

Tautological constructions in English...and beyond

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1 Background

1.1 When I say *tautology*, what do I mean?

In general, I mean a sentence that is necessarily true. In particular, when discussing English, I follow Ward & Hirschberg (1991) in considering the following constructions tautological:

- (1) Equatives: *a (will) be a*
 - a. Boys will be boys.
 - b. A win is a win.
 - c. Slow is slow.
 - d. That's just **Manny being Manny**.
 - e. When **men were men**...
- (2) Conditionals: *if p, then p*
 - a. If we're late, we're late.
- (3) Subordinate conjunctions: *when p, p*
 - a. When he gets mad, he gets mad.
 - b. We'll get there when we get there.
- (4) Headless relatives: *p, who/what(ever) p*
 - a. She is who she is.
 - b. It is what it is.
- (5) Disjunctions: *(Either) p or not p*
 - a. Either they'll get it or they won't.
 - b. You'll like it or you won't.

1.2 Why tautologies?

Given that tautologies are necessarily true, they are apparently uninformative. So, according to Grice's maxim of Quantity (in (6)), we wouldn't expect speakers to utter them.

- (6) a. Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.

- b. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

However, as a number of researchers have noted, tautologies are, in fact, informative and uttered quite frequently.

2 Outline

1. A thorough description of the uses English tautologies
 - a. Functions of tautological constructions in English
 - b. Equatives
 - c. Conditionals
 - d. Subordinate conjunctions
 - e. Headless relatives
 - f. Disjunctions
2. Accounting for English in Gricean terms
3. Comparing to another well described language
 - a. Jordanian Arabic (Farghal 1992)

3 Describing English tautologies

3.1 Functions of tautological constructions

3.1.1 Acceptance/resignation

Tautologies can be used to communicate that someone has accepted or resigned themselves to something or to communicate the need to accept or resign oneself to something. Every type of tautology in English can be used with this function, as shown in (7a)-(7e).

- (7)
- a. But **war is war**. It isn't pretty. There will always be collateral damage, blue on blue incidents, and civilian casualties. It's not entirely avoidable. It can only be minimized.¹
 - b. LOGAN: Thank you, but I don't think I could eat another thing, and unfortunately we should be going. I have an early day tomorrow.
 EMILY: Oh, Logan, an early day. I'm so sorry we kept you.
 LOGAN: I wish I could stay longer.
 EMILY: **An early day is an early day**. Beatrice, get their coats.²
 - c. **If he's mad, he's mad**. There's nothing you can do about it.³
 - d. Resting on giant rocks, we try a Zen approach: **El Refugio is where it is, and we'll get there when we get there**.⁴
 - e. I said that I know exactly what I'd want in a male companion and **either I'll find it or I won't**, but if I don't I am 100% okay with that.⁵

¹<http://blogs.reuters.com/axismundi/2009/03/26/wanted-an-ethical-code-of-war/>

²Gilmore Girls; originally aired 05/03/2005.

³<http://forum.baby-gaga.com/about420751.html>

⁴http://www.budgettravel.com/bt-dyn/content/article/2009/02/05/AR2009020502762_pf.html

⁵<http://www.askdrding.com/2008/07/11/dear-dr-ding-31/>

3.1.2 Denial of difference within category

Tautologies can be used to deny the importance of differences between members of a category. This can sometimes communicate that, for the present purposes, all members of a category are the same. Bulhof & Gimbel (2001) dub tautologies with this function DEEP TAUTOLOGIES. This function is found with equatives, conditionals, and disjunctions, as shown in (8a)-(8c).

- (8) a. **A win is a win**... Even if it's a weird one.⁶
b. I race worthy apponents, occasionally though there is a need to just totally murder some chump in a slow car, whether it's a mustang a civic or a bmw... **if it's fast, its fast. If it's slow, it's slow**.⁷
c. **You do it or you don't**. Period. No one ever cares why you couldn't do it. They only care if you did it.⁸

3.1.3 Evoking an extreme example

Tautologies can be used to evoke an extreme example. Sometimes this extreme example can be seen as an idealized stereotype. Equatives, conditionals, and subordinate conjunctions are found with this function, as shown in (9a)-(9c).

- (9) a. Remember when **men were men** and wrote their own device drivers?⁹
b. ...she's generally extremely easy-going so I know that **if she's upset, she's upset**...¹⁰
c. And **when he runs, he runs**. I'm not just talking two miles here!¹¹

3.1.4 Distinctness of categories

Tautologies can be used to highlight the distinctness of categories or individuals (from one another). This function is only found with equatives.

- (10) a. Oh, **East is East**, and **West is West**, and never the twain shall meet...¹²
b. And I promise I will never ask you to get your brother to do an interview with me – **he's him** and **you're you**, and I'm here because *you* caught my attention.¹³
c. These are the my favorites. These may not be in your favorites-list, but hey, **I'm me** and **you're you**.¹⁴
d. The important thing to remember is that **you're you**, not anyone else. You're a unique individual with your own personality, strengths and weaknesses, struggles, and all the other unique things each individual has that no one else has.¹⁵

⁶http://lakersblog.latimes.com/lakersblog/2005/11/a_win_is_a_win.html

⁷<http://www.hondahookup.com/forums/showthread.php?t=139160&page=6>

⁸http://www.petcds.com/Bananas_media/5_TALKING_TO_THE_MIRROR.pdf

⁹<http://www.infoworld.com/t/networking/remember-when-men-were-men-and-wrote-their-own-device-drivers-400>

¹⁰<http://www.mothing.com/discussions/showthread.php?t=101152>

¹¹<http://www.city-data.com/forum/greensboro-winston-salem-high-point/707661-good-jogging-trails-areas-please.html>

¹²From "The Ballad of East and West" by Rudyard Kipling

¹³<http://loft-in-translation.blogspot.com/2007/07/ladies-and-gentlemen-i-give-you-krampt.html>

¹⁴<http://blog.srikanths.net/2008/11/srikanths-favorite-firefox-add-ons.html>

¹⁵<http://inf.globalchatter.com/messageboard/viewtopic.php?t=15252>

Very often these come in pairs, as in (10a)-(10c), though not always, as in (10d).

3.1.5 Obligation

Tautologies can be used to communicate that one must fulfill one's obligations. Only equatives are used in this way.

- (11) a. A deal's a deal.
- b. A bet's a bet.
- c. The law's the law.

I follow Wierzbicka (1987) in treating these as distinct from other tautologies.

3.1.6 Highlighting wysiwyg nature

Tautologies can be used to emphasize that with something or someone, what you see is what you get. Generally, this is by comparison to something or someone else that is more complicated, though this comparison can be implicit, as in (12c).

- (12) a. **A rat will be a rat, an ant an ant**, they will continue to function the way they do without interrupting their genetic codes' program for living. But human beings can be more than just human...¹⁶
- b. First of all, there are some real fundamental differences between the "old" phones and today's phones. In the 60's **a phone was a phone**. Nothing more. They were used to make and receive phone calls. No fancy stuff.¹⁷
- c. It was a time of innocence, and fun. A time when **a kid was a kid**, and an X-ray was not for candy.¹⁸

3.2 Equatives: *a (will) be a*

All of the functions of equative tautological constructions:

- (13) a. Acceptance/resignation: *boys will be boys, Joe being Joe*
- b. Denial of difference within category: *a win is a win, late is late*
- c. Evoking an extreme example: *men were men*
- d. Distinctness of categories: *East is East, and West is West*
- e. Obligation: *a promise is a promise*
- f. Highlighting wysiwyg nature: *a phone was (just) a phone*

Of the tautological constructions in English, equatives are used with the widest variety of functions, as seen in (13). Several of the uses are unique to equatives (Distinctness of categories, obligation, highlight wysiwyg nature). I will not discuss these in anymore than I did in 3.1, the rest will be discussed a bit further in this section.

¹⁶<http://thecriticalthinker.wordpress.com/2009/07/31/maoa/>

¹⁷<http://www.engineer-exchange.com/content/view/37/70/>

¹⁸<http://forums.tvland.com/tvln/board/message?board.id=2076&thread.id=25167>

3.2.1 Acceptance/resignation

- (14) a. Every one of them would no doubt sacrifice an appendage to see the infamously feuding brothers share the stage again for a legitimate Kinks gig, but **brothers will be brothers, Kinks will be Kinks**, and their fans have by now learned to accept their fix in half doses...¹⁹
- b. It should be a fairly easy job and the gasket should only be a few pounds.. note the ‘should’.. **cars will be cars** after all !!²⁰
- c. **Kanye will be Kanye**. It’s done...he apologized and now it’s time to move on.²¹
- d. But **war is war**. It isn’t pretty. There will always be collateral damage, blue on blue incidents, and civilian casualties. It’s not entirely avoidable. It can only be minimized.
- e. LOGAN: Thank you, but I don’t think I could eat another thing, and unfortunately we should be going. I have an early day tomorrow.
 EMILY: Oh, Logan, an early day. I’m so sorry we kept you.
 LOGAN: I wish I could stay longer.
 EMILY: **An early day is an early day**. Beatrice, get their coats.
- f. You may not like the boss. That is not the issue. Maybe you wouldn’t have picked him or her if you had been given the choice, but **the boss is the boss** and that’s the way it has always been.²²
- g. **Joe is Joe**, you gotta take the bad with the good, he didn’t do any damage as far as I see.²³
- h. As far as bill and his new LOOK, well that’s just **bill being bill!** Accept it! Love it! And please people, BREATHE!!²⁴

Noteworthy properties:

- Although the **a** slots are always filled by nominals, their form does not appear to be restricted:
 - Plural N (14a), Name (14c, 14g, 14h), abstract N (14d), indefinite sg. NP (14e), definite sg. NP (14f)
- It is some aspect of the nominal filling the **a** slots that is being or should be accepted
- When ‘will’ is used, it is frequently with plural Ns, as in (14a), but not always, as shown in (14b) and (14c)
- When the equative takes the form **a being a**, it often follows *that’s just*

¹⁹http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/5920886/dave_davies/

²⁰<http://forums.mg-rover.org/showthread.php?t=3349>

²¹<http://www.teshub.com/reader/?p=14>

²²<http://www.federalnewsradio.com/index.php?nid=20&sid=1602754>

²³<http://my.barackobama.com/page/community/post/amandascott/gGglFm/commentary>

²⁴http://www.iloveradio.de/tokio-hotel-neues-album-erscheint-ende-mai-anfang-juni_00929.html

3.2.2 Denial of difference within category (a.k.a. deep)

- (15) a. It doesn't matter if your illness is severe or mild – **a loss is a loss**. You may not be considered disabled, but if you live with a chronic illness, you are still facing changes – something that will impact the rest of your life.²⁵
- b. **War is war**, it doesn't matter who's fighting it.²⁶
- c. **The boss is the boss**, regardless of rank.²⁷
- d. **Sisters are sisters**. No matter what their background.²⁸
- e. **Hot is hot**, it doesn't matter what's causing it.²⁹
- f. A package is considered late even if it's 60 seconds late. **Late is late**.³⁰

Noteworthy properties:

- The form of the equative is generally more restricted than with acceptance/resignation function:
 - Does not appear with 'will'
 - Does not take the form *a being a*
 - **a** slot is never filled with a name
- Unlike with acceptance/resignation tautologies, the **a** slot can be filled by adjectives ((15e), (15f))
- Out of context, some tautologies can be ambiguous (either deep or acceptance/resignation):
 - Compare tautologies in (14d) and (15b) or (14f) and (15c)

3.2.3 Evoking an extreme example

- (16) a. Remember when **men were men** and wrote their own device drivers?
- b. But back then **cars were CARS**, a fender bender didn't do \$5000 worth of damage!³¹

Noteworthy properties:

- The extreme examples evoked by equative tautologies are idealized stereotypes.
- Often equative tautologies with this function are found in contexts that evoke nostalgia ('Remember when...' in (16a); '...back then...' in (16b))

²⁵<http://www.arthritistoday.org/community/blogs/tin-mom-blog-101209.php>

²⁶http://letstalk.adventist.org/have_your_say/2004_09_23.html

²⁷<http://www.arrse.co.uk/Forums/viewtopic/t=16149/start=45.html>

²⁸<http://community.breastcancer.org/forum/38/topic/739410>

²⁹http://www.tahlequahdailypress.com/features/local_story_307160635.html?keyword=secondarystory

³⁰<http://www.merchantcircle.com/business/Corporate.Mail.Refund.888-622-0485>

³¹<http://forum.goodpaws.org/index.php?showtopic=42638&st=15>

3.3 Conditionals: *if p, then p*

All of the functions of conditional tautologies:

- (17) a. Acceptance/resignation: *if we're late, we're late*
- b. Denial of difference within category: *if it's late, it's late (even if only by a day)*
- c. Evoking extreme example: *if he's mad, he's (really) mad*

3.3.1 Acceptance/resignation

- (18) a. **If he's mad, he's mad.** There's nothing you can do about it.
- b. I've learned not to sweat it, **if I forget, I forget.**³²
- c. After two days, I decided to escape. It was dangerous, but I decided: '**If we get there, we get there. If we die, we die...**'³³

What is being or should be accepted is usually indicated by **p**, but not always. In 'If we get there, we get there' in (18b), what is accepted is instead $\neg p$.

3.3.2 Denial of difference within category (a.k.a. deep)

- (19) a. people aren't gonna buy something that is slower than what they already have, i dont care how high they can fly or how well they can scout with it. **if it's slow it's slow.**³⁴
- b. It doesn't matter how hard the pitcher is throwing – **if you're late, you're late.**³⁵

The category that is being treated as if it were homogenous is indicated not by **p** itself, but by an adjective or nominal found in **p**.

3.3.3 Evoking an extreme example

- (20) ...she's generally extremely easy-going so I know that **if she's upset, she's upset...**

There is a particular intonation pattern associated with this function. This is why the author emphasized 'upset' in the apodosis.

3.4 Subordinate conjunctions: *when p, p*

- (21) a. Acceptance/resignation: *we'll get there when we get there*
- b. Evoking extreme example: *when he yells, he yells*

³²http://scienceblogs.com/pharyngula/2009/04/what_are_you_doing_alberta.php

³³<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/stories-of-taliban-atrocities-spread-as-villagers-flee-over-the-front-line-616396.html>

³⁴http://74.125.155.132/search?q=cache:8qmaIpD_QjIJ:forums.worldofwarcraft.com/thread.html%3FtopicId%3D32203250%26sid% posted 01/24/2007; accessed 05/25/2009

³⁵http://mlbplayers.mlb.com/pa/news/article.jsp?ymd=20090422&content_id=4381142&vkey=mlbpa_news&fext=.jsp

3.4.1 Acceptance/resignation

- (22) a. Resting on giant rocks, we try a Zen approach: El Refugio is where it is, and **we'll get there when we get there**.
b. I am now at 171 and my goal is 140. I don't have a specific date set for that goal. **When I get there I get there**.³⁶
c. Again, I advise patience (easier said than done, I know). **He'll ask when he asks**.³⁷

Noteworthy properties:

- What has been or should be accepted is the timing of **p**
- The order of the subordinate and main clauses is not fixed (compare (22a) and (22b))

3.4.2 Evoking an extreme example

- (23) a. And **when he runs, he runs**. I'm not just talking two miles here!
b. my friends bird is cute too, he is more into talking and says things a lot clearer than my bird. he bites a lot more often and a lot harder, **when he yells, he YELLS**.³⁸

Noteworthy properties:

- Same intonation pattern as with conditional tautologies with the same function. This is why the author emphasizes 'yell' in the main clause in (23b)
- The subordinate clause always comes first

3.5 Headless relatives: *p*, *who/what(ever)* *p*

Headless relatives are primarily used to convey acceptance/resignation or the need for acceptance/resignation.

- (24) a. There is no point in complaining. **They are who they are** and they write whatever they want.³⁹
b. Ppl can make very stupid and idiotic decisions when they are drunk and feeling vulnerable (I'm not excusing or condoning her behavior at all). But **what's done is done**, you have to try and not dwell on this.⁴⁰

3.6 Disjunctions: (*Either*) *p* or not *p*

Disjunctions can be used with acceptance/resignation ((7e) repeated as (25a)) and deep tautology functions ((8c) repeated as (25b))

³⁶<http://caloriecount.about.com/far-along-weight-loss-journey-ft108463>

³⁷<http://ar.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20070629225305AABrcN4>

³⁸<http://au.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20081001205006AAQ9qFh>

³⁹<http://www.lifebeyondcode.com/2006/10/13/10-more-things-they-didnt-tell-you-about-blogging/>

⁴⁰<http://en.allexperts.com/q/Adultery-2037/wife-affair-3.htm>

- (25) a. I said that I know exactly what I'd want in a male companion and **either I'll find it or I won't**, but if I don't I am 100% okay with that.
- b. **You do it or you don't**. Period. No one ever cares why you couldn't do it. They only care if you did it.

4 Accounting for English

4.1 Gricean accounts

The basic idea is that acquire meaning because the Maxim of Quantity is flouted:

- (26) An account of how [tautological utterances] come to have communicative significance, and different communicative significances, can be given in terms of the flouting of the maxim of Quantity. Since this requires that speakers be informative, the asserting of tautologies blatantly violates it. Therefore, if the assumption that the speaker is actually co-operating is to be preserved, some informative inference must be made. . . (Incidentally, exactly how the appropriate implicatures in these cases are to be predicted remains quite unclear, although the maxim of Relevance would presumably play a crucial role.) (Levinson 1983, 111)

4.1.1 Deriving the particular meanings of particular tautological utterances

Ward & Hirschberg (1991) propose that the appropriate implicatures are predictable based on (minimally different) alternative utterances that could have been chosen but weren't. (27) contains their specific proposal for equative tautological utterances.

- (27)
- S has affirmed a tautological utterance of the form '**a is a**' (or Sp. '**a es a**', or Turk. '**a a-dir**'), which appears to add nothing to our mutual beliefs in general, and, in particular, nothing to our mutual beliefs about **a**;
 - Assuming that S is observing the Cooperative Principle, then, by the maxims of Quantity and Relation, S has said as much as s/he truthfully can that is relevant about '**a**';
 - S might have produced utterances of a similar form, say '**a is b**' (where '**a**' and '**b**' are distinct, modulo referring expressions), which *could* have added something to our mutual beliefs about '**a**',
 - S chose *not* to utter such alternatives;
 - thus S implicates that these alternatives are not relevant for the purposes of the exchange.

Certainly accounts for or helps account for actually attested uses of tautologies is context, but seems to predict a larger possible range of functions than I describe above. Also, unclear how to predict which tautologies will be odd.

4.1.2 Making the account of a particular type of equative tautology more restrictive

- (28) An account of acceptance/resignation tautologies
- Speaker (S) has uttered a tautology (X)

- S knows Hearer (H) already knows X is true, since X is necessarily true
- Assuming S is being cooperative, S must be saying something informative
- If something is necessarily true then, by definition, nothing and no one can make that thing untrue
- Therefore nothing can make the consequences of that thing being true avoidable
- One ought to accept things that are unavoidable
- Therefore one ought to accept the consequences of X being true

As a result of reasoning in (28), tautologies evoke the ACCEPTANCE FRAME (defined in (29) and exemplified in (30)).

- (29) An ACCEPTOR does not worry excessively or trouble him/herself about an ACCEPTEE. The ACCEPTEE would normally be expected to cause worry, but is not excessively troubling.
- (30) [I've]_{acceptor} accepted [the fact that it's unlikely if not impossible for me to get a decent job before 2009]_{acceptee} and honestly I'm writing this because I have time to.⁴¹

Introducing the acceptance frame makes it possible to account for the oddness of certain equative tautologies.

- (31) a. #Bottles are bottles.
b. #Clouds are clouds.
- (32) a. #Sadists are sadists.
b. #Rapists are rapists.
c. #Nazis are Nazis.

Sentences like those in (31) are odd because there is nothing worrying or problematic about things like bottles and clouds under normal circumstances. So calling for acceptance of any aspect of them is odd. In a context where some aspect is seen as troubling, sentences like these cease to be odd, as seen in (33).

- (33) A: These ship in a bottle things would be a lot easier to do if the necks just weren't so narrow.
B: Well, bottles are bottles.

Sentences like those in (32) are odd because the referents of nominals like the ones found in these examples are excessively troubling. In a context where the behavior of such people is seen as less troubling, sentences like these are no longer odd, as shown in (34).

- (34) KKK Member 1: I think that people might take our marches more seriously if we could just get those Nazis to be less vocal about their anti-Semitic views.
KKK Member 2: Nazis are Nazis.

- Good: Accounting for patterns of oddness
- Not so good: Only really being applicable to equatives
- What to do: Find a way to have all types of tautological constructions evoke the acceptance frame (since this is the real source of the oddness-related predictions)

⁴¹<http://www.michaelhaslett.com/?m=200811>

5 Comparing English and Colloquial Jordanian Arabic

Farghal (1992) reports on a variety of tautological in Colloquial Jordanian Arabic. Here I will focus on the functions that appear to resemble English functions most closely (though I will mention the other uses).

(35) Tolerance tautologies: *Def Nsg. (bi-ḍal) Nsg.*

- a. il-bint bint
def-girl girl
'Girls are girls.'
- b. il-bint bi-ḍḍalhā bint
def-girl will-stay (fem) girl
'Girls will be girls.'
- c. il-ḥarb ḥarb
def-war war
'War is war.'
- d. il-ḥarb bi-ḍḍalhā ḥarb
def-wars will-stay (fem) wars
'Wars will be wars.'
- e. il-kursī kursi
def-chair chair
'Chairs are chairs.'
- f. il-kursī bi-ḍḍlluh kursi
def-chair will-stay chair
'Chairs will be chairs.'

As described, (Farghal 1992)'s tolerance tautologies appear to have a very similar function to what I have called acceptance/resignation tautologies in English.

(36) Admiration tautologies: *Def Adj (bi-ḍal) Adj; Adj Adj; N N; When x do y, x do y*

- a. il-ḥilwah ḥilwah
def-pretty pretty
'She's unmistakably pretty.' (Nobody can miss that she's pretty)
- b. il-ḥilwah bi-ḍḍalhā ḥilwah
def- pretty will-stay (fern) pretty
'She's pretty and will stay pretty.' (She's pretty no matter what she wears)
- c. ḥilwah ḥilwah
pretty pretty
'She's extraordinarily pretty.'
- d. bint bint
girl girl
'She's a real girl.'
- e. lammā badrus badrus
when (I) study (I) study
'When I study, I am exceptionally good at that.'

For the most part, these do not appear to correspond to any uses of tautologies in English. The possible exceptions to this are tautologies of the form NN and *When x do y , x do y* . These might have been similar to tautologies in English that evoke an extreme example. NN might be similar to the use of equative tautologies like ‘men were men’, while *when x do y , x do y* seems very similar to the subordinate conjunction tautologies like ‘when he runs, he runs’. Though one apparent difference between the Arabic and English tautologies here is that the English version need not communicate admiration.

(37) Absolute generalization tautologies: *Def N_{pl} N_{pl}* .

- a. il-banāt banāt
def-girls girls
‘The girls (are) girls’, i.e., ‘A girl is a girl.’

Although the form of the tautology is obviously different, Farghal’s absolute generalization tautologies appear to correspond almost perfectly to what Bulhof & Gimbel call deep tautologies. In both cases, differences between members of a category are treated as if they are unimportant.

(38) Obligation tautologies: *Nposs Nposs; Nposs ya‘nī Nposs; N ya‘nī N*

- a. ‘umm-ak ‘umm-ak
mother-your mother-your
‘Your mother (is) your mother.’ (One must fulfill obligations to one’s mother)
- b. ‘umm-ak ya‘nī ‘umm-ak
mother-your mean mother-your
‘Your mother means your mother.’ (One must fulfill obligations to one’s mother)
- c. ‘um ya‘nī ‘um
mother mean mother
‘A mother means a mother.’ (A mother must fulfill obligations to her children, etc.)

(38a) and (38b) appear to be quite similar to what Wierzbicka has called obligation tautologies in English (in use, but not form). (38c) is not like any construction in English.

(39) Fatalistic tautologies: *Rel V_{past} V_{past} ; Rel badduh V bi- V*

- a. illi-mat mat
Rel-died died
‘That, who died, died.’
- b. illi-badduh imtit bi-mtit
Rel-want die will-die
‘That, who has been predestined to die, will die.’

As described, these seem quite similar in function to what I call acceptance/resignation tautologies, in particular headless relatives. English examples like ‘what’s done is done’ and ‘whatever will be will be’ could be said to have fatalistic, in the appropriate contexts.

(40) Functions with no correspondent in English

- a. Condemnation tautologies: *Def Adj (bi-ḡal) Adj ; Adj Adj ; $Pron$ (bi-ḡal) $Pron$*
- b. Indifference tautologies: *V_{past} V_{past} ; (Rel) (badduh) V_{pres} V_{pres}*

6 Appendix: English tautologies classified by function

1. Acceptance/resignation
 - a. Equatives: *boys will be boys, Joe being Joe*
 - b. Conditionals: *if we're late, we're late*
 - c. Subordinate conjunctions: *we'll get there when we get there*
 - d. Headless relatives: *it is what it is*
 - e. Disjunctions: *I'll find it or I won't*
2. Denial of difference within category
 - a. Equatives: *a win is a win, late is late*
 - b. Conditionals: *if it's late, it's late (even if only by a day)*
 - c. Disjunctions: *Either you try it or you don't (there's no in between)*
3. Evoking idealized stereotype/extreme example
 - a. Equatives: *men were men*
 - b. Conditionals: *if he's mad, he's (really) mad*
 - c. Subordinate conjunctions: *when he yells, he yells*
4. Distinctness of categories
 - a. Equatives: *East is East, and West is West*
5. Obligation
 - a. Equatives: *a promise is a promise*
6. Highlighting wysiwyg nature
 - a. Equatives: *a phone was a phone*

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