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 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