

Veselinova, Ljuba. 2003. Suppletion in verb paradigms: Bits and pieces of a puzzle. PhD dissertation, Department of Linguistics, Stockholm University.

This study examines stem change in verb paradigms, as in English *go* ‘go.PRESENT’ vs. *went* ‘go.PAST’, a phenomenon referred to as **suppletion** in current linguistic theory. The present work is based on a broad sample of 193 languages, and shows that, contrary to the widespread view, patterns of suppletion according to grammatical category show systematicity in several respects.

Three of the most frequently encountered suppletion types are examined in detail. They are tense-aspect suppletion, as in English above; suppletion according to imperative mood as in Modern Greek *erxome* ‘come.INDICATIVE’ vs. *Ela* ‘come.IMPERATIVE’, and verbal number as in Ainu *ek* ‘come.SINGULAR’ vs. *arki* ‘come.PLURAL’. These patterns of suppletion can be correlated with particular geographical areas, language families, and specific lexemic groups. Further on, a correlation can be made with general lexicalization hierarchies as well as with language-specific strategies for encoding semantic domains such as identity, class inclusion and property assignment.

Historical data indicate that diachronically suppletive forms in paradigms result from a variety of processes which have different motivations. In a wider perspective, we can see that what may appear idiosyncratic from the point of view of a particular language, is in fact cross-linguistically recurrent and systematic, in terms of the categories outlined here.

The present work also seeks to explore the methodological issues of evaluating the frequency of linguistic features in large language samples by introducing a method of weighting languages according to their genetic relatedness. All figures obtained in this way are compared to the proportions yielded by more familiar counting methods, and the results and implications of the different procedures are compared and discussed throughout. [Author’s abstract, used with permission.]