

# Historical changes in language development

Knowing about historical morphological and phonological changes may help you understand certain phenomena in the language today.

## 1. Alternation of ů – o:

dům – domy, v domě, stůl – stoly, na stole, moct – můžu, pomoci – pomůžu, můj – moje, tvůj – tvoje

Why? Because historically the sound ů developed from o: dóm > duom > dům.

## 2. The fleeting e

den – ve dne, dva dny

tatínek – mám tatínka, tatínkův

Why? Because old Czech had the sounds ѣ (soft yer) and ѣ (hard yer). These sounds changed: starting from a word's end, every odd yer disappeared and every even one changed into e, e.g.: дѣнь – den, дѣнь – dny. That's why the sound e disappears in the declined singular forms and in the plural forms. Most masculine nouns ending in -ek, -ec and -en have a fleeting e, e.g.: tatínek, Vietnamec, den, as do most feminine nouns ending in -eň, e.g.: píseň. In our textbook we warn you about the fleeting e by underlining it on the vocabulary pages and in the glossary.

## 3. Alternation of certain consonants before -i and -e:

h > z, ž

ch > š

k > c, č

r > ř

g > z

d > d'

t > t'

n > ň

Why? Put very simply, we can say that the hard consonants h, ch, k, r, g, d, t, n "cannot stand" the added endings e and i and react to them by changing (see above). We find this change in the following grammatical phenomena:

a) in the nominative plural of masculine animate nouns, e.g.: doktor – doktoři, kluk – kluci, student – studenti [studenti]

b) in the nominative plural of masculine animate adjectives, e.g. dobrý – dobří, hezký – hezcí, tlustý – tlustí [tlustí]. However, in everyday spoken Czech this change does not take place.

c) in the locative and dative of feminine nouns, e.g.: maminka – mamince, Praha – v Praze

d) in the comparative of adjectives and adverbs, e.g.: krátký – kratší, drahý – dražší

e) in feminine forms of possessive adjectives, e.g.: maminka – mamínčin, Barbora – Barbořin

f) in diminutives, e.g.: králík – králíček

## 4. Sound shifts

In the past the vowels a, o and u changed after the soft consonants ž, š, č, ř, d', t', ě, c and j as follows:

-a, -o > -e (e.g. vesnica > vesnice, srdco > srdce)

-u > -i (e.g. juh > jih)

Put simply we can say that this resulted in two types of noun declension:

- hard declensions (the 1st declension group in our textbook)

- soft declensions (the 2nd declension group in our textbook). See the tables on p. 202 and 203.

## Word order

Czech word order is quite flexible. This means that individual sentence components do not have to be put into a fixed word order. This type of word order makes possible a wide variety of communications. Compare these, e.g.:

Petr miluje Evu (= not Mary, Jane or some other girl).

Petr Evu miluje (= he loves her, not likes, hates etc.).

Evu miluje Petr (= it's Petr who loves Eva, not Filip, Adam or someone else).