1. pause with partial restart (at planning point in speech):
>   *The problem is, is that we have to go now* as a realization of
>> *The problem is that we have to go now*
>   cf. *It's a, a difficult question*

2. pseudoclefts with subject ending in a form of *be*:
>   *What the problem is is that we have to go now*
>> [underlining indicates uncontractible, weakly accented, auxiliaries]
>   *What the problem was was that we had to go right away*

3. setup/payoff paratactic constructions ("cleftoids"), with cataphora:

>   copular cleftoids (usually written with a comma between setup and payoff):
>   *The thing/trouble/problem is: we have to go now*
>> [some of the cleftoid nouns allow omission of the article:
>>   *Thing/Problem is, we have to go now*]
>   *The question/issue/puzzle/problem really is: did these guys...*
>   *The question was: was the virus...* [KQED, 7/19/01]

>   noncopular cleftoids with simple setup:
>   *The fact remains: (that) the people's living standards are being cut*
>   *Here's the question/issue/puzzle/problem: did these guys...*
>   *There's your problem: the lens cap is still on*
>   *I made the point once before: (that) we have to work on this committee*
>   *Can I simply say this: (that) the parliamentary process is a difficult one*
>   *Let me just say this: we are in crisis*
>   *I have just one thing to say: we are in crisis*

>   noncopular cleftoids with pseudocleft (or inverted pseudocleft) in setup:
>   *What bothers me is this: (that) there are rats in the garage*
>   *This is what bothers me:...*
>   *Here's what bothers me:...*
>   *Here's what I think:...*
>   *That was what I was talking about: (that) they do already do that*

4. Construction A (simple copula): *The problem is your accent / The problem's your accent*
    forms of *be* can be without accent, and so are contractible

   Construction B (cleftoid): *The problem is: your accent / *The problem's: your accent*
       as in (specificational) pseudoclefts, forms of *be* must have some accent,
       and can't contract

with finite clauses in the predicate:
    A wants *that*:
            1 *The problem is/problem's that we have to go*
            2 **The problem is/problem's we have to go*
    B rejects *that*:
            1 **The problem is: that we have to go*
            2 *The problem is: we have to go*

Isis fills the gap in B: *The problem is: is that we have to go*
  [ordinarily written with a comma, or with no separating punctuation, if there's no
    audible pause]

Isis is then a kind of blend of the cleftoid (paratactic) construction B, the simple copular
construction A, and the ordinary (hypotactic) pseudocleft construction. In any case, Isis looks
paratactic, so attempts to assimilate its analysis to analyses of hypotactic constructions, like the
(specificational) pseudocleft, are probably ill-conceived. Parataxis, however, has gotten little
attention in the generative literature, despite its incredible frequency in actual speech.

Crudely, the core examples of Isis have a setup that ends with some form of the copula, with
weak accent, and a payoff composed of an introducing element and a clause; the introducing
element is a form of the copula, with weak accent, usually (but not invariably) followed by the
complementizer *that*. The form of the copula in the payoff is either (timeless present) *is* or a past
tense agreeing with (well, mirroring) a past tense copula in the setup, as in pseudoclefts:
        What the problem was is/was that we had to leave.

The introducing element *is/was* (*that*) thus functions as a clause marker - a complementizer, in
the standard terminology.

5. For some speakers, Isis extends to predicates of all sorts:
        The attempt is: is certainly to... [KQED, 10/8/01]
including (for some speakers) pseudoclefts and noncopular cleftoids:
        What is does is: is it takes this chip and... [KFJC, 9/29/01]
        We looked at it this way, my partner and I: is that... [KGO-TV, 9/30/01]
        Can I simply say this: is that the parliamentary process is a difficult one
          [from McConvell; many of the noncopular cleftoids above have Isis variants in
            McConvell's data]