

Werner, Otmar. 1987. The aim of morphological change is a good mixture – not a uniform language type. Papers from the 7th International Conference on Historical Linguistics. Pavia, Italy, ed. by Anna Giacalone Ramat, Onofrio Carruba and Giuliano Bernini, 591-606. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

The paper provides a model that would explain the reason for language change. A scale is postulated with regular forms at one end of it and suppletive ones at the other. Under “suppletive” the author implies both etymologically different forms and those that became suppletive as a result of phonological changes. Their frequency is the key factor that gives rise to suppletion in the first place (only frequent items have a tendency towards phonological condensation) and keeps it there. If the item loses its frequency, it may drift to another part of the scale, i.e. become regular (an example is former *kiesen – kuren*, ‘to choose’ that became *kUren – kUrten*).

The author postulates that non-etymological suppletion may have different degrees, thus *habe-hat* is an example of “light suppletion”. The steps from regular word to suppletive one are provided in the following scheme:
stem variants → root inflection → light/full suppletion.

The author believes that the mistake of natural morphologists concerning suppletion is that they isolate these cases from the rest of the morphological development of a language.