The purpose of this talk is not to . . .

- bore you to death with any linguistic analysis
- teach you Czech
- frighten you
The purpose of this talk is to . . .

- give you the basic overview and the feel of Czech
- show you that the foreign languages you study are actually easy
- hopefully, be fun!
Basic facts about Czech

- Indo-European language
- Slavic language (western type)
- Similar to: Slovak, Polish
- Less similar to: Russian, Serbian
- More than 1000 years old, but still developing.
Vocabulary

- Parts of speech (nouns, verbs, ...) like English
- It's an inflective language
- Not only word suffixes change, but sometimes also parts of the stem
- A lot of flexion types and irregularities
- Seven cases of nouns, expressed by word form, not only by prepositions: ty (you), bez tebe (without you), k tobē (towards you), s tebou (with you), ...
- Every noun has its gender: male, female or neutral (like German der, die, das)
Verbs

- Subject to flexion, like, for example, in Spanish, German, French, ...
- Gender changes the verb form – on měl, ona měla, ono mělo (he had, she had, it had)
- Past, present and future tense, present conditional
- Past perfect and past conditional – more or less historical, not widely used
- No continuous tense, completive and imperfective verbs instead – skočit (jump) and skákat (be jumping)
Some devilish examples of richness of Czech

No phrasal verbs, prefixes instead:

- jít (go)
- najít (find)
- předějít (precede)
- předějít (anticipate)
- pojít (die)
- vzejít (arise)
- sejít (meet)
- vyjít (come true)
- dojít (run short)
- . . .
Some devilish examples of richness of Czech

This can happen not only to verbs:

- **národ** (nation)
- **porod** (childbirth)
- **příroda** (nature)
- **zárodek** (germ)
- **rodina** (family)
- **úroda** (crop)
- **urozený** (noble)
- **přirozené číslo** (integer)
Symbols

- Orthography is phonetic (write as you speak, unlike English)
- Uses Latin alphabet, but with accents:
  A Ā B C Č D Ď E Ė E̯ F G H Ī Į J K L M N Ň
  O Ĭ P Q R Ė Š Š T Ĥ U Ě Ů V W X Y Ŷ Ž
- Q and X used only for foreign words
- Beware, accents can make a difference: plast (plastic) ≠ plášt (honeycomb) ≠ plášť (cloak)
- ... but usually not written on computers
- Digraph 'ch', ordered between H and I (!)
  hod < chod < iant
- But not always: “na-nic-hod-ny”!
- Unsortable by computer due to semantical rules... but no one really cares :-)


Pronunciation (1)

- Almost never contextual
- Word stress at first syllable
- Vowels usually make syllables... not always
- A - dumb
  I - lit
  U - cuckoo
  E - men
  O - pot
- Other vowels: Y Â É Î Ï Ù Ó Ó Y Ü Õ Æ
- Û=Ŭ (historic)
- Ė is quite tricky: ĐĚ[ĐE], TĚ[TĚ], NĚ[NĚ], but VĚ[VJE] (everywhere else)
- I=Y, exploited by nasty teachers
- but sometimes make a difference: typ (type) ≠ tip (bet)
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<td>(as in rip, but harder)</td>
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<td>Ch</td>
<td>loch</td>
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<td>?</td>
<td>(a nightmare)</td>
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Jawbreakers – “jazykolamy”

- Nenaoleju-li je já, naolejuje je Julia.
- Bratře Petře, nepřepepři toho vepře!
- Strč prst skrz krk.
- Prd krt skrz drn, prv zhlí hrst zrn.
- Smrž pln skvrn zvlhl z mlh.
Other interesting things

- **čtvrvrst** (a quarter handful),
  **scvrenklsl** (you flipped off)
- **nejneobospodarovávatelnější**
  (the least cultivatable)
- **nejvykrystalizovávanější** (the most crystalizing)

Palindromes:

- **nepotopen** (unsunken), **nezasazen** (not hit)
- **Do chladu si mísu dal Chod.**
  (A Chod put his bowl into a cool place).
- **Kdy mohou splatiti ti ti tiší hoši dluh?**
  (When can those quiet boys pay you the debt?)
English words of Czech origin

- **pistol**
  from 15th century, a handgun *pišťala* (pipe, whistle)

- **robot**
  1920, Karel Čapek's play “R.U.R.”
  (Rossum’s Universal Robots)
  derived from *robota* (slavery work)

- and, maybe surprisingly... **dollar**!
  16th century, coins originally made in silver mines in Joachimsthal in Bohemia, later spread to Austria-Hungary, Prussia, brought to America by the Spanish
  *Joachimthaler* → *thaler* → *tolar* → **dollar**