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The diversity of Czech relative clauses

Czech language offers a widespread number of relative pronouns and a lot of possibilities to construct relative clauses (RCs). Normally, they can be used interchangeably, only in some specific cases a special type of clause or pronoun is requested.

A specific type of RCs which differs from other, more standard constructions, are RCs with the pronoun *co* ('what') as their head. This type of RCs is often described as rural and non-standard. Only a few articles and grammars describe it as a part of Colloquial Czech (the so-called *hovorová čeština*). Using *co* seems to be the most economic way to form relative clauses, in particular *co* does not depend on gender and number of the head noun. Furthermore, it is used as a replacement for other relative pronouns like *který* or *jenž*.

Relative clauses with *co* show a high number of particularities, e.g. in case, structure and number. The main part of my talk is dedicated to *co*. I will argue that it should be regarded as a relative pronoun and will provide arguments in favour of this decision. I will discuss examples of relative clauses with *co* from the Czech National Corpus (ČNK) and point out differences to other relative clauses. In order to do this, I will give an overview over Czech relative pronouns, pointing out regularities, possibilities of prescription or the dualism between *který* and *jenž* and giving an outlook on the newest developments and tendencies.

At the end of the talk, I will also address the question whether *co*-clauses are really rural and restricted to the *hovorová čeština*.

References

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