA format? (3) Why is there a “renew now” link for life members?
 E: That would be **three** things.
 [Ed Rice to Gregory Ward in email, 10/31/2007]

4. Three properties of epistemic *would*

☛ Claim: The use of a demonstrative subject pronoun whose referent is the instantiation of an OP variable gives rise to 3 properties.

Property I: Epistemic *would* equatives are systematically ambiguous between a reading on which the referent of the demonstrative is an evoked discourse entity and a reading on which it is the instantiation of the variable of a salient OP:

- (32) a. [King dips his finger in a bowl, licks the food off , and proclaims it delicious.]
 King: What do you call this dish?
 Servant: That would be the dog’s breakfast.
 [“Shrek 2”]
 OP: YOU CALL THIS DISH X.
- b. A: I’m looking for the name of a magician. He works in Hawaii and just finished a lecture tour in Canada. One of the routines in his lecture included a display of a regular size penny, then using a magnifying glass the penny would get bigger and bigger up to 3 inches. Who is this magician?
 B: That would be Carl Andrews, and the trick you are referring to is Gregory Wilson’s Dishonest Abe.
 [electronic mailing list, 9/8/00]
 OP: THIS MAGICIAN IS X.

Property II: Apparent number disagreement

- (33) a. One of the best mulches is composted leaves, so good for the garden, the flower bed, and a wonderful amendment to the soil. Also, here’s hoping you won’t burn your leaves, wasting them, despite the fact that burning them is illegal in most Illinois counties – that would be the populated ones, like Cook, DuPage, Lake, e.g.
 [email, 4/24/01]
 OP: THE ILLINOIS COUNTIES IN WHICH BURNING LEAVES IS ILLEGAL ARE X.
- b. No, I’m sorry, but I must disagree with the observation that cats are energy sinks. That would be children under the age of ... say 12.
 [e-mail discussion about what counts as an ‘energy sink’ 06/06/01]
 OP: X ARE ENERGY SINKS.
- c. By the way, I heard your names (that would be you and Andy) on NPR yesterday... Happy anniversary!
 [e-mail, 6/26/02]
 OP: I HEARD THE NAMES OF X.
- (34) The show started on ABC as Two Guys, A Girl And A Pizza Place. The show centered on three young characters just starting out in life - that would be the two guys and a girl.
 [<http://www.poobala.com/twoguysandagirl.html>]
 OP: THE THREE YOUNG CHARACTERS JUST STARTING OUT IN LIFE ARE X.

Property III: Apparent tense disagreement

- (35) a. Sabrina: Do you remember a rainy afternoon we spent together? My father had driven your mother and David into town for a music lesson.
 Linus Larrabee: How old was he?
 Sabrina: I don’t know... Fourteen, fifteen.
 Linus: That would be the oboe.
 [movie “Sabrina”]
 OP: DAVID WAS TAKING LESSONS IN X AT THAT TIME.

- b. Mom: It’s an Equifest 2001 ribbon!
Daughter: That would be T-2.
[conversation, 7/15/04; ‘T-2’ is the name of a deceased horse]
OP: THE HORSE THAT WON THAT RIBBON WAS X.

5. Summary, Part II

Epistemic *would* equatives:

- convey a speaker’s high level of commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed;
- mark the postverbal constituent as (containing) the focus of a contextually salient OP;
- include a demonstrative subject which can be used to refer deictically to the instantiation of the variable of the OP, and identifying it, via the equative construction, with its postcopular focus; this use of the demonstrative in an equative, in turn, gives rise to three properties.

Conclusion

- Two copular constructions – deferred equatives and epistemic *would* equatives – share the pragmatic requirement of a salient open proposition in context.
- They differ with respect to the number of OP variables being instantiated as foci, with the demonstrative of epistemic *would* being used to refer either to an evoked discourse entity or to the instantiation of an OP variable.
- Unlike other OP-marking constructions that rely on word order to signal their markedness, these equatives rely on other devices: for deferred equatives, it’s the interpretation of the copula as expressing a (non-identity) correspondence; for epistemic *would* equatives, it’s the presence of the epistemic modal *would*.

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An alternative analysis of the demonstrative in equative clauses

Mikkelsen (2004): Demonstrative copular clauses of the form *That’s Robert* (and, by extension, epistemic *would* equatives) are SPECIFICATIONAL CLAUSES, analogous to non-demonstrative copular clauses of the form *The culprit was Robert*. (Specificational clauses are analyzed by M as inverted PREDICATIONAL CLAUSES, e.g. *Robert was the culprit*.) For M, the demonstrative pronominal subject of a specificational clause is property-denoting (type ⟨e,t⟩ in the sense of Partee 1987), requiring an antecedent of the same semantic type.

Commonality: The demonstrative pronominal subject is anaphoric (not expletive, à la Büring 1998).

Differences: For M, the subject takes a property as its antecedent.

For BK&W, the demonstrative is ambiguous; on one reading, its referent is an evoked discourse entity, on the other it’s the instantiation of an OP variable.

Evidence for M’s theory: tag questions, left-dislocations, and non-restrictive modifiers.

Tag questions (Higgins 1979):

- (1) a. That is Susan, isn’t {it/*she}? [=Mikkelsen’s (2004) ex. (7.51); judgment hers]
- b. That woman is Susan, isn’t {*it/she}? [=Mikkelsen’s (2004) ex. (7.52); judgment hers]

Neuter pronouns are possible with other types of clearly individual-denoting subjects:

- (2) a. I think that guy over there is Bill, isn’t it?
- b. That guy on the couch isn’t your brother, is it?
- c. That woman who keeps walking by is your boss, isn’t it?

Left-dislocations:

- (3) a. The tallest girl in the class, that’s Molly. [=Mikkelsen’s (2004) ex. (5.2a)]
- b. The tallest girl in the class, she’s Swedish. [=Mikkelsen’s (2004) ex. (5.2b)]
- c. * The tallest girl in the class, that’s Swedish. [=Mikkelsen’s (2004) ex. (5.2b)]

Dislocations and appositives:

- (4) a. That guy over there smoking a joint – isn’t that Bill?
- b. A: Did they fire Chris?
 B: No, they fired Lee. Chris, that’s who they promoted. [example due to T. Kroch]
- c. Then Zack – that’s my boyfriend – shows up... [ER, 11/30/06] (cp. Then Zack – #it’s my boyfriend – shows up...)

Here, the dislocated/head NP is necessarily individual-denoting, suggesting that the demonstrative must be individual-denoting as well.

Non-restrictive modifiers:

- (5) a. * That, who everybody can see clearly, is Susan. [=Mikkelsen’s (2004) ex. (7.53); judgment hers]
- b. That woman, who everybody can see clearly, is Susan. [=Mikkelsen’s (2004) ex. (7.54); judgment hers]

The prohibition against non-restrictive modifiers with demonstrative pronoun subjects, however, applies even to those that are clearly individual-denoting:

- (6) [context: Speaker and hearer are looking at a family photograph]
 - a. Those are the Smiths.
 - b. * Those, who I can't stand, are the Smiths.
 - c. Those people, who I can't stand, are the Smiths.

Epistemic *would* equatives with proximal demonstrative subjects:

- (7) Is there a sufficient number of rooms reserved at Kellogg Center to cover those panelists who might want to stay there? And can you (Maggie, Mary?) send info to the non-EC members who are on the panels? This would be Sue Steele, Gina Taranto, Cecile McKee, and Mari Broman Olsen. I assume that they would want to stay at Kellogg Center, if rooms are available, even though it is not the cheapest alternative. [email, 3/12/06]

If *that* is property-denoting, why doesn't it do so here? ☺

- (8) [context: A very tall person enters the room and replaces a light bulb]
I wish I were that. [=Mikkelsen's (in press) ex. (66); judgment hers]