

# Synopsis Functional Shift

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In this paper, I would like to propose that some distinct usages of a linguistic expression should not be analyzed as separate phenomena, but can be captured uniformly under a semantic theory of language universality. To be more specific, take the linguistic expression *I am sorry* as an example.

- (1) Christie, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, III, 29

The convulsions were of a peculiar violence, Dr. Wilkins. I am sorry you were not here in time to witness them. They were quite — tetanic in character.

- (2) Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*, XIX, 191

(“... Sit down here and tell me about yourself.”)

“I am very sorry I can’t,” said Anne firmly.

- (3) Christie, *Murder on the Orient Express*, III, VI, 221

I am sorry, M. Poirot, but I must refuse to answer that question.

In (1), *I am sorry* expresses the speaker’s propositional attitude towards the complement proposition. In (2), the same expression serves to mitigate an illocutionary force. In (3), it is a comment on the main assertion part, expressing the speaker’s communicative attitude. The main argument is that these distinct functions of *I am sorry* should not be handled separately, but they should be regarded as derivative usages from the unique grammatical process which I refer to as the “functional shift.” The functional shift can be designated as follows:

$$(4) \left( \begin{array}{c} \pi^4 \\ \uparrow \end{array} E_1 : \left[ \left( \begin{array}{c} \pi^3 \\ \uparrow \end{array} F_1 : \text{ILL} (F_1) \right) (S) (A) (PA \ X_1 : [\text{Predication}] (X_1)) \right] (E_1) \right)$$

The semantic entity of PA (the speaker’s propositional attitude) shifts functionally to another semantic entity of  $\pi^3$  (an illocution satellite), which qualifies a basic illocution ILL. The semantic entity of  $\pi^3$ , then, shifts to another semantic entity of  $\pi^4$  (a clause satellite), which qualifies a speech act itself. I take the grammatical process of functional shift to be a general principle governing the phenomena of grammaticalization and subjectification.