Syntactic change: Examples

(1) Greek

(a) Classical Greek

\( \text{thélēi} \) ‘want’ (a main verb); 1SG form \( \text{thélō} \); 3SG form \( \text{thélēi} \)

\[
\text{thélō} \quad \text{hina} \quad \text{gráphō} \quad \text{thélēi} \quad \text{hina} \quad \text{gráphei}
\]

want.1SG that write.1SG want.3SG that write.3SG

‘I want to write’ \hspace{1cm} ‘He/she wants to write’

(b) New meaning develops (old one remains)

\( \text{thélō} \quad \text{hina} \quad \text{gráphō} \)

‘I want that I [=to] write’ or ‘I will write’

(c) ‘Future’ meaning comes to take frozen 3sg form:
Classical Gk thélēi \( \rightarrow \) Modern Gk [\( \theta \)eli]

(d) More phonological reduction (sound changes, etc.)

[\( \theta \)eli hina] \( \rightarrow \) [\( \theta \)eli na] \( \rightarrow \) [\( \theta \)e na] \( \rightarrow \) [\( \theta \)a na] \( \rightarrow \) [\( \theta \)a]

• Are any of these steps in the process identifiable types of change?

(e) Modern Greek

[\( \theta \)a γráfo] ‘(I) will write’

• What would we say the morpheme [\( \theta \)a] means now?

• What general process is seen in the change \( \text{thélēi} \rightarrow [\( \theta \)a] \)?

(2) Finnish has undergone a syntactic change in how a subordinate clause is constructed. What are the different steps in this process? Can any of them be identified as known types of language change?

(a) Old Finnish: [-m] ACC.SG, [-n] GEN.SG

\[
\text{näen} \quad \text{miehe-m} \quad \text{tule-va-m}
\]

I.see man-ACC.SG come-PART-ACC.SG \hspace{1cm} \text{(PART = participle)}

‘I see the man who is coming’

\[
\text{näin} \quad \text{venee-t} \quad \text{purjehti-va-t}
\]

I.saw boat-ACC.PL sail-PART-ACC.PL

‘I saw the boats that sail’

• How does Old Finnish construct a subordinate clause?

(b) Sound change (systematic): [m] \( \rightarrow \) [n] / __#

• What type of sound change is this?
(c) Consequence of the sound change

näen miehe-\text{n} tule-va-\text{n}
I.see man-ACC.SG come-PART-ACC.SG
‘I see the man who is coming’

or I.see man-GEN.SG come-PART-GEN.SG
‘I see the man’s coming’

(d) A new construction arises

näin vene-i-\text{den} purjehti-\text{van}
I.saw boat-PL-GEN sail-PART
‘I saw the boats that sail’

• How does Finnish construct a subordinate clause now?
• What type of language change led to the form in (d)?