# Competing verb stems as variables: the case of the perfect stem of γίγνομαι in Attic Greek.

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In Classical Attic, there are two stems of the perfect of γίγνομαι: γεγον-, inherited from the Indo-European, and a more recently developed γεγενη-. The pattern of attestation of these stems is chaotic, with no clear relationship between the formality of the genre and stem-choice. Moreover, despite a period of widespread usage, γεγενη- fails to replace γεγον- in the longer term; it is a change in process that seems not to complete. How can we explain this variation? Do the patterns and reasons change over time?

Gathering statistics on each stem's usage in a variety of Attic texts, I attempt to discern the semantic and syntactic motivations in stem-choice. Marrying this statistical analysis to variational analysis of individual passages which may be stylistically or pragmatically marked, I discuss the social identity which was attached to use of one stem or the other. I then analyse the patterns of usage of these stems in different genres and discuss what this may reflect about the usage in speech of the period. I proceed then to analyse the diachronic change in stem-usage, revealing a marked contrast between the late fifth and late fourth centuries BC.

I argue that the finiteness of the verb form is key to understanding the patterns we see but also that stem-choice overall is the result of a number of interacting factors, both social and linguistic, which come together differently in different genres at different times.

By combining the sociolinguistic with the syntactic, the synchronic with the diachronic, I arrive at a micro-history of this feature which enhances our understanding of Attic texts and the language change of this period. Moreover, it contains broader lessons for our understanding of those changes which do not come to completion and the factors which influence the usage and development of morphological sociolinguistic variables.