

Accusative resumptive pronoun in the Czech relative clauses with absolutive relativizer *co*

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This paper addresses the poorly understood patterning in the presence vs. absence of the accusative resumptive pronoun in the Czech relative clauses (RC) introduced by the absolutive relativizer *co*. Using both qualitative and frequency-based quantitative analysis, I investigate the distribution of the resumptive pronoun in authentic usage as attested in the *Czech National Corpus*. The study leads to the conclusion that the criteria that determine the distribution of the accusative resumptive pronoun go well beyond the traditionally invoked need for expressing agreement categories (gender, number) and grammatical relations (accusative object) or that the presence vs. absence of the pronoun should depend exclusively on the animacy of the relativized noun. Instead, the distribution appears to depend on the semantic compatibility between the relativized noun and the proposition expressed by the RC, reflecting a functional distinction between a determinative and non-determinative (explicative) interpretation of the RC; the former is unambiguously signaled by the bare relativizer *co*, the latter is available with the analytic *co* + resumptive pronoun_{ACC} pattern as one of the interpretive options.

1. Introduction

Czech uses two formally distinct relativization strategies. One concerns relative clauses (RC) introduced by the agreeing relative pronoun *který* ‘which’, illustrated in (1). The relative pronoun agrees with the relativized noun (RN) in number and gender and also marks the syntactic function of the RN’s referent in the relative clause, such as, for example, the nominative in (1a) or the accusative in (1b); in both cases, the RN is feminine singular:

- (1) a. Za obrazem se našla plechová schránka, která
behind painting RF find.PST.SG.F metal.ADJ box.NOM.SG.F which.NOM.SG.F¹
obsahovala celou řadu písemností
contained whole.ACC.SG.F row.ACC.SG.F written.document.GEN.PL
‘Behind the painting, there was a tin box that contained a good number of
written documents.’
- b. Vyplývá to z dohody, kterou jsme
follows it from agreement.GEN.SG.F which.ACC.SG.F AUX.1PL
podepsali s vedením firmy
sign.PST.PL with management.INS.SG.N company.GEN.SG.F
‘It follows from the agreement [that] we signed with the company’s
management.’

¹ Abbreviations used in the glosses: ACC ‘accusative’, ADJ ‘adjective’, AUX ‘auxiliary’, DAT ‘dative’, F ‘feminine’, GEN ‘genitive’, INS ‘instrumental’, M ‘masculine’, N ‘neuter’, NEG ‘negation’, NOM ‘nominative’, PRES ‘present’, PST ‘past’, RF ‘reflexive’, SG/PL ‘singular/plural’.

In contrast, the absolutive relativizer *co* cannot, by itself, mark any grammatical categories.² Instead, they may be expressed by a resumptive (personal) pronoun inside the RC, such as in the combination *co* + ACC in (2).

- (2) Ta malá vanička, co jsme ji tam s sebou
 that little bathtub.NOM.SG.F CO AUX.1PL 3SG.F.ACC there with self
 měly, {mi sotva stačila, a pořád mi koukala kolena z vody}
 have.PST.PL
 ‘That little bathtub which we had [it] there with us {was barely big enough for me, and my knees kept sticking out of the water}’

The distribution of the resumptive pronouns in general is a rather complicated matter, posing various interesting questions that still await a focused investigation. To the extent that the issue of resumptive pronouns has been addressed in the Czech grammatical literature at all, the available commentary is quite sparse and often very vague. Some accounts of relativization simply mention, without further elaboration, that the relativizer *co* may or may not be accompanied by a resumptive pronoun (e.g. Trávníček, 1951: 1166, Havránek – Jedlička, 1988: 394, *Mluvnice češtiny*, 1988: 528), while others present the pronoun as obligatory (Kopečný, 1958: 44, Šmilauer, 1972: 192, Štícha, 2003: 770), again, without much discussion. There appears to be a certain general consensus, though: the resumptive pronoun is prohibited in the subject function (Svoboda, 1967: 11 and Grepl – Karlík, 1998: 320 state this explicitly), obligatory in the oblique cases (genitive, dative, locative, instrumental), and optional in the accusative. In the limited space of this paper, I will focus on the apparently most open-ended pattern, namely, the use of the accusative pronoun.

It is a fact that we can readily find both examples such as (2) above, with the pronoun, and examples such as (3) below, without it:

² With a few brief exceptions (Kopečný 1958: 59-60, Svoboda 1967: 12, 1972: 104, and most recently Lešnerová – Oliva 2003: 244), the Czech linguistic literature has generally avoided addressing the complicated issue of assigning a specific lexical category to the word *co* in this usage. It is evident that in its relativizing function, it can no longer be considered a pronoun, but it is less clear whether it should be, therefore, more properly categorized as a conjunction, or perhaps as a particle of sorts; as a theoretical issue, it is even less clear how the combination *co* + pronoun should be treated systematically. However, nothing in this paper hinges on resolving this matter and I will thus leave it as an open question. I will simply use the label ‘(absolutive) relativizer’, which I take to be theoretically noncommittal but descriptively transparent and useful, and when terminologically convenient, I will refer to its two formal variants as ‘bare’ (without an anaphoric pronoun) and ‘analytic’ (with an anaphoric pronoun).

- (3) Ty ženy, co se mnou vídáš ve společenských rubrikách
 those women CO with me see.PRES.2SG in society.ADJ columns
 {časopisů," vysvětloval, "to jsou jen kamarádky"}
 "Those women [CO] you sometimes see with me in the society columns {in
 magazines," he explained, "those are just friends"}.

It is also true, at least superficially, that the bare relativizer *co* (3) and the analytic *co* + ACC (2) may appear to be just two formal variants for marking the RN's referent as a direct object in the RC, since the pronoun could be left out in (2) and added in (3) without affecting the grammaticality of either.

The traditional interpretation of these observations amounts to the view that the resumptive pronoun is merely optional and, essentially, "redundant" (Kopečný, 1958). Which, then, begs the question of why speakers would opt for using the pronoun, since its absence evidently does not interfere with their understanding of who does what to whom in the proposition expressed by the RC, and the standard explanation (the need for marking agreement categories and the grammatical function of the RN's referent) thus does not hold. More specifically, we can ask whether the presence vs. absence of the pronoun is completely irrelevant for the meaning of the sentence, or whether there are any systematic differences, however subtle, associated with one variant or the other. This is no doubt a larger question than it may seem at first glance and than could be fully answered in this brief study. But I will proceed on the hypothesis that with the help of corpus material, we can find out whether there are any detectable correlations between the presence vs. absence of the pronoun and other factors, and if so, what those correlations suggest for further analysis.

The only attempt to address the relationship between the two formal variants is Svoboda's (1967: 11) rather terse observation that the resumptive pronoun in the accusative is "merely optional" and appears especially with animate RNs. However, RCs with the pronoun are also deemed "more colloquial" than RCs with bare *co*, which implies that we should not actually expect them in standard language to begin with.³ I will take the animacy hypothesis as the starting point for the present study, testing its accuracy by examining a sample of authentic usage as attested in the *Czech*

³ I cannot address this aspect of the distribution in this short study but it does require a focused analysis as well, taking into consideration both written and spoken corpora and engaging in a systematic textual research of these RCs. The preliminary probe through the present sample shows already that the textual distribution with respect to standard vs. colloquial language cannot be as categorically stated as we find in the existing literature.

National Corpus. Using both qualitative and frequency-based quantitative analysis, I will demonstrate that the actual usage presents a more complex picture which at least partially disproves Svoboda's claim about what it means to be "merely optional" with the animate RNs, and that a more fine-grained analysis will be required. I will argue that the notion of optionality must be re-evaluated and that the distribution of the resumptive pronoun may have to do not only with animacy, but also with the relative degree of referentiality or individuation of the RN, and this criterion can also be shown to be associated with a functional distinction between determinative and non-determinative (explicative) interpretation of the RC. For the latter, I will be assuming a slightly modified variant of Grepl – Karlík's (1998) semantic and functional classification of Czech RCs.

2. Distribution of the accusative resumptive pronoun in written Czech

The sample that serves as the material basis for the present analysis consists of a randomly selected collection of 879 relevant tokens (i.e., all absolutive RCs), all of them from the written corpus SYN2000 within the Czech National Corpus. Within this sample, 147 tokens represent RCs in which the RN's referent serves the function of a direct object. We may note that the most frequent absolutive RCs are those in which the RN's referent is the subject (306 tokens), with indirect object (dative) being a very distant third in frequency (24 tokens). The RCs with a direct object pointing to the RN referent, whether explicitly marked as such or left null, are thus well attested and the sample can be taken as a reasonably good approximation of the tendencies we can expect in the corpus data.

2.1 Resumptive pronoun and animacy

Within the subset of RCs with the accusative, the sample contains substantially more inanimate RNs (84% of the total) than animate ones. This asymmetry is expected, as it corresponds to the universally observed tendency toward direct objects (patients) as entities that can be acted upon, manipulated, affected, etc. and, hence, prototypically inanimate things (e.g. Hopper – Thompson, 1980). It may also be unsurprising that clauses with the null pronoun (ACC-null) are distinctly more frequent than clauses with the pronoun present (ACC-pro). After all, the pronoun is supposed to co-occur especially with animate RNs and be optional anyway. The overall counts and the relative frequencies with respect to each of these two criteria

are summarized in Table 1. In the left portion of the table, we have the distribution according to animacy; the right portion shows the distribution of the resumptive pronoun.

Animate	23 (16%)	ACC-null	85 (58%)
Inanimate	124 (84%)	ACC-pro	62 (42%)
Total:	147	Total:	147

Table 1. Animacy and the accusative resumptive pronoun in the sample

It is instructive, though, to examine more closely how these two variables (animacy and the presence/absence of the pronoun) are interrelated in actual usage, which is presented in Table 2.

	Animate	Inanimate	Totals:
	22 (=16%)	125 (=84%)	147
ACC-null	1	84	85
ACC-pro	21	41	62

Table 2. Co-occurrence patterns between animacy and resumptive accusative pronoun

The first thing we notice with respect to the presumed correlation between the accusative pronoun and animate RNs is the following. Table 2 shows that animate RNs co-occur almost exclusively with the analytic form *co*+ACC (the first column) and it is striking that the patterning is so lopsided: the corpus attestations apparently fail to document the presumed optionality of the pronoun with the animate RNs; the example in (3) above is the lone token in the whole sample that contains a bare *co* following an animate RN. Moreover, the correlations between inanimate RNs and the two RC variants (second column) also show a more complex pattern than a simple relationship between inanimate RNs and a null pronoun. We can see that about one third of the inanimate tokens actually occur with RCs that contain a resumptive pronoun; this is not such a negligible proportion and together with the distribution of the animate RNs raises questions about what it means for the pronoun to be “optional”. Thus, in actual usage, typical examples of RCs with a direct object anaphorically tied to the RN are not the ones in (2) and (3) but, rather, the ones in (4) and (5) below: (4) represents the regular (and practically required) pattern for animate RNs and (5) illustrates the most common occurrences involving inanimate RNs, while

(2) above represents the less typical, though by no means marginal, variant in the present sample:

(4) Tři kluci, co jsem je neznal jménem,
three boys CO AUX.1SG 3PL.ACC NEG.know.PST.SG.M name.INS
{se horlivě seřadili za pana doktora Bohadla}
'Three boys, who I didn't know [them] by name, {eagerly lined up behind Dr. Bohadlo}'

(5) a. Asi jste špatně rozuměl dopisu, co Vám poslali
perhaps AUX.2PL badly understood letter.DAT CO 2PL.DAT sent
'You probably misunderstood the letter [CO] they sent to you'

b. Všechny ty věci, co jste mně minule ukázala,
all those things CO AUX.2PL 1SG.DAT last.time show.PST.SG.F
{se mi doopravdy moc líbily}
'{I really liked a lot} all those things [CO] you showed me last time'

These findings pose a new set of questions that clearly could not have been considered before. Namely, why should it be that there is such an overwhelming attraction between animate RNs and the presence of the pronoun in the RC (4)? And can the corpus reveal anything about the one third of the inanimate RNs also co-occurring with the pronoun, shown in (2)? I will explore these issues in the next section.

2.2 Resumptive pronoun and the RN's degree of referentiality

As has been discussed elsewhere (Fried, To appear), the corpus provides evidence that the absolute RCs preferentially modify RNs that are relatively high in individuation/referentiality, in the spirit of the notion proposed by Timberlake (1975, 1977). This can be demonstrated by examining the parameters that are universally associated with determining relative degrees of individuation – animacy, number, and definiteness – and how they manifest themselves in concrete NP tokens. It has been shown that the typical RN that is modified by an absolute RC (and regardless of the relativized referent's grammatical function in the RC) has a highly individuated referent: singular animate entity, often reinforced by collocating with a demonstrative pronoun, which marks the nominal as definite. Let us now take a closer look at these parameters with respect to the accusative pronoun.

Consistently with the corpus-supported finding that absolute RCs generally do not attract, let alone require, the presence of a demonstrative pronoun (*ten* 'that')

with the RN (and thus invalidating Svoboda’s, 1967 claim to the contrary), explicit deixis does not seem to play an overwhelming role in predicting the distribution of the accusative resumptive pronoun either. The frequencies of RNs with or without the demonstrative pronoun are summarized in Table 3. The column labeled ‘Deictic’ refers to RNs modified by *ten* ‘that’, which makes them explicitly definite; the column labeled ‘Non-deictic’ represents bare RNs, whereby definiteness is left unspecified.

	Deictic	Non-deictic	Totals:
ACC-null	44	41	85
ACC-pro	30	32	62
	74	73	147

Table 3. Deixis and the accusative pronoun

We can see that the two types of RN – with and without explicitly indicated definiteness – split about evenly in each of the two RC variants: with the analytic form, or with the bare *co*. Marking the RN with explicit deixis seems to have but a minimum effect on the distribution of the resumptive pronoun, although we can detect a certain measure of relative preference for deictic RNs whose RC has the bare *co* (59%), at the expense of the analytic relativizer (41%). This tendency suggests the possibility that the absence of a resumptive pronoun might possibly correlate, at least to some extent, with definiteness, by preferring explicitly deictic RNs.

In examining the last parameter – number – we can formulate yet another partial hypothesis: if it is one of the defining features of the RCs without the resumptive pronoun that they are more likely to attract relatively highly individuated, referential entities (as indicated by the explicit deixis), then we might also expect a higher proportion of singular RNs with those RCs (ACC-null). And this is indeed confirmed by the sample, as indicated in Table 4. Both types of RCs are consistent with the generally observable property of absolutive RCs, discussed in Fried (To appear), in that singular RNs are more common than plural RNs; both types of RCs are comparable in this respect (45 tokens in ACC-null and 40 tokens in ACC-pro). But we must note that in the RCs with the accusative pronoun present, singular RNs are almost twice as likely as plural RNs, which is a significant departure from the pattern in the RCs with bare *co*. It might also be worth noting that RCs with the bare *co* appear to co-occur more readily with abstract nouns (22 tokens, such as *informace*

‘information’, *starosti* ‘troubles’, *kouzlo* ‘attraction’, etc.) than RCs with the analytic form *co*+ACC (6 tokens).

	Singular	Plural	Totals:
ACC-null	45	40	85
ACC-pro	40	22	62
	85	62	147

Table 4. Grammatical number of RN and the accusative pronoun

Even this simple, frequency-based numerical analysis of the sample allows us to articulate several new observations concerning the distribution of the accusative resumptive pronoun in the RCs. The findings can be summarized as follows:

- (6)
 - a. overall, RCs with bare *co* are more frequent than those with the accusative resumptive pronoun;
 - b. the resumptive pronoun appears to be required when the RN is animate, but is optional with inanimate RNs;
 - c. about one third of inanimate RNs is likely to occur with the resumptive pronoun;
 - d. the resumptive pronoun is significantly more likely to co-occur with singular RNs, regardless of animacy.

It follows that a typical RC in which the RN fills the slot of a direct object is thus one in which the RN is inanimate (might even be abstract), possibly in the singular, and possibly explicitly definite (i.e. with the demonstrative *ten* ‘that’), and there is no resumptive pronoun; this is illustrated by the token in (7).

- (7) včera jsme jedli s Pavlem ten sýr, co
 yesterday AUX.1PL eat.PST.PL with P. that cheese.ACC.SG.M CO
 nám přinesl v rodinném balení pan doktor Vřelec
 1PL.DAT brought in family package Mr. Dr. V.
 ‘yesterday Paul and I ate the cheese Dr. Vřelec brought [us] in a family pack’

Within the (less typical) variant in which the RC does contain the accusative pronoun, the most likely configuration is the one in (8): the RN is animate, singular, and probably without explicitly marked definiteness.

- (8) zda na mě čeká holka, co jsem ji
 whether for me waits girl.NOM.SG.F CO AUX.1SG 3SG.F.ACC
 {měl nadevše rád}
 ‘whether the girl, who I loved [her] more than anything, is waiting for me’

2.3 Possible explanations for explicit *co*+ACC marking

So far, the corpus confirms that the use of the accusative pronoun is, indeed, optional, but it turns out to be optional along quite different criteria than the one – animacy – offered in Svoboda 1967. Moreover, it still remains to be determined whether the observed optionality truly translates into redundancy, as suggested in other accounts (Kopečný 1958). Two remaining questions thus need to be answered: (i) why should it be that animate RNs appear to require the pronoun in the RC and (ii) to the extent that the pronoun is optional with inanimate RNs, are the two variants simply in free variation (and the pronoun thus simply redundant), or could the difference in form reflect a difference in meaning? Moreover, both aspects may be interrelated and the question is how exactly. Answering these questions properly will require additional, careful research on a larger set of data, including usage in spoken Czech. That is not possible in the limited space of this paper. However, we can at least suggest hypotheses that the distributions found in the present sample offer for further investigation.

In addressing the first question, we can start by recalling that animate RNs with RCs in which the RN's referents serve as direct objects are disproportionately less common than inanimate ones. As already noted, this is consistent with the fact the relevant participant's semantic role in these RCs is that of a patient: animate entities are universally dispreferred as patients and, hence, are not naturally expected in a grammatical pattern that forces them into that role. We can, therefore, hypothesize that the presence of the pronoun is an explicit signal of a configuration that goes against normal expectations, and appeal to markedness as an explanatory notion (in the sense of Croft's, 1996 conception of markedness): the analytic variant *co*+ACC would represent a marked pattern, in contrast to the bare *co* variant, which is unmarked. We could thus treat the presence of the pronoun as a communicatively motivated strategy, whereby the speaker signals to the hearer that things are not 'as conventionally expected', namely, that the direct object is an entity that would normally, based on its semantics (human agent), be more likely associated with subjecthood. The presence of the pronoun evidently constitutes the marked case as compared to the bare *co*, and so its function could be to indicate a marked situation. This is in keeping with much cognitively oriented research of discourse-management strategies, which shows that grammatical marking may be in the service of facilitating

language processing, and it particularly relates to Givon's (1979) notion of case recoverability as it applies, cross-linguistically, to the presence vs. absence of resumptive pronouns in different types of RCs (cf. hierarchies summarized in Croft 1996: 200-201). By the same argument, inanimate RNs do not require any special marking that would aid in the hearer's understanding and therefore it need not come as a surprise that inanimate RNs normally do not collocate with the accusative pronoun.

This hypothesis forces the second question, although it simultaneously suggests a direction in which to search for answers. If the identity of the inanimate RN does not need any special signal in the RC because it is the expected referent for the patient role, why should we be finding any tokens of the analytic form with inanimate RNs at all? I propose that at least one part of the answer lies in the semantics of the RC itself and its relationship to the RN.

For this discussion, I am assuming a functional and semantic classification of RCs that is explicated in more detail elsewhere (Fried, In press and To appear) and takes its inspiration primarily in Grepl – Karlík's (1998) classification, supplemented by Svoboda's (1972) more general taxonomy. RCs can be divided into two major types, determinative and non-determinative. The defining feature of the former is their relevance for determining the identity of the referent of the RN; the defining feature of the latter is the opposite: such RCs do not contribute to RN's identifiability but just elaborate on some aspect of the RN, an aspect that may be of interest in a given context. This broad functional distinction partially intersects with restrictiveness in such a way that all non-determinative RCs are necessarily non-restrictive and most, though not all, determinative types are restrictive.

The details of this classification are largely irrelevant to our immediate purposes and I will not dwell on them any further. What matters to us is the following. The corpus sample shows that the core function of the absolute RCs, regardless of the grammatical function of the RN's referent in the RC, is to *identify* the RN's referent, based on contrast, such as we find in (5) above: the RCs in those examples are necessary for identifying the exact letter (5a) or things (5b) the speaker has in mind, as opposed to other letters or things. The bare *co* variant forms a conceptually very tight unit with the RN; this is cognitively consistent with the identificational function (the RC cannot, as it were, exist without the RN as a complete proposition) and formally reflected by the absence of any resumptive

The example is extracted from an argument about the quality of a text, where the addressee is the original author and the speaker the translator of the text. At issue is not some specific subset of *blbosti* ‘stupidities’ written by the author, as opposed to those written by someone else (here implying the translator as the potential other source), but the text as a whole. This is also indicated by the information structure of the RC, which puts the verb *napsal* ‘written’ in the focal position. The meaning that is communicated by the RC in (12) has the flavor of a side comment that applies to all members of the class of stupidities under discussion, along the lines of ‘but you’re the one who WROTE them [all]’, in an argument about whose responsibility it is that the translated text got the author into trouble.

Overall, the interpretation of a given token (identification vs. explicative parenthetical) would depend on the pragmatic plausibility in a concrete context and there is no guarantee that by removing the pronoun in RCs with inanimate RNs we necessarily change the meaning of the RC. Nor can we claim that there is a categorical distinction between the RC types that is always manifested formally. However, the sample does justify an interim conclusion (and a hypothesis for further research) that the distinction identificational/explicative is largely neutralized with animate RNs, since those overwhelmingly prefer the explicit marking, and that it is partially maintained as a potential meaning difference with inanimate RNs, in which the pronoun is not needed for other functions and, therefore, remains available for marking such a distinction. Thus, whatever the ultimate answer about the observed distributions turns out to be, it seems safe to conclude that the issue of optionality and redundancy requires a careful re-evaluations and that the meaning differences between RCs as full propositions and RCs in which the direct object is not expressed as a distinct participant must be taken into account in the analysis.

3. Conclusions

The distribution of the resumptive pronoun in absolutive RCs in which the RN’s referent serves as the direct object is not properly accounted for in the existing literature. A probe into the corpus of written Czech, reported in the present paper, makes it clear that it is a much more complex problem than previously assumed. While in the limited space of this study I could not provide a fully worked out, exhaustive account of the distributional patterns attested in the corpus, the findings

provide concrete empirical foundations for further research and help articulate new hypotheses about the direction in which the patterns can be fruitfully studied. Based on a combination of qualitative and frequency-based quantitative analysis, I have shown that the criteria for determining the distribution of the accusative resumptive pronoun go well beyond the traditionally invoked need for expressing agreement categories and grammatical relations and that the distribution of the pronoun is not merely a question of optionality. Instead, we must work out the interplay between various properties of the RN (animacy, number, definiteness), the (often contextually conditioned) semantic relationship between the RN and the type of proposition expressed by the RC, and the degree of their mutual dependence and conceptual unity. Only on the basis of such a complex and close analysis can we hope to make predictions about the pronoun's function(s) and distribution in actual usage.

Sources of data:

Czech National Corpus (čNK), accessible at <http://www.korpus.cz>:

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