



The Competition of Two Dative Cases in Czech

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The Phenomenon

- nearly all masculine nouns in Czech have two competing forms of the dative singular
- there are three classes of masculine nouns.
 - “hard” stems have either the ending *-u* or the ending *-ovi*, e.g. *student* – *studentu* / *studentovi*
 - “soft” stems have either the ending *-u* or the ending *-ovi*, e.g. *lékař* – *lékaři* / *lékařovi*
 - nouns ending in *-a* have only the ending *-ovi*, e.g. *starosta* – *starostovi*
- some examples
 - Tomuto *studentu* formálně nic nebrání v tom, aby se zapsal ke studiu v dalším akademickém roce.
 - Tomuto *studentovi* se podařilo takřka nemožné, když si vyrobil vlastní meč.
 - Dobrý den, v pondělí jdu na prohlídku k *lékaři* pro posudek na řidičák.
 - Nebo když jde uklízečka k *lékařovi*, tak dostane horší ošetření než ten milionář?

• *two variants of one case or two cases?*

Further Information

- the same phenomenon can be observed with the locative singular; however, this poster only addresses the dative
- the diachronic source of the variation is clear:
 - *-u/-i* goes back to the dative singular of Proto-Slavic *o-/jo-*stems
 - *-ovi* goes back to the dative singular of Proto-Slavic *u-*stems
- both endings also occur in other West Slavic languages, but they are distributed complementarily and do not vary

What Do the Grammars Say?

- older grammars list several factors for the use of *-ovi*, e.g., that it is used with personal names or with nouns standing on their one, that “hard” nouns show a stronger tendency to use *-ovi*, than “soft” nouns etc.
- recent grammars emphasize that both endings are equivalent, except in chains of masculine nouns, where the last noun has *-ovi*, and all others *-u* or *-i*
- Mluvnice češtiny (1987):
 - [...] In principle, both forms are equivalent in contemporary language, e.g., *sousedu/sousedovi*, *hochu/hochovi*, *psu/psovi*: *muži/mužovi*, *soudci/soudcovi*. Various factors, especially syntactic, word order, and rhythmic factors, determine the use of the longer or shorter form; e.g. if the name stands alone, it usually has a longer ending, in the first members of a multi-word coordinate expression it has a shorter ending, and only in the last member does it have a longer ending, cf. *panu (soudruhu) profesoru doktoru Miloši Novákovi*.
- Mluvnice současné češtiny. Jak se píše a jak se mluví (2010)
 - D/L of “hard” stems standing alone: 69% *-ovi* in written texts, 96%*-ovi* in spoken texts
 - D/L of “soft” stems standing alone: 6% *-ovi* in written texts, 64%*-ovi* in spoken texts
 - D/L before other nouns: 12% *-ovi* in written texts, 26% *-ovi* in spoken texts
- Hebal-Jeziarska, M. (2011). Variantnost ve flexi životných maskulin. In: *Kapitoly z české gramatiky* (pp. 450–508). Praha: Academia.
 - there is a lot of variation, with some clear tendencies. "Hard" stems show more *-ovi* than "soft" stems. Names show more *-ovi* than other persons, who show more *-ovi* than animals.

Which conditions should apply if we can speak about two different cases?

- the two cases should be complementarily distributed (in as many cases as possible 😊)
- the two cases should have different functions

Analysis of Corpus Examples

- I analyzed samples of 250 occurrences from the corpus SYN v9 for standing-alone datives and for chains
- their frequencies in the corpus are as follows:

type	1 dative	2 datives	3 datives	4 datives
i.p.m.	794,98	129,66	34,44	0,85

- standing-alone datives:

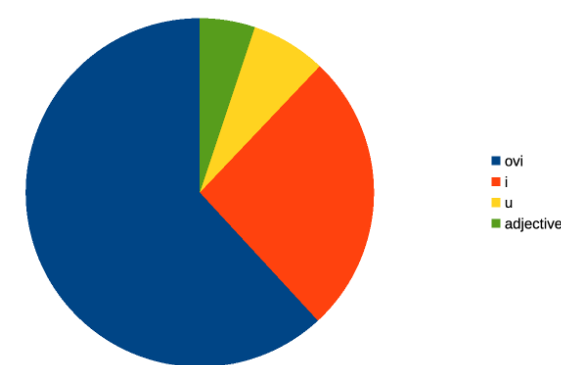
62% *-ovi*

26% *-i*

6% *-u*

- 5% adjectives

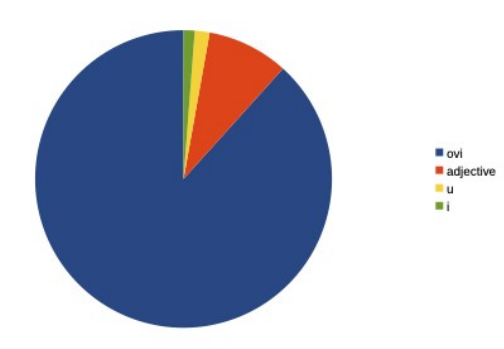
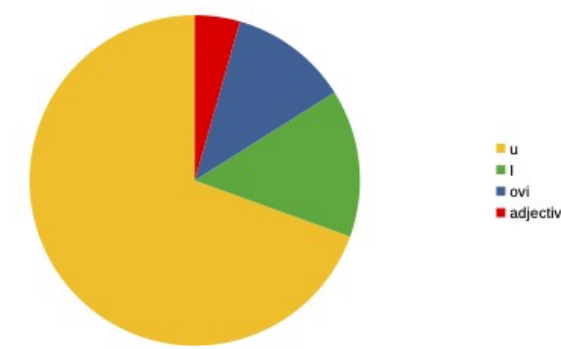
- lexicalized to a certain degree



- chains of two datives

first position: 69% *-u*

second position: 88% *-ovi*

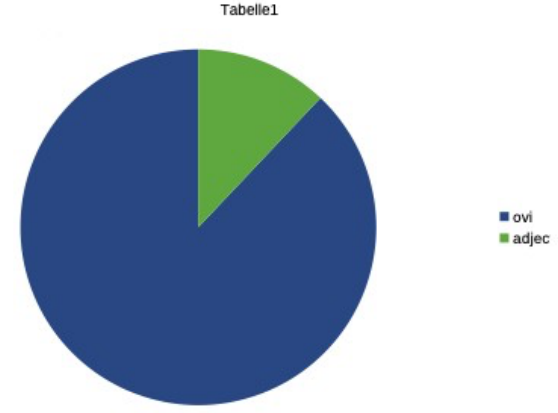
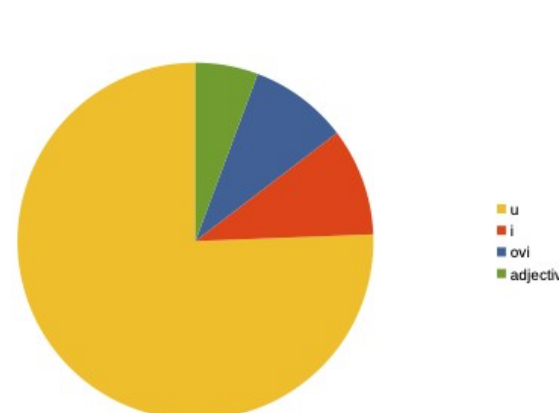
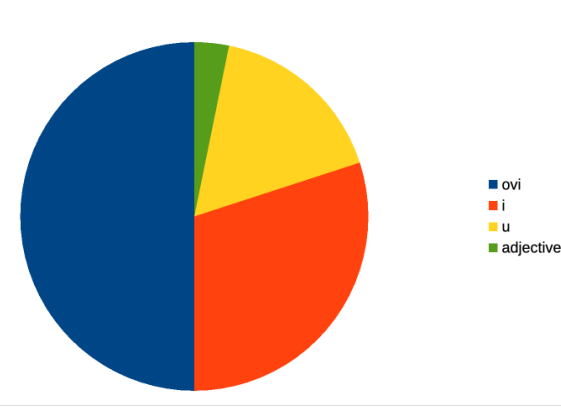


- chains of three datives

first position: 50% *-ovi*

second position: 75% *-u*

third position: 87% *-ovi*



- preliminary results

- *-ovi* shows a strong tendency to stand at the end of a group of datives and a weaker tendency to stand alone
- the function of *-ovi* could be that of a “border signal”, we expect the nominal group to end here
- the ending *-u* is unmarked with regard to this criterion
- the fact that *-ovi* can also occur in the first position of a chain of datives needs to be investigated further
- the corpus data show that first position *-ovi* is typical for occupations, functions, titles, but not for personal names