The main goal of this paper is to analyze one specific Czech discourse marker, vždyť, both from the synchronic and diachronic position. In the context of this analysis, some questions of linguistic methodology are discussed.

Most of this analysis focused on its semantic properties, which were described using the NSM methodology (Natural Semantic Metalanguage). NSM allows its users to describe the meaning of grammatical words in natural language, thanks to which a researcher can formulate the expression's function without having to use a complicated and obscure terminology. The resulting definition of vždyť is compared to the description found in Czech dictionaries, whose authors, unlike my approach, describe the meaning of vždyť in terms of multiple senses, polysemy. Apart from semantics, a small part of the chapter is dedicated to the description of other properties of vždyť, e. g. phonetics.

In the diachronic analysis, a hypothesis is formulated about the emergence of vždyť from the originally temporal marker vždy, explaining it on the basis of conversational implicatures. That is illustrated by some examples of vždy from the earliest available linguistic data from Czech. I then describe the meaning of vždyť in Old Czech, while speculation about its further development is hindered by the lack of adequate data.

This paper aims to bring attention to the extremely difficult problems of describing discourse markers, as well as the importance of choosing a well suited methodology. Some general issues of semantics and linguistics are discussed as well.