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Between relativization and complementation? : usage patterns of Old Polish co

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BETWEEN RELATIVIZATION AND COMPLEMENTATION? USAGE PATTERNS OF OLD POLISH *CO*

Abstract

In many languages, the complementizer and the invariant relative particle are represented by homophonous wordforms. A much-discussed pathway of grammaticalization is the development from the relativizer to the complementizer function. Even though there is no homophony between the relativizer and the complementizer in Modern Standard Polish, non-formal and older varieties show a certain overlap of complementation and relativization such as the use of the relative particle co *in a complementizer position. The present contribution investigates the distributional and functional potential of the clause-initial* co *in comparison with the "classical" Old Polish complementizers* jako *and* iż(e)/że *in the Greater Polish Oaths (1386–1446). Based on the analysis, a proposal for an alternative chronology of functions is put forward. It suggests that at the beginning of the pathway* co *was an indeterminate connective that had a general connecting function. It had the potential to develop into a complementizer or relativizer or both. In modern Polish, only the relativizer function has fully emerged, the complementizer function is restricted to certain periods and areas.*

1. Relativizers and complementizers

Relativization and complementation have a strong formal relation. We observe a frequent homonymy / homophony of relative words and complementizers across languages, for example En. *that*, Ge. *das/dass*, Ru. *čto*, BCMS *što* etc. (see also the overview in Kehayov – Boye 2016, 864–865). The formal relation suggests a semantic or functional proximity between relative clauses and complement clauses,

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which is supported by the fact that there are several languages that use relative clauses as complementation strategies (see Dixon 2006 and other contributions in the volume Dixon – Aikhenvald 2006).

One possible pathway for the diachronic development of such elements is the following:[1]

(1)   relative pronoun > relative particle > complementizer

However, as Kuteva et al. put it, "[m]ore research is needed on the structure and the genetic and areal distribution of this pathway" (Kuteva et al. 2019, 367). This is particularly true when the development of the various functions began and sometimes even ended before the onset of written documentation of a language, e.g., Germanic and Slavic languages.

The present paper is a contribution to this discussion. It is an explorative study on the functional potential of *co* in Old Polish and provides a microanalysis of different, yet very similar contexts for *co* at the left clausal periphery. Based on the analysis, I suggest a grammaticalization path that is different from the one discussed above (cf. (1)). Due to the explorative nature of this contribution, I did not conduct a quantitative analysis and will just offer very general observations on the relative frequency of certain uses of *co*.

2. Relativizers and complementizers in Polish

In Modern Polish, the string *co* is an inflectional form (NOM-ACC.SG) of the WH-pronoun *co* ('what') and the relative pronoun *co* ('that'). In addition, it functions as an invariable relative particle, often used in combination with a resumptive pronoun.[2] The unmarked and most frequent relativizer in Modern Polish is, however, the pronoun *który*.

The complementizing function is carried out by several connectives, the most important being *że/iż* and its non-factual variants *żeby/iżby/aby/ażeby/by* (for a more comprehensive list see Hansen et al. 2016, 205–211).

Even though Standard Polish does not display homophony between the complementizer and the relativizer, there is still an overlap of relativization and complementation from both a diachronic and synchronic perspective.

According to today's *communis opinio*, the complementizer *że* developed out of *iż(e)*, which, in turn, is a fossilized inflectional form of the Protoslavic pronoun

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1   Cf. Kuteva et al. (2019, 367), Lehmann (1995, 1213–1214). See also Meyer (2017) for a detailed account for Russian, Polish and Czech and Axel (2009) and Axel-Tober (2017) for German *das(s)*.
2   For details and references, cf. Mendoza (2019).

jьže.[3] Moreover, the connective *że* shows a relativization-like function in so-called presentational relative clauses:[4]

(2) SPOKES (Guz 2019, 215; 2023, 13)
     człowieku to są ludzie że za kasę ci w gówno wejdą
     'Man, these are people who will tread in shit for money'

And last, but not least, there are complementation-like functions of *co* in non-standard varieties and older stages of Polish. The following examples illustrate this usage in dialects (3) and in older literary texts (4):

(3) Przaznysz, Mazovia (Kuraškevič 1971, 167; Nitsch 1929)
     Napisała kartkę co te dziecko je nie chrzczone
     'She wrote a card that this child has not been baptized'

(4) Rej, Wizerunek, 66v/9; 1558 (Kuraškevič 1971, 169)
     Názájutrz chłop narzeka co go bolą boki
     'The next day, the man said that his sides hurt'

This use of *co* is rather peripheral and has not received much attention. It is usually mentioned in passing in the relevant chapters in dialectological works (e.g., Klemensiewicz et al. 1965, 457; Urbańczyk 1972, 58; see also Urbańczyk 1939, 46–48; Krążyńska 1979, 84). Not much information on its distribution and frequency is offered, the complementation function is perceived as a dialectal innovation, possibly resulting from language contact. In his short paper, Kuraškevič (1971) analyzes the dialectal material provided by Nitsch (1929) and several dictionaries from different stages of Polish. He finds attestations of *co* with the complementizer function in southern, northern and eastern dialects, but only very few in dialects from central Poland. Therefore he suggests a possible impact from the neighboring languages that show a complementizer-relativizer homonymy (German, Ukrainian, Russian).[5] In Old Polish, *co* only very marginally occurs as a complementizer.[6] It

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3   The basis for *iże* could be the NOM.SG.M *jьže* or the NOM/ACC.SG.N *ježe*. Some researchers derive it from the former (e,g., Boryś 2005, Sławski 1956), others opt for the latter (see discussion in Sławski 1956); Topolińska (1998, 247) allows for both forms. An alternative etymology is proposed by Brückner (1970), who analyzes *iż(e)* as a combination of the particles *i* + *że* (*i* + *że* > *iże* > *że*).

4   In presentational relative clauses, "information is asserted in the relative clause that modifies the nominal element, which is introduced by a semantically bleached main clause" (Duffield et al. 2010, 19). For presentational relative clauses in Polish, see Guz (2019, 214 f.; 2023).

5   In the now almost extinct dialects of the former eastern territories of Poland, we also find the opposite phenomenon, namely the collapse of the two functions in *że*. Cf. the relativizing *że* in *Człowiek że go spotkałem* 'the man that I met' (Kuraškevič 1971, 168; see also Urbańczyk 1939, 47–48; Kurzowa 2006, 95).

6   There are also attestations of *co* in the complementizer function in Old Czech, albeit the examples

becomes more frequent in the 16th and 17th centuries and seems to have decreased again by the 19th century. In modern Standard Polish, the complementizer function is obsolete and today it has "without doubt a dialectal character and a certain territorial affiliation" («несомненно диалектный характер и определенную территориальную принадлежность»; Kuraškevič 1971, 165).

3. Usage patterns of *co* in the Greater Poland Oaths

In the following, I will analyze Old Polish *co* in a specific environment and identify patterns that could have been the cradle of the complementation function of *co*. In doing so, I will try to not "overinterpret" the Old Polish structures, that is, I will not force a functional categorization on indeterminate or unclear expressions. As will become evident in the following, the function of a single occurrence is often difficult to specify or to distinguish from related functions.

The so-called Greater Poland Oaths[7] provide excellent material for an investigation on microvariaton. They contain records of witnesses' oaths at court from the late 14th through the mid-15th century. The organization and the wording of the oaths is quite stereotypic, which permits us to identify micropatterns of linguistic features and language practices.[8]

The Old Polish oaths are bilingual. The actual oath is preceded by a Latin introduction that usually names the circumstances and the participants of the case. Latin is also used in the "Polish parts" of the oath. Sometimes a whole segment is in Latin, sometimes we find short Latin insertions within a Polish segment.[9] The Latin introductory part will not play a role in the following analysis, Latin insertions will be accounted for when they come up in an example.

A full written record of an oath has three components: 1) the oath formula, 2) the content of the matter, and 3) the affirmation of testimony of the witness(es). The order of the components is flexible in that the affirmation of testimony often precedes the content part. The oath formula is shortened more often than not, sometimes even omitted in the written records; the same is true, to a degree, for the affirmation of testimony.[10] Example (5) shows a full oath with all three components:

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are rare and not always unequivocal. See Bauer's (1960, 131) reference to examples from the 15th century in Gebauer's (1903–1916) dictionary of Old Czech. Note that modern Czech does not show homonymy of complementizer and relative particle.

7   I used the electronic repository eROThA, which contains the digitized versions of the oaths published in Kowalewicz – Kuraszkiewicz (1959–1981). My corpus includes the oaths uploaded until May 2022.

8   Cf. Krążyńska's meticulous analyses of both the clause-internal and the cross-clausal patterns of the Greater Poland Oaths (Krążyńska 1979, 1980, 1981, 2010).

9   See Włodarczyk – Adamczyk (2021) for an analysis of the multilingual practices of the Greater Poland Oaths.

10   For details on the structure of the oaths, see Kuraszkiewicz (1986) and Słoboda (2021).

1) oath formula: *Tako jim pomoży Bog i święty †*, 2) affirmation of testimony: *jako to świadczą*, 3) content: *jako cso Bartek kmieć rany woźnym ukazał . tych mu Dzirżek nie dał ani ranił*. The oath formula is almost complete, just the word *krzyż* is replaced by the cross symbol.

(5) Poznań 540, 1402[11]
   Tako jim pomoży Bog i święty † jako to świadczą . jako cso Bartek kmieć rany woźnym ukazał . tych mu Dzirżek nie dał ani ranił
   'So help him God and the holy † as they testify to this as that the farmer Bartek showed the wounds to the court official, Dzirżek did not give him these and he did not injure (him)'

The focus of the analysis will be on the joint of testimony or oath formula and content part since this is the relevant environment for both complementizer and clause-initial *co*.

3.1 The left context

The left context of *co* is the affirmation of testimony or, if that is omitted, the oath formula. The predicates used in the affirmation of testimony are *świadczyć* 'to testify', *być przy tem* 'to witness' (used by eyewitnesses) and *wiedzieć* 'to know'. The clausal complement is typically introduced by a connective such as *iż(e)/że, jako*; cf. the following example for illustration:

(6) Pyzdry 611, 1419
   Jako to świadczą iże Mikołaj poorał Margorzacie rolą [...]
   'As they testified to this *iże* Mikołaj plowed the field for Małgorzata [...]'

The affirmation of testimony usually contains the pronominal form *to* that cataphorically refers to the content part. From a formal point of view, *to* could be interpreted as a particle attached to *jako*[12], but a comparison with other patterns makes this interpretation less likely. Pronominal references also occur with the predicate *wiedzieć* (7); in *być przy tem* (lit.: 'to be (present) at this'), the pronoun is built into the predicate expression. Moreover, *to* regularly occurs when the affirmation of testimony follows the content part, and here a referring function is highly likely, cf. (8).

Example (8) also illustrates the use of the clause-initial connective at the very beginning of the oath in cases where the oath formula is omitted and the affirmation of testimony is placed after the content.

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11   The examples are given in the standardized Old Polish version offered on eROThA, except for punctuation and Latin insertions, which are taken from the Old Polish original.
12   *Słownik staropolski* (Urbańczyk et al. 1953–2002) lists several such uses of *to* after a function word.

(7) Kościan 1047, 1424
Jako o tem wiem jako Wociech Nowiecski wydzierżał tę zastawę s tym listem zapisnym […]
'As *I know about this*, that Wociech Nowiecski was holding the guaranty with this letter of obligation […]

(8) Kościan 897, 1421
Jakom u Hampla nie pożyczył 10 grzywien. {Testes:}[13] *Jako to świadczą.*
'*Jako* he did not borrow ten grzywnas from Hampel. {Witnesses:} As *they testify to this.*'

The clause-initial *co* occurs in all positions that are possible for *jako* and *iż(e)/że*. It may follow the oath formula (9), or the complement taking predicate (CTP) in the affirmation of testimony (10), or it may occur at the very beginning with no preceding Polish text (11):

(9) Kościan 130, 1399
Tako mi pomoży Bog † cso konie pobrany Nicolao et Wojciechowi ludziem Pradłowym tego pani nie ma użytka
'So help me God † *co* the horses were taken from Nicolaus and Wojciech by the people of Pradło, from this the lady has no benefit'

(10) Kościan 238, 1404
Jako to świadczę cso Piotrasz kupił u Mikołaja dziedzictwo tę mu jest wszytkę[14] *zapłacił*
'As I testify to this *co* Piotrasz bought land from Mikołaj, (he) has paid him all of it'

(11) Kalisz 117, 1403
cso Wojtek dawał Dzietrzychowi winę o koń to był jego prawy
'*co* Wojtek blamed Dzietrzych about the horse, that (it) was his rightfully'

In all these positions, *co* may be preceded by *jako* or *iż(e)/że*. The following examples illustrate this cooccurrence after a CTP (12), after the oath formula (13) and at the very beginning of the oath (14):

(12) Poznań 540, 1402[15]
Tako jim pomoży Bog i święty † jako to świadczą . jako cso Bartek kmieć rany woźnym ukazał . tych mu Dzirżek nie dał ani ranił

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13   Latin insertions are given in curly brackets.
14   The deviation in gender agreement of *tę wszytkę* might be due to a confusion with the feminine *dziedzina*, which has a similar meaning (cf. https://rotha.ehum.psnc.pl/breeze/Kos.238).
15   I will reuse some of the examples but with continuous numeration.

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'So help him God and the holy † as they testify to this *jako co* the farmer Bartek showed the wounds to the court officials, Dzirżek did not give him these and he did not injure (him)'

(13) Pryzdry 711, 1423
Tako mi etc. jako csom *zajął pięcioro skotu Maciejewi tom zajął na mego pana dzie-dzinie*
'So me etc. *jako co* I took five head of cattle away from Maciej, that I took on my Lord's ground'

(14) Kościan 362, 1408
Jako cso *wieprz Janowi u Josta zabit to ji zabito z prawem.*
'*Jako cso* the boar was killed by Jost to the detriment of Jan, that it was killed rightfully'

The discussion so far has focused solely on the positional potential of the clause-initial *co*, without regard to its possible functions and the right context. These issues will be addressed in the next section.

3.2 *The right context*
The relevant parameters of the right context patterns are determined by structural elements that create connectivity, i.e., cohesion and syntactic linkage between the clause preceding *co* and the following clause. From the perspective of discourse structure, a *co*-clause that is followed by another clause introduces a topic and the second clause elaborates on it.

I will now analyze the patterns formed by how connectivity is expressed between elements in the two clauses. The parameters are:

a) the existence of an anaphoric relation between the first clause and element(s) in following clause,
b) the type of anaphoric element(s) (noun, demonstrative, *jen*),
c) the type of antecedent (NP, clause),
d) the presence of the correlative *to* in the second clause.

As said before, I will refrain from trying to assign precise functions to the element *co*, but will only discuss a possible functional range. I also will not consider the question of how the clauses relate to each other in terms of sub-/superordination or coordination.[16]

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16   In this regard, my approach is quite different from Krążyńska's. Krążyńska considers *co-to* structures with a transitive verb and no NP in the *co*-clause as the starting point, with *co* functioning as a pronoun in the accusative. The other patterns identified by the author, including the structure *co-ten*, are

Pattern 1: *co* NP$_i$ – demN$_i$

In the first pattern, *co* introduces a clause that contains a noun phrase referring to a topical referent (NP$_i$; *kupia* in the example below). It is followed by a clause containing an anaphoric noun phrase with the constituents demonstrative + noun (*ta... kupia* in the example below), which is coreferent with NP$_i$:

(15) Kalisz 96, 1403
Jakom przy tem był cso *się* kupia$_i$ *wodziła miedzy Sułkiem a miedzy Otą* ta *się* kupia$_i$ *Sułkiem rozszła.*
'As he witnessed *co the deal* went on between Sułek and Ota, *this deal* failed for Sułek.'

Pattern 2: *co* NP$_i$ – dem$_i$

The second pattern is similar to pattern 1, the difference is that the anaphoric element is represented by a bare demonstrative pronoun. Examples (16) and (17) show the demonstrative in different syntactic positions, namely in subject position (*ten* in (16)) and in object position (*tego* in (17), the genitive is triggered by negation):

(16) Pyzdry 359, 1412
Tako jim pomoży Bog i święty † jako to świadczymy cso *Przedsław wziął* koń$_i$ *Jarosławowi* ten$_i$ *dziś wilka ma.*
'So help them God and the holy † as we testify to this, *co* Predsław took *the horse$_i$* from Jarosław, *this$_i$* has now the *wilk*-disease'

(17) Pyzdry 140 1401
Tako jim p. B. † jako to świadczym cso *Jan żałował na Sędziwoja o* chmiel$_i$ tego$_i$ *Sędziwoj nie wziął*
'So them p. B.[17] † *jako* we testify to this *co* Jan sued Sędziwoj *about the hops$_i$, this$_i$* Sędziwoj did not take'

If we wanted to assign a function to the element *co* or name the relation between the two clauses in (15)–(17), we could categorize the first clause as a preposed relative clause with an internal head (*kupia* in (15), *koń* in (16) and *o chmiel* in (17)) and a second head (*ta kupia*) or a light head (*ten* and *tego*) in the second clause. *Co* would then function as a relative particle.[18]

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interpreted as modifications and extensions of the original pattern. According to her, these processes may eventually lead to the recategorization of *co* and a change in the degree of syntactic in/dependency of the clauses (KRĄŻYŃSKA 1979, 1980, 1981).

17   p. B. = pomoży Bog 'help God'.

18   See LEHMANN (1984, 48–49, 122–129) and ZALIZNJAK – PADUČEVA (2002, 670–674) for a discussion of preposed relative clauses with an internal head from a typological perspective. The relationship be-

Pattern 3: *co – to*

The third pattern shows the form *to* as an introduction to the second clause. There is no agreement between the NP (in (18): *koń*) and *to*, hence there is no coreferential relation between the two, *to* has a mere correlative function:

(18) Kalisz 117, 1403
    cso *Wojtek dawał Dzietrzychowi winę o koń* to *był jego prawy*
    '*co* Wojtek blamed Dzietrzych about the horse, *to* (it) was his rightfully'

Example (19) is ambiguous between pattern 2 and 3. The form *to* could represent either the NOM.SG.N of the demonstrative and refer to *żyto* 'rye' or the correlative *to*:

(19) Poznań 83, 1390
    Cso *mi Febronija pobrała żyto* to *stało za dwanaćcie grzywien.* {*Testes iurabunt ad testimonium*}.¹⁹
    '*co* Febronija took *rye* from me, *to* was worth twelve grzywnas. {The witnesses will swear to the testimony.}'

Pattern 4: *co – dem*

In this pattern, the demonstrative in the second clause has a propositional antecedent. It does not refer to a single element in the first clause, but to the situation as a whole, cf. the form *temu*.DAT.SG.N in (20)

(20) Kalisz 260, 1408
    Tako nam pomoży Bog i święty † jako to świadczymy jako cso *żałowała Margorzata na Świętosława o birzwna* temu *są minęła trzy lata niż zazwała.*
    'So help us God and the holy † as we testify to this that *co* Margorzata sued Świętosław about the beams *since then* three years passed before she took it to court.'

The following example is ambiguous in the same way as example (19) above. The form *to* could be interpreted as the correlative element or as the ACC.SG.N of the demonstrative, referring to the proposition of the preceding clause:

(21) Kalisz 531, 1416
    Tako jim pomoży Bog i święty † jako to świadczymy co Jadwiga raniła Margorzatę to *uczyniła za je początkiem iże pirzwie jej syna raniła*

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tween topic or, more generally, information structure and preposed relative clauses has been discussed by LEHMANN (1984, 370–372).

19   Note that the testifying part in this oath is in Latin.

'So help them Bog and the holy † as we testify to this *co* Jadwiga$_i$ hurt Małgorzata$_j$, *to* (she$_i$) did (it) upon provocation by her$_j$ because she$_j$ had hurt her$_i$ son first'

It is difficult, if not impossible, to find a relative function in the *co*-clauses in (20) and (21). In (20), there are no formal relations between noun phrases across the clauses at all and in (21) we cannot single out a noun phrase that the second clause "is about". In such cases, *co* is a mere topic-introducing device.

Pattern 5: *co*
Pattern 5 consists of a single clause, introduced by *co*. The pattern does not exhibit any pattern-constituting elements except for *co*. In addition, *co* is adjacent to the CTP (*świadczymy/świadczę*), and hence it finds itself in the syntactic position of a typical complementizer. This clears the way for the development of a complementizing function.

(22) Pyzdry 204, 1440
Tako nam p. B. † jako to świadczymy co *Dobiesław porąbił quatuor quercos et viginti w jich zapuście [...]*
'So us p. B.[20] † as we testify to this, *co* Dobiesław felled 24 oak trees in their forest [...]'

(23) Kalisz 15, 1401
Jako to świadczymy co *Piotr żałował na Żyrkowskiego o siedḿ grzywien iściny a o szkodę nics*
'As we testify to this *co* Piotr sued Żyrkowski about seven grzywnas capital and not about the loss'

(24) Konin 290 , 1408
T mi p B i ś †[21] *jako to świadczę* cso *Sędka naprzód dała Pawłowej świeści rany'*
'[So help me God and the holy cross] as I testify to this, *co* Sędka inflicted injuries to Paweł's relative first

4. Concluding remarks

My research, while still preliminary, suggests the following: From a distributional point of view, the clause-initial *co* has almost the same potential as the "classic" complementizers *jako* and *że*. One important difference is, however, that it can oc-

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20   See fn. 14.
21   T mi p B i ś † = Tako mi pomoży Bóg i święty krzyż.

cur in combination with one of them, whereas *jako* and *iz(e)/że* cannot be combined with each other.

The element *co* has a wide functional range. When the clause introduced by *co* is followed by another connected clause, *co* introduces the topic. In this case, the first clause is often compatible with the function of a preposed relative clause. However, there are many attestations of preposed *co*-clauses that are outside this functional range and have solely topic-introducing function. In the very few cases where there is no connectivity between the *co*-clause and the following clause or if there is no second clause at all, the function of *co* – if alone – is compatible with the function of a complementizer. A factor that may have fostered the use of *co* in a complementizer function is its adjacency to a traditional complementizer (*jako, iże*), in examples like (5)/(12), (13), (14), (20).

The diachronic depth that is attested for Old Polish is not sufficient to trace back a path as suggested by MEYER (2017), AXEL-TOBER (2017) and others. However, the data from the Greater Poland Oaths support an alternative theory for the diachrony of the functions of *co*. In many if not most cases *co* functions as an underspecified general connector, used to introduce topical elements or topics. Due to its position, *co* has the potential to develop into a relative word or a complementizer, as depicted in (25):

(25) general connector

    → relative word
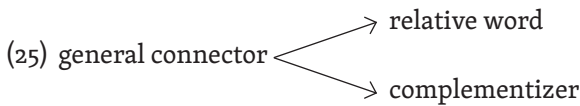
    → complementizer

In the analyzed material, the different functions of *co* are not fully developed. The 16th and 17th centuries saw the temporary emergence of the complementizer *co*, as described in the works cited in Section 2. The process did not reach the modern standard language and stayed a temporally and geographically restricted phenomenon.

The relativizing function of *co* is fully developed in Modern Polish. However, whereas postposed *co*-relative clauses are a regular occurrence, particularly in less formal varieties, the preposed relative clause with *co* has become obsolete.
Vestiges of the general connector function of *co* are its role in presentative relative clauses (cf. ex. (2)) as well as its occurrence in utterances like *i stoi taki jeden # ten co ty żeś jeździła ten elektryczny* 'and there is one, just like the one (that) you drove the electric one' (SPOKES; Guz 2017, 110), where the relativized element is low on the accessibility hierarchy (see MENDOZA 2019, 16 and 37).

The scenario laid out here is not restricted to the Polish *co*. It also fits the case of the Russian *čto*, which, unlike the Polish *co*, functions as a regular complementizer in Russian.[22]

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22   For the Old East Slavic relativizer *čto*, see MENDOZA (2008).

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