

Title: Milan Kundera's Metalinguistic Technique and Conceptual Analysis.
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What is remarkable about Milan Kundera's novels is that, in a sense, they are almost completely dedicated to the discussion of words' meaning. Kundera has elaborated his own metalinguistic technique. It consists in formulating a definition for a particular word that expresses some key, unique concept in a particular language – and, as such, lacks a corresponding word in other languages. Such a definition is then translated into another language, and the corresponding word starts being used as a secondary sign, that is, as a signifier of this definition. When the correlation between the source word and this definition is achieved, the function of the signifier can be transferred to any approximate synonym of the language in which the novel is written or into which it is translated.

In one of his interviews (Kundera 1987), Kundera describes his method as follows: He starts with giving an example of a typical situation in which people feel in a particular way (cf. the semantic description of emotions by means of prototypical situations that arouse them in Wierzbicka 1972, Иорданская 1970); then he searches for a word expressing this feeling, after which he proposes a definition for this word. This is how the word *tenderness* emerges in his novel *Life Is Elsewhere*. Its definition follows: “a tiny artificial space in which it is mutually agreed that we would treat others as children.” Note the similarity of this definition with a semantic definition of the Russian diminutive suffix *-očka* proposed by Wierzbicka (1992: 260): “I feel something good toward you / of the kind that people feel speaking to *small children*.”

- Kundera's analysis of the word *lítost* that expresses a specifically “Czech emotion” (≈ ‘pity towards oneself arising an aggressive reaction in one's partner’) in his novel *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* is another example of a conceptual analysis. This “brilliant mini-study” (Wierzbicka 1992:166) gave birth to a whole branch of semantic investigations (Wierzbicka 1992, 1999; Зализняк 1999, 2000).

- In our paper we will consider a “linguistic-specific emotion” that constitutes one of the central plotlines of Kundera's novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, and corresponds to the concept conveyed by the Czech word *soucít* (≈ ‘compassion, sympathy’). Actually, Kundera means, by this word, a particular kind of love that Thomas, the protagonist of the novel, feels towards Teresa, his mistress and wife (cf. the expression “love-soucít” in Němcová Banerjee 1990). On the other hand, the word *soucít* in Kundera's novel is a kind of “existential code” of Thomas (Kundera 1987: 125). It functions as a secondary sign whose meaning does not correspond exactly to the meaning of the word *soucít* in Czech. But its use in the novel does not correspond to the definition given to it by Kundera himself either (“the maximal capacity of affective imagination, the art of emotional telepathy” (Kundera 1984: 20)). Indeed, it does not designate empathy with just any feelings, but only with painful ones. Therefore, three meanings of the word *soucít* are involved: the meaning it has in Czech, the meaning ascribed to it by Kundera (by means of a metalinguistic definition) and the meaning that can be deduced from the use of this word in the novel. In our paper we propose a definition of the latter using Anna Wierzbicka's “natural semantic metalanguage”. The most specific semantic feature of the word *soucít* corresponds to component ‘X feels as if he felt the same bad thing himself.’

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