

A corpus study of the Old Irish perfectivizing conjunct particle *-ro-*:
preliminary quantitative description and identification of the forms

Carlos García-Castillero
University of the Basque Country

This talk offers the preliminary results of a study on the morphological behavior of the Old Irish conjunct particle *-ro-*. This inflectional element of the Old Irish verbal complex, which adds perfective and potential meaning, evinces an interesting case of morphological externalization that virtually is happening before our eyes: in spite (or perhaps due to) the generalized use of this inflectional marker (it appears in c. 2300 forms out of a total of c. 15300 verbs) in the corpus (Wb + MI + Sg), there are no hybrid (or double) cases, noticeable variation in one and the same verb, and the externalization has a leftwards direction. The study basically looks for the factors that favor the change said, but it also considers lexical frequency, apart from compound character and presence of other conjunct particles in the verbal complex, which have been already suggested in previous contributions.

After a short review of some necessary notions, this presentation will offer some reflections and proposals that have arisen in the initial steps of the study that lead to a general (but provisional) quantitative description, as well as to the discussion on two questions: what counts as a form with conjunct particle *-ro-*, and what counts as an externalized case of *-ro-* in the Old Irish texts. In trying to give an answer to these two questions, I make two proposals related, first, to the ways in which the conjunct particle appears in the verbal complex, and second, to the interaction of the process of externalization with other changes (also) based in analogical processes.