The Development Of The Greek Future System:
Setting The Record Straight

Panayiotis A. Pappas & Brian D. Joseph
The Ohio State University
Department of Linguistics, Columbus, Ohio USA 43210-1298
pappas.27@osu.edu / joseph.1@osu.edu

Περίληψη
Οι μελετητές της ιστορικής γραμματικής των Νέων Ελληνικών συμφωνούν σε γενικές γραμμές ότι το μόριο θα προέρχεται από μια παλαιότερη δομή η οποία περιελάμβανε το ρήμα θέλω. Τα τελευταία χρόνια όμως υπάρχει διαφωνία για την ακριβή αφετηρία και συνεπώς την ακριβή πορεία (ή τις ακριβείς πορείες) της εξέλιξης του θα. Στην παρούσα εργασία, παρουσιάζουμε μια ξεκάθαρη ανάλυση της ιστορίας του θα, διευκρινίζοντας αρκετές από τις επιμέρους αμφιλεγόμενες απόψεις της εξέλιξής του, και διευθετώντας, έτσι, την ιστορία αυτού του σημαντικού στοιχείου του ελληνικού ρηματικού συστήματος.

0. Introduction

The Modern Greek future marker θα [Ta] has long been recognized as deriving from an earlier, Medieval Greek formation based on the main verb θέλω ['Telo] 'want' used as an auxiliary (so Psicharis 1884, Meillet 1912, among others). The details of this development, however, are far from clear. Complicating the picture is the fact that a vast array of Medieval Greek future formations based on θέλω ['Telo] is to be found so that there is some controversy over the exact starting point of θα as well as the various steps that must be assumed to ultimately yield the form in question. Some clarity, however, is possible here, and a principled explanation for the emergence of θα can indeed be formed. In what follows, by way of clarifying several controversial aspects of the emergence of θα, we first give what we believe to be the truth about the diachrony of θα and related future tense formations based on θέλω as an auxiliary, and we then critically evaluate other proposals, identifying the problematic aspects in each one. Our ultimate goal, therefore, is to set the record straight about this important piece of the Modern Greek verbal complex.

1. Our view of the change

Our proposal for the development of θα essentially follows Psicharis (1884), Meillet (1912), Ba[a]nescu (1915), Joseph (1978/1990), Tonnet (1993) and others and takes the ubiquitous Medieval Greek construction of θέλω plus an infinitive (eg. θέλω γράφειν ['Telo 'Vrafin] 'I will write' as the starting point. Various changes, including sound changes, grammatical reanalysis, replacement of inifinitival complements by finite verbs, analogical generalization of pre-vocalic or pre-consonantal variants, and the like, led to the modern construction of θα plus an inflected verb.

A detailed presentation of these developments and relevant textual examples of all the stages posited are to be found in Pappas&Joseph (forthcoming), but the outlines of the changes can be sketched (due to lack of space) as in Diagram (1).
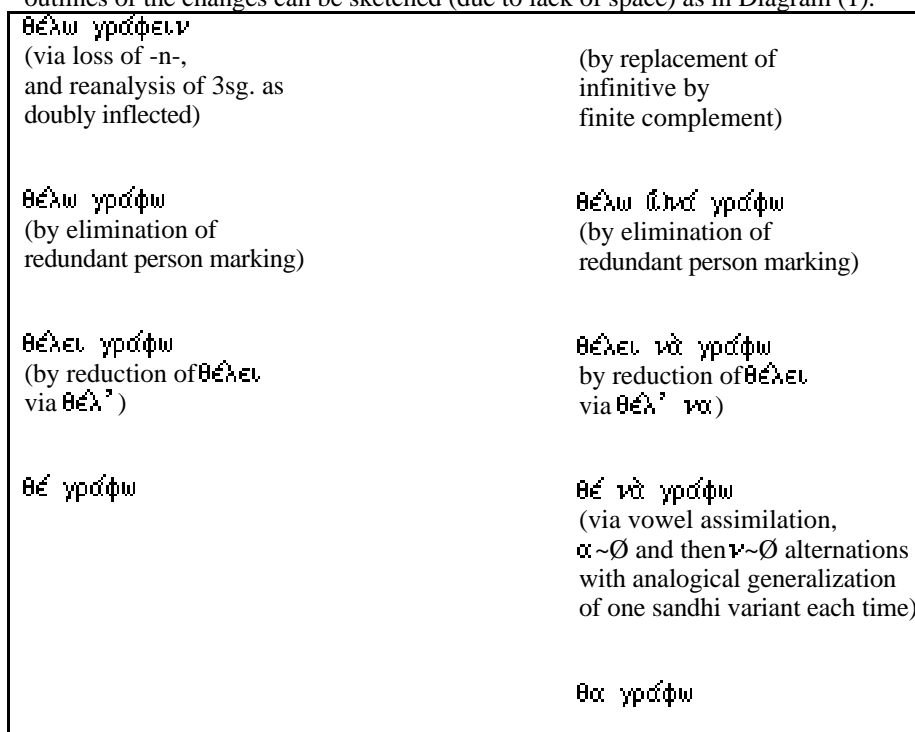

θέλω γράφειν
(via loss of -n-, and reanalysis of 3sg. as doubly inflected)

(by replacement of infinitive by finite complement)

θέλω γράφω
(by elimination of redundant person marking)

θέλω ἵνα γράφω
(by elimination of redundant person marking)

θέλει γράφω
(by reduction of θέλει via θέλ᾽)

θέλει νὰ γράφω
by reduction of θέλει via θέλ᾽ να)

θέ γράφω

θέ νὰ γράφω
(via vowel assimilation, α~Ø and then ν~Ø alternations with analogical generalization of one sandhi variant each time)

θα γράφω

Diagram (1).

Thus, we view θέλω γράφειν as the ultimate source of θα, since through the substitution of the infinitive by the finite complement the more immediate source of θα, θέλει νὰ γράφω, arose. Moreover, we propose two distinct lines of development (indicated by the solid lines) which are however related. Given such a complex set of developments, it is perhaps not surprising that some aspects presented here have provoked controversy and different interpretations. We turn now to some of those.

2. Other approaches
2.1 Horrocks' (1997) account
Horrocks (1997:230ff). has a very different view of the emergence of θα, though the differences focus on the starting point more than on the later stages. For him, the development starts with the use of the subjunctive with να as a future tense in and of itself.

He then sees the starting point for θα itself as arising out of the "strengthening" of this future use of να plus subjunctive by "the prefixation of θε [Te] a reduced form of 3rd sg. θέλει ['Teli] 'it will be (that)', used impersonally"; at that point, with a newly reconstituted future of θέ να + subjunctive, he invokes the steps outlined in diagram (1), though without mention of the analogical spread of

sandhi variants. Horrocks was no doubt guided in part by his belief that the apparent full form θέλω ἵνα plus subjunctive, as assumed by Meillet, has only a volitive sense in Medieval Greek, for he says that:

> As far as futurity is concerned, the θέλω ['Telo] + infinitive periphrasis [is] systematically distinguished from the volitive θέλω ['Telo] + να [na] construction (p. 231)

Horrocks concludes by explaining the θέλει γράφω constructions essentially as the result of conflation between θέ νὰ γράφω and θέλω γράφω. His proposal is summarized in Diagram (2).

θέλω γράφειν (via loss of -n-, and reanalysis of 3sg. as doubly inflected) θέλω γράφω		ἵνα γράφω ('strengthening' by the introduction of θέ) θέ νὰ γράφω assimilation elision/apocope
	conflation of θέλω γράφω and θέ νὰ γράφω	θα γράφω
	θέλει γράφω (Ionian Islands, Crete)	

Diagram (2).

Our first point of disagreement with Horrocks' proposal lies with his claim that θέλω νὰ γράφω was only volitive. We assert that this construction could in fact denote the future. Indeed there are several examples of such a use of the construction throughout Greek Medieval texts of the 15th, 16th and 17th c. Although their number is minuscule when compared to the θέλω γράφειν construction, the use of θέλω νὰ γράφω as a future cannot be denied. For instance, examples (1)-(3) really do not allow for any other interpretation.

(1) υἱός ὑπήκοος γενοῦ, υἱέ, νὰ λάβῃς
εὐχήν τὴν τῶν γονέων σου καὶ δόξαν ἐξ' ἀνθρώπων
θέλεις εἰς τὸ Μοντόριον νὰ' πέλθῃς εἰς τήν σκόλαν.
"become an obedient son, son, to obtain/ the blessing of your parents and glory from men/ You will go to the school in Montorion" (Florios and Patziaflo:ra 226-7, 15 c.)

(2) Τὸ λοιπόν, θέλεις νὰ μοῦ δώσεις πέντε φορές σαράντα
"So, you will give me five times forty" (From Valetas 1949 vol 1, Kartanos 1528)

(3) θέλει νὰ ἀνοίξει ἡ γῆς

"The ground will open up" (Valetas 1949, vol 1.16 c.)

The second point concerns the form θε, which is in fact the most robustly attested, and structurally closest predecessor of θα. The emergence of this form is indeed problematic for both accounts, though the existence of partially reduced forms such as θέλ' νὰ (and note also Cretan θελά—Pangalos 1955) is consistent with the scenario we sketch in Diagram (1). Horrocks does not really discuss how θέ came about, and more to the point, why speakers would choose it and not some other monosyllabic form to strengthen the νὰ+subjunctive construction. This is not just idle speculation, for, as Horrocks himself points out there were other impersonal, future-like constructions that speakers could have looked to such as πρέπει νὰ 'it is necessary that' and μέλλει νὰ 'it will be that'; on the basis of the latter attested construction one would just as easily expect a future construction such as a putative but not occurring μέ νὰ*.

Our proposal provides a better account of the development of future θα, by linking it back to θέλω νὰ γράφω and by extension to θέλω γράφειν, a link that is lacking in Horrocks' (1996) account.

2.2 Bubenik's (1996) account
Another mention of the development of θα in the recent literature is Bubenik's (1996:159) account :

> One of the famous instances of [syntactic extension] is the loss of the infinitive in Greek (from AGr *thélo: gráphein* 'I want to write' to MnGr *θα gráfo*). The momentum here was the loss of the final *-n* of the infinitive and its subsequent confusion with the 3rd Sg *gráphei*; hence the ambiguity of *thélo: gráphei* 'I want to write' ~ 'I want, he writes'. The only unambiguous person was then *thélei gráphei* 'he(x) wants [that] he(x) writes' = 'he wants to write', and it became the source of extension to other persons: *thélo: grápho:* 'I want [that] I write' = 'I want to write' (—> MnGr *θα gráfo*).

There are several problematic aspects to this account. First of all, Bubenik has confused the loss of the infinitive, which was a widespread and extended development that ultimately affected all uses of the infinitive (as a verbal complement, as a nominalization, as a verbal adjunct, etc.) with the development of the future marker θα. Though the two are related, since, as our account above indicates, the replacement of the earlier infinitive by a finite complement played a role in the development of θα, the relation does not hold in the way that Bubenik posits.

That is, at the time that the infinitive without a final *-ν* was reinterpreted as a third person singular finite verb, the combination of θέλω and the infinitive already had a future meaning, contrary to what Bubenik's scenario suggests; also, the combination of θέλω and a finite verb like γράφω juxtaposed with no connective never had a volitional meaning, but seems to have always meant

future, inasmuch as it seems to derive most immediately from the θέλω plus infinitive future, not the volitional combination; third, in order to motivate the -α- vocalism of θα, one has to invoke να (i.e. θέ να > θά να via assimilation), but in Bubenik's schema, there is no mechanism by which νά is introduced. This is a problem not just for the account of θα, but also for Bubenik's account of the replacement of the infinitive (and that of Anttila 1972/1989 (reiterated in Harris & Campbell 1995:384-5)), since in verbal complementation, the infinitive is generally replaced by a finite verb with some sort of subordinating marker, usually να but also ότι and πώς (see Joseph 1978/1990, 1983 for disussion).

Thus Bubenik conflates several different developments in his account, though he is not completely wrong, in that θέλω plus the infinitive did figure in the emergence of θα (only at a later point than he gives), and the reinterpretation of an infinitive as a 3SG finite verb does seem to have occurred, but most clearly only in the future construction — the replacement of the infinitive in the volitional and other complement constructions involved much more than just a simple reinterpretation.

2.3 Hopper & Traugott's (1993) account
Finally, we turn to Hopper & Traugott (1993:2), who discuss the development of θα within the context of their presentation of "grammaticalization", the phenomenon of linguistic "items becom[ing] more grammatical through time". As noted above, Meillet (1912) mentions θα as deriving from earlier θέλω ἵνα. Hopper & Traugott's interest in Meillet's work lies in the fact that he coined the term "grammaticalisation"; for him, the development of θα involved "l'attribution du caractère grammatical à un mot jadis autonome", his definition of grammaticalization. And, Hopper & Traugott cite the Greek case as a typical example of grammaticalization, endorsing Meillet's derivation and characterization of the history of θα.

This is surely reasonable, for, as we note above, this derivation of θα is correct in broad terms, even though some modifications concerning the intermediate steps are needed. Nonetheless, there is one way in which Hopper & Traugott make a serious error concerning their endorsement of the θέλω να-to-θα development.

In particular, they are working in a framework in which grammaticalization is a separate mechanism of change that typically involves phonological reduction and a move towards greater semantic generality and abstraction. Their error lies in their taking all the steps sketched above in diagram (1) as being part of the "grammaticalization" of θα. We, on the other hand, consider "grammaticalization" as an epiphenomenon, a derivative notion useful only in labeling the results of the combined effect of other well-understood processess of change; our reasoning is as follows.

First, we note that the point at which the invariant third person singular form θέλει was fixed in the future construction marked a turning point in the

development of the Medieval Greek future, for at that point, and thereafter, there was a significant change in the construction. At that point θέλει was certainly more grammatical in nature and less lexical, despite the identity in form between it and the third person singular of the main verb of volition 'want'; in particular, it was fixed positionally, could not be inverted, and could not support clitics, even though in previous stages, there were fewer such limitations on the form of θέλω in the future. Moreover, it was at this point that the phonological reduction was set into motion, so to speak, leading ultimately to the highly reduced θα. It may not be clear exactly when this more restricted θέλει or its successors developed into a prefix, but clearly the emergence of θέλει was an important step in this direction.

On the one hand, therefore, the development of prefixal θα from θέλει ἵνα looks like a perfectly ordinary case of grammaticalization, with an affix developing out of a once free form by a nicely traceable progression. However, the stages that are usually taken as showing grammaticalization, especially the end stages whereby the status of a highly reduced future marker as nothing more than a function morpheme becomes clearest, are perhaps the least interesting as far as grammaticalization is concerned, under the view that grammaticalization is a process. That is, if grammaticalization is a process, then the changes leading to θα are really just part of an inexorable movement towards greater grammatical form, and so the really crucial step is the initial one by which θέλω + the infinitive first began to be used as a future; the subsequent changes just provide further ammunition, so to speak, but the critical first step is what activates the process.

On the other hand, if grammaticalization is not a process but rather is merely a description of the outcome, then these stages are crucial to reaching the end result of an element that is fully a function/grammatical morpheme. Significantly, though, they are not guided by some "higher force" driving them on since there is no process of grammaticalization; rather they are just ordinary instances of well-understood and well-recognized independent processes/mechanisms of change, namely phonetic change and analogy.

Therefore, it would appear that "grammaticalization" does not need to be invoked as the force behind the ultimate formation of a grammatical morpheme for future in Greek. Well-understood processes of change other than "grammaticalization" suffice to give the ultimate result. Hopper & Traugott, therefore, overstate the situation drastically by linking the development of θα to a process-view of grammaticalization; Meillet seems to have had it right — or at least more so — since his wording ("l'attribution du caractère grammatical à un mot jadis autonome") suggests a view of grammaticalization in which it is a way of characterizing the result of other changes.

3. Conclusion
This brief survey of some of the discussion to be found in recent literature on the development of the future in Greek does not exhaust the topic. Tsangalidis (1999: Chapter 3), for instance, has considered the history of θα from the perspective of grammaticalization theory. Furthermore, Pappas (1999) has

studied the development of counterfactuals in Greek, which are formally linked with the futures, being also ultimately based on formations with θέλω, and has presented a quantitatively based study of the ways in which the future and the counterfactuals diverged in early Modern Greek. Thus, there is room for further examination of the history of θα, and undoubtedly there will be more controversies to adjudicate in future scholarship, but from the observations presented here, the basic lines of development now ought to be clear.

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