

The Conceptualisation of the Christian Life
in John Henry Newman's
Parochial and Plain Sermons

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By

Marcin Kuczok

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

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Parochial and Plain Sermons,
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Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures.....	x
List of Tables.....	xii
Acknowledgements	xiv
Introduction	xv
List of Abbreviations	xix
Part I: Theoretical Preliminaries	
Chapter One.....	2
Conceptualisation in Cognitive Linguistics	
1.1 The notion of conceptualisation	
1.2 The linguistic picture of the world	
1.3 Extension of meaning	
1.4 Conceptual integration	
1.5 Conclusions	
Chapter Two	32
Conceptualisation and Axiology	
2.1 Linguistic axiology	
2.2 Values and valuation	
2.3 The domain of values	
2.4 Values in the linguistic picture of the world	
2.5 Axiology in the language of Christian ethics	
2.6 Conclusions	
Chapter Three	46
Conceptualisation in Religious Language	
3.1 The transcendental character of religious language	
3.2. Metaphor in religious language	
3.3 Metonymy in religious language	
3.4 Metaphoronymy in religious language	

3.5 Conceptual integration in religious language	
3.6 Conclusions	
Chapter Four.....	64
John Henry Newman's <i>Parochial and Plain Sermons</i>	
4.1 The person of John Henry Newman	
4.2 A theological perspective on sermons	
4.3 A linguistic perspective on sermons	
4.4 <i>Parochial and Plain Sermons</i> (1834-1843)	
4.5 Conclusions	
Part II: A Cognitive-Linguistic Analysis of the Concept of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE in <i>Parochial and Plain Sermons</i>	
Chapter Five	90
The Concept of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE	
5.1 The concept of LIFE in the English language	
5.2 The concept of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE in religious language	
5.3 The understanding of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE in Newman's PPS	
5.4 Conclusions	
Chapter Six	98
The Structural Models of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE in PPS	
6.1 THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A JOURNEY	
6.2 THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A RACE	
6.3 THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS WAR	
6.4 THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A BUSINESS TRANSACTION	
6.5 THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A TRIAL	
6.6 THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS WORK	
6.7 THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A SCHOOL	
6.8 THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS SERVING GOD	
6.9 THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS FAMILY LIFE	
6.9.5 Conclusions	
Chapter Seven.....	216
The Models of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE based on Ontological Metaphors	
7.1 Animalisations in the concept of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE	
7.2 Vegetalisations in the concept of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE	
7.3 Reifications in the concept of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE	

The Conceptualisation of the Christian Life in John Henry Newman's *ix*
Parochial and Plain Sermons

Final Conclusions	251
References	257
Index of Quotations from <i>Parochial and Plain Sermons</i>	275
Index of Metaphors and Metonymies	280

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1. The category “car” (adapted from Radden, Dirven 2007:7)

Figure 1-2. The radial network analysis of “fruit” (adapted from Geeraerts 2010:195)

Figure 1-3. The basic diagram of conceptual blending (adapted from Fauconnier, Turner 2002:46)

Figure 1-4. The megablend *Ann is the boss of the daughter of Max* (adapted from Fauconnier, Turner 2002:155)

Figure 2-1. The SCALE schema representing the horizontal dimension of the domain of values (adapted from Krzeszowski 1997:75)

Figure 3-1. The varieties of religious language (adapted from Zdunkiewicz-Jedynak 2008:109)

Figure 3-2. The megablend *prayer is the echo of the darkness of the soul* (adapted from Fauconnier, Turner 2002:157)

Figure 4-1. The directions of passing God’s Word in preaching (adapted from Adamek 1992:36-37)

Figure 4-2. A sermon as an act of communication (adapted from Adamek 1992:34)

Figure 6-1. The megablend THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A JOURNEY in PPS

Figure 6-2. The megablend THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A RACE in PPS

Figure 6-3. The metaphonymies A CHRISTIAN’S SOUL / HEART / MIND ARE BATTLEFIELDS in the model of WAR in PPS

Figure 6-4. The megablend THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS WAR in PPS

Figure 6-5. The metaphonymies A CHRISTIAN’S SOUL / HEART / BODY ARE COMMODITIES in the model of A BUSINESS TRANSACTION in PPS

Figure 6-6. The metaphonymy CHRIST’S BLOOD IS MONEY in the model of A BUSINESS TRANSACTION in PPS

Figure 6-7. The metaphonymies SIN IS A CUSTOMER and THE WORLD IS A CUSTOMER in the model of A BUSINESS TRANSACTION in PPS

Figure 6-8. The megablend THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A BUSINESS TRANSACTION in PPS

Figure 6-9. The megablend THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A TRIAL in PPS

Figure 6-10. The megablend THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS WORK in PPS

Figure 6-11. The megablend THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A SCHOOL in PPS

Figure 6-12. The metaphonymy A YOKE FOR ENSLAVEMENT OF CHRISTIANS in the model THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS SERVING GOD in PPS

Figure 6-13. The metaphonymy SIN IS A MASTER in the model THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS SERVING GOD in PPS

Figure 6-14. The blend for the model THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS SERVING GOD in PPS

Figure 6-15. The metaphonymies WRATH IS THE FATHER OF SINNERS and HELL IS THE FATHER OF SINNERS in the FAMILY model in PPS

Figure 6-16. The megablend THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS FAMILY LIFE in PPS

Figure 7-1. The metaphonymy CHRIST IS A LAMB in the model of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE based on the metaphor of A SHEEPFOLD in PPS

Figure 7-2. The metaphonymy SATAN IS A SERPENT and SIN IS A SERPENT in PPS

Figure 7-3. The metaphonymy SIN IS A WORM in PPS

Figure 7-4. The metaphonymy TEMPTATIONS ARE BEASTS in PPS

Figure 7-5. The metaphonymies THE SOUL / THE MIND ARE PLANTS in the model of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE based on the metaphor CHRIST IS A PLANT in PPS

Figure 7-6. The metaphonymies: A CHRISTIAN'S SOUL / CONSCIENCE / BODY / HEART ARE GOD'S DWELLING PLACES in PPS

Figure 7-7. The blend A CHRISTIAN IS GOD'S DWELLING PLACE in PPS

Figure 7-8. The megablend THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A GIFT in PPS

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1. The Fundamental Axiological Matrix (adapted from Krzeszowski 1997:134)

Table 2-2. The hierarchy of values according to the Great Chain of Being (adapted from Krzeszowski 1997:74)

Table 6-1. The lexical correlates illustrating PROGRESS and LACK OF PROGRESS in the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema in PPS

Table 6-2. The lexical correlates of the conceptual model THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A JOURNEY in PPS

Table 6-3. The lexical correlates of the conceptual model THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A RACE in PPS

Table 6-4. The verbal correlates of the metaphor LIFE IS STRUGGLE in PPS

Table 6-5. The lexical correlates of the concept of OFFENCE in PPS

Table 6-6. The lexical correlates of the concept of DEFENCE in PPS

Table 6-7. The lexical correlates of the conceptual model THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS WAR in PPS

Table 6-8. THE MORAL ACCOUNTING metaphor (adapted from Johnson 1993:45)

Table 6-9. The lexical correlates of the conceptual model THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A BUSINESS TRANSACTION in PPS

Table 6-10. The lexical correlates of the conceptual model THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A TRIAL in PPS

Table 6-11. The lexical correlates of the conceptual model THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS WORK in PPS

Table 6-12. The lexical correlates of the conceptual model THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A SCHOOL in PPS

Table 6-13. THE DUTIES of A CHRISTIAN towards GOD in PPS

Table 6-14. THE DUTIES of A CHRISTIAN towards other people in PPS

Table 6-15. The lexical correlates of the conceptual model THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS SERVING GOD in PPS

Table 6-16. The lexical correlates of the conceptual model THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS FAMILY LIFE in PPS

Table 7-1. The lexical correlates of the conceptual models of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE based on animalisations in PPS

Table 7-2. The lexical correlates of the conceptual models of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE based on vegetalisations in PPS

Table 7-3. The lexical correlates of the conceptual model of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE based on the metaphor A CHRISTIAN IS GOD'S DWELLING PLACE in PPS

Table 7-4. The lexical correlates of the conceptual model THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A GIFT in PPS

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Marcin Kuczok

INTRODUCTION

“Linguistica ancilla theologiae”
(Lieven Boeve)

In Acts 4:20, Apostles Peter and John say: “We cannot stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard”. These words imply that the religious experiences of God, the divine inspiration, conversion, and faith can be so intense and powerful that a human being will inexhaustibly search for the right means to describe the transcendental experiences even though no linguistic means will ever satisfactorily render the depth of those experiences. For those reasons people have always employed special forms of expression to refer to the religious sphere of life: simile, metaphor, symbol, analogy, poetry and art (Termińska 1991:132).

The present study aims at analysing the mechanisms of the conceptualisation of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE in Newman’s *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (hereafter abbreviated as PPS). The meaning of the concept of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE has not been analysed from the linguistic perspective yet. The available materials (e.g. Liégé 1961; CCC 1993; Hütter 2007) treat the Christian life as a reality that has a concrete existential dimension, not as a linguistic problem. The concept of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE belongs to religious language, which aims at describing a reality that, by its very nature, is indescribable. For those reasons, in the views of some philosophers, religious language is semantically empty, meaningless and nonsensical as it is impossible to verify empirically such statements as *God exists* or *God does not exist* (Ayer 1990:125-126). However, in line with the assumptions of cognitive linguistics, in this book it will be claimed that conceptualisation of religious reality is possible through the process of embodiment in abstract thought, by way of conceptual metaphor or metonymy, as well as thanks to conceptual blending. All these phenomena pertain to the subconscious sphere of the mind, and are not to be confused with imagery, metaphors, similes and other stylistic tropes deliberately employed in literature for rhetoric purposes. It is also necessary to emphasise that the subject of the book is not the Christian life as such, which is studied in such fields of research as theology or philosophy, but the concept of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, that is, the conceptual mechanisms underlying the language used to describe

the experience of the Christian life. It should be also added that whenever concepts are discussed in the text, they are printed in capital letters.

John Henry Newman (1801-1890) belonged to the most outstanding figures of Victorian England. In the Anglican period of his life, Newman became a famous philosopher and theologian, a leader of the Oxford Movement, as well as a devout preacher and vicar. In 1845 he joined the Roman Catholic Church, and continued his philosophical and pastoral work as a Catholic priest of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, receiving a cardinal's dignity in 1879. In 2010 Pope Benedict XVI beatified Newman during his visit to the United Kingdom. PPS were preached in the years 1825-1843 during Sunday services in Oxford, and published in eight volumes in the years 1834-1843. For a linguist conducting research in religious discourse, the eight volumes constitute a perfect corpus of modern-English religious language, a set of 191 outstanding sermons produced by a renowned theologian and gathered together. It should be added that the linguistic genre of sermon focuses on the Christian life: sermons aim at explaining the intricacies of the Christian life to the faithful. This seems especially important provided that the scholars who specialise in Newman focus on his thought and its implications rather than on the means he utilises for describing the complex reality of religion. Apart from that, there exists no comprehensive study of the concept of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE in Newman's PPS.

Researchers studying the process of conceptualisation adapt either the semasiological direction or the onomasiological direction of analysis (Kominek 2009:64-69; Geeraerts 2010:264). In the former approach, the studies usually begin with language forms, that is, lexical elements, and aim at finding meanings or concept related to them. In the latter approach, the aim of the analysis is to find out how a given concept is expressed in language. Consequently, in the study of metaphor, the semasiological approach is based on the source domains of various metaphorical concepts as the starting point for the research. A good example is the study of the target domains of LIGHT and DARKNESS, presented by Libura (1995). In the onomasiological approach to metaphor, it is the abstract target domain that is the starting point: the research aims at answering the questions: *What kind of source domains for metaphorical mappings to the target domain exist in the analysed discourse or corpus?* and *Is it possible to find any coherence between the identified metaphorical mappings?* (Kominek 2009:67). For instance, Jäkel (2003) has analysed the metaphorical models in the domains of MENTAL ACTIVITY, ECONOMY and SCIENCE. The present study adapts the onomasiological direction of analysis, aiming at reconstructing the metaphorical structure

of the concept of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

According to linguistic semantics, in the process of lexicalisation concepts are encoded in the words of language. There exists ample evidence that languages differ in the ways they express concepts: although the focus of linguistic analysis is the system of knowledge that enables people to speak and understand a language, there exist lexicalisation differences that reveal how linguistic systems express meaning (Geeraerts 2010:237-239; cf. O'Grady 1997:279-282). Thus, the study of the mechanisms of conceptualisation of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE will aim at identifying the lexical correlates that encode the meaning of the concept by means of the metaphorical or metonymic mechanisms of meaning extension, and how those lexical correlates can be interpreted with regard to the experiential and theological perspectives on the Christian life. The character of the study will be qualitative rather than quantitative, aiming at presenting the scope of the metaphorical models underlying conceptualisation of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE in PPS.

The study assumes the following hypotheses about the nature of religious language:

(1) The conceptualisation of **transcendental reality** is possible thanks to the cognitive mechanisms of **meaning extension**, such as conceptual metaphor or metonymy.

(2) The cognitive mechanisms of meaning extension in religious discourse are **subconscious and natural** in humans.

(3) The mechanisms of conceptualisation in English religious discourse are motivated by **both sensorimotor and cultural experiences**. Also, **the axiological charges connected with both types of experiences are reflected in the valuation of religious discourse**.

(4) The English language of religious experiences constitutes **only a reflection** of the conceptual processes in human minds.

(5) The English religious language makes use of exactly **the same conceptual mechanisms as everyday conventional language**.

(6) The conceptual structure of religious language is **logical and coherent**, organised in **systematic models** which function as tools for interpreting religious experiences.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part contains theoretical preliminaries, while the second part includes the cognitive-linguistic analysis of the concept of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE in PPS. Part I contains four chapters, and Part II contains three chapters. Chapter One analyses the notion of conceptualisation in cognitive linguistics. Then, Chapter Two

is devoted to the problems of axiology in language, especially from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. Chapter Three focuses on religious language, pointing to its specific character. Chapter Four discusses the characteristics of the linguistic genre of sermon, and presents the person of John Henry Newman, as well as his PPS. Chapter Five, which opens Part II of the book, is an analysis of the concept of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE from a linguistic perspective and from a theological perspective. Next, Chapter Six is devoted to the metaphorical models of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE based on structural metaphors. Finally, Chapter Seven provides an analysis of the metaphorical models of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE based on ontological metaphors.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AHD *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.*
CCC *The Catechism of the Catholic Church.*
MED *The Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners.*
OALD *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English.*
PPS *Parochial and Plain Sermons.*
PPS 1 *Parochial and Plain Sermons.* Volume 1.
PPS 2 *Parochial and Plain Sermons.* Volume 2.
PPS 3 *Parochial and Plain Sermons.* Volume 3.
PPS 4 *Parochial and Plain Sermons.* Volume 4.
PPS 5 *Parochial and Plain Sermons.* Volume 5.
PPS 6 *Parochial and Plain Sermons.* Volume 6.
PPS 7 *Parochial and Plain Sermons.* Volume 7.
PPS 8 *Parochial and Plain Sermons.* Volume 8.

PART I:

THEORETICAL PRELIMINARIES

CHAPTER ONE

CONCEPTUALISATION IN COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

Cognitive semantics as an interdisciplinary branch of study involves such fields of knowledge as philosophy, psychology, and neurology along with linguistics. Thus, human language and its various phenomena are viewed not as autonomous instances, but as an integral part of culture, dependent on people's interactions with the world, the processes of thinking, understanding reality and reacting towards it.

The first part of this chapter focuses on the notion of conceptualisation, which pertains to the basic issues in cognitive linguistics. The second part presents the theory of the linguistic picture of the world, which oscillates around the question of reconstructing the conceptual processes found in language. The third part concentrates on the problem of meaning extension through metaphor, metonymy and metaphtonymy. After that, the focus goes to the theory of conceptual blending, which accounts for the integration of conceptual mechanisms.

1.1 The notion of conceptualisation

The notion of conceptualisation pertains to central terms in cognitive linguistics. According to Langacker (1990:2; 1997:229), it can be defined as “the locus of meaning” or even equated with meaning in lexical semantics, which should describe abstract entities like thoughts and concepts through structural analysis. The author explains the term in the following way (1990:2):

“The term conceptualization is interpreted quite broadly: it encompasses novel conceptions as well as fixed concepts; sensory, kinesthetic, and emotive experience; recognition of the immediate context (social, physical, and linguistic); and so on.”

Even more, it can be said that conceptualisation adjusted to the specifications of linguistic conventions constitutes semantic structure (Langacker 1987:99).

Conceptualisation resides in cognitive processes, which need to be analysed. The following parts concentrate on such cognitive processes as categorisation of experiences, classification of categories, as well as profiling and imagery in semantic structure, all of which are of vital importance to the issue of conceptualisation.

1.1.1 Experience and categorisation

In the framework of cognitive linguistics, lexical units, such as words or phrases, are not defined on the basis of the objective external reality, but in relation to human “experiential gestalt”. Cognitive processes mediate between the experiences of the world and their linguistic forms in the lexicon and grammar of a language. Generally, it can be said that human mind works in the following order, called the rule of Cognitive Commitment (Lakoff 1990:40):

- (1) perception
- (2) conceptualisation
- (3) linguistic expressions

People’s perception, that is, the world of experiences, can only be interpreted by means of “categories”. A “category” can be defined in the following way (Radden, Dirven 2007:3):

“(...) the conceptualisation of a collection of similar experiences that are meaningful and relevant to us, i.e. categories are formed for things that “matter” in a community.”

Categories are established in the process of “categorisation”, which means drawing conceptual boundaries and giving structure to the world without structure. According to Taylor (1995:50), categorisation allows people to reduce the infinite variation in the world to manageable portions. The process is said to be mostly unconscious, as the human mind automatically categorises people, animals, both natural and man-made objects, as well as events, emotions, actions, spatial or social relationships, abstract entities, such as illnesses or governments, elements of scientific theories, for instance, electrons, and elements of folk theories, like colds. In fact, it is impossible to provide an accurate description of all categories, both concrete and abstract (Lakoff 1987:6).

However, it must be noted that linguistic expressions are often associated with more than one concept, and because of that they can be vague or fuzzy. For instance, when referring to the weather phenomenon of fog, the English language has three possible lexical items, used according to the degree of experienced visibility: *fog*, *mist* and *haze*, while German has only two categories: *Nebel* and *Dunst*. The differences can be explained by the different climates in Britain and in Germany. Thus, it can be said that language imposes a kind of conceptual grid on people's experiences (Radden, Dirven 2007:5-6).

Within categories it is possible to distinguish between various members. Some of them are considered to be better examples of the given category, while others are perceived as less typical. The most typical item is called the "prototype", while the least typical members are called "peripheral members" of the category (ibid.:7). Certain philosophical backgrounds for the idea of prototypes can be traced back to Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1978), where the author argued that language in everyday use is like a game and there are various kinds of language-games in everyday communication, connected with one another by family resemblance without sharp boundaries between them. However, the Prototype Theory accepted in cognitive semantics has been based on the research conducted in the field of psychology by Rosch (1978), and developed especially by Lakoff (1987). One of the most important claims here is that unlike scientific categorisation, which is based on definitions, natural categorisation is based on our experience of the world. Moreover, Lakoff (1987:68) has claimed that everyday experience allows people to form the so-called "Idealised Cognitive Models" (ICMs), which show the properties characterising a given concept and referring to an appropriate linguistic form. If a given object has all the properties specified by a given Idealised Cognitive Model, it is the prototypical model of that Idealised Cognitive Model.

For instance, in the category "car", for most people a saloon car is the best type, thus it constitutes the prototypical member of the category, while a jeep can be considered less prototypical, and a lorry peripheral, as illustrated in Figure 1-1 below.

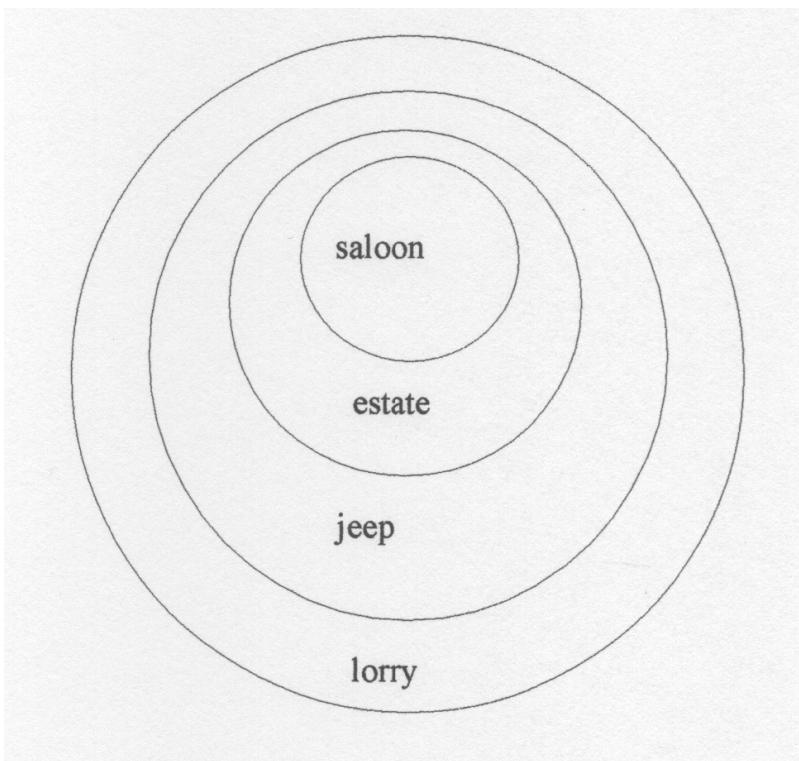


Figure 1-1. The category “car” (adapted from Radden, Dirven 2007:7)

1.1.2 Classification of categories

In human minds, categories are grouped into larger sets, such as “taxonomies”, “partonomies”, as well as “frames” and “domains” (Radden, Dirven 2007:8-11). “Taxonomies” organise categories in hierarchies. The types of categories that come to mind readily in everyday interaction with the world belong to the “basic level” of the hierarchy: they are simple in forms, used frequently, and evoke rich images. The “basic-level terms” are members of higher or superordinate categories, called “hyperonyms”, while the lower categories or kinds of the basic-level terms are called subordinates or “hyponyms”. For instance, the word *car* constitutes the basic-level term in the taxonomy of the hyperonym *means of transport* with hyponyms such as *sports car*, *saloon* or *jeep*. Partonyms or meronyms can be described as part-whole relations. For example, within the category *car* it is possible to distinguish such partonyms as

wheels, engine, body, interior and others.

The notion of “frames” comes from Fillmore’s study (1982). “Frames” can be defined as coherent packages of knowledge that surround a category and are activated by the use of words, for instance, when using the expressions: *to start the car* or *to wash the car*, our knowledge of the conceptual frame “car” allows us to understand them properly as *to start the engine of the car* and *to wash the body of the car*, respectively. Furthermore, the parts of the whole that are directly involved in a given situation when speaking of the whole are referred to as “active zones”. In the above examples, with the frame “car”, the active zones are *the engine* and *the body* (Radden, Dirven 2007:9-11).

Cognitive “domains” can be defined as integrated pieces of knowledge necessary for an understanding of a given concept (Langacker 1988:53), and they constitute the most general means of structuring people’s mental experiences. It is possible to distinguish “basic conceptual domains”, for instance, the domain of COLOUR, TASTE or SMELL, and “abstract domains”, for example, LOVE or RELIGION. Although the number of cognitive domains is infinite, it is possible to state that they are hierarchically ordered in our mind: one domain can structure another because it is impossible to understand concepts in isolation from broader concepts. For example, in order to understand the concept of A JOURNEY, one needs to have an awareness of THE FLOW OF TIME, of CAUSALITY, of MEANS OF TRANSPORT and other factors. Furthermore, the full set of domains required for the description of a predication, called its “matrix”, typically consists of more than one domain (Langacker 1987:147-150).

The prototype theory can be also extended to the description of “polysemy”. In the so-called “radial network”, the senses are related to the prototype and to one another by means of individual links. Then, it is possible to label the links with the kind of semantic relations underlying them, which involve both literal and figurative similarity, for instance, metaphor and metonymy (discussed in the following parts of this chapter) (Geeraerts 2010:192-195). Figure 1-2 below presents the radial network for the category “fruit”.

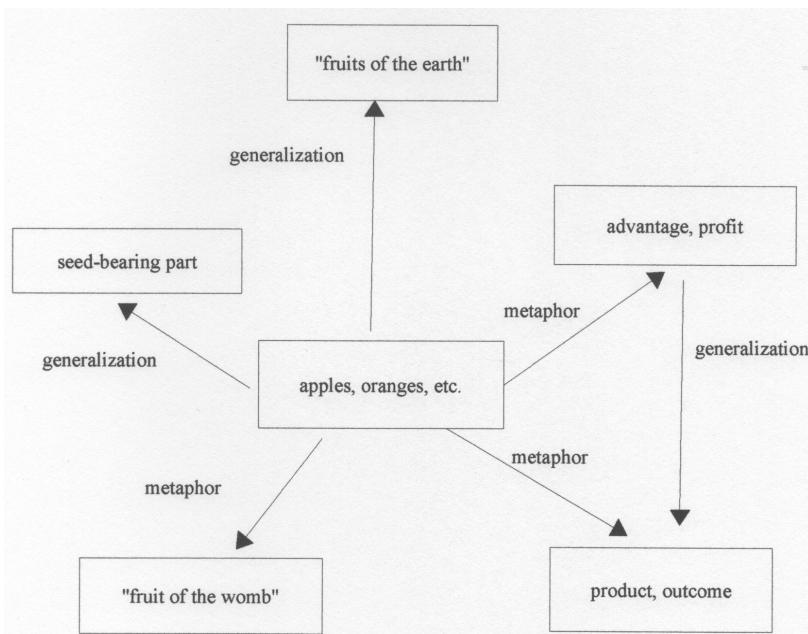


Figure 1-2. The radial network analysis of “fruit” (adapted from Geeraerts 2010:195)

1.1.3 Profiling and imagery

Langacker (1988:50) has claimed that “a semantic structure derives its value through the imposition of a ‘profile’ (designatum) on a ‘base’”. The “base” of a structure can be equated with the “matrix”, consisting of conceptual domains necessary for the understanding of a given structure. The “profile” is this part of the matrix which is in focus, that is, which is designated (ibid.:58-59). The profile-base arrangement reflects the figure-ground opposition, described in gestalt psychology, which has demonstrated that people automatically arrange the elements of a visual scene into a salient “figure” and non-salient background, called “ground”. For instance, when seeing a bird perching on the treetop, the bird becomes the figure, and the tree recedes into the ground. Similarly, when speaking about a Sunday, we profile this particular day to the base “week” (Radden, Dirven 2007:28-30).

Finally, semantic structures involve conventional “imagery”, which means that conceptualisers construe a situation in a particular fashion. By the term “imagery” Langacker (1988:63) means:

“our amazing mental ability to ‘structure’ or ‘construe’ a conceived situation in many alternate ways. (...) Because of imagery, two expressions that have the same content, or describe the same objective situation, may nevertheless have different meanings (...)”

Thus, it can be said that the two expressions describing the same situation represent two alternate scene construals. A “scene” in the context of conceptualisation denotes a particular arrangement of linguistic means that the conceptualiser has at his or her disposal. The sense of the verb “to construe” is to combine the understanding of the meaning with using a given grammatical structure (ibid.).

The list of the dimensions of imagery includes the following (Langacker 1987:110-137; Langacker 1988:64-90; Langacker 1990:6-12):

(1) **level of specificity**, which refers to the degree of precision or specification evoked by a given expression, for instance someone can be described as *tall*, *over 6' tall*, *about 6' 5" tall* or *precisely 6' 5" tall*;

(2) **background assumptions and expectations**, which include the base of a predication, against which a profile emerges and other phenomena, such as presuppositions or contrastive sentence stress, which may fall on different elements of the same sentence and draw a border between the profile and the base;

(3) **secondary activation**, which means activating “nodes” in the radial network of conceptual categories; while “primary activation” is connected to the concept named by the speaker, “secondary activation” refers to simultaneous activation of other nodes, which may contribute their nuances of meaning to the concept in use, for example, in the case of metaphors the secondary activation may involve the literal meaning of the metaphorical expression, which is also realised by the speaker;

(4) **scale and scope of predication**; the scale of predication can be compared to the scale of a map: the difference between an island and a continent can only be determined on the basis of the map scale; the scope of a predication is defined as the extent of its coverage in domains, although it is not always sharply indicated; a good example is the word *hand* whose scope can be the concept of AN ARM;

(5) **relative salience of predication**; this can be attributed firstly to the notion of profiling, discussed above; then, the distinction between the “trajector” being the primary mover in profiling, and the “landmark”, understood as any other participant in profiling, plays an important role here; lastly, the issue of the relative salience of predication is connected to the notion of “analysability”, which refers to recognising the semantic contribution of the component elements in an expression by the speaker;

(6) **perspective**, connected first of all with the notion of “orientation”, which reflects the canonical configurations of entities in space, for instance, a growing tree can be described as *tall*, while a cut down one as *long*; next, the idea of “vantage point”, that is, the perspective from which the speaker views a given configuration, can be observed in such choices as the use of the verbs *come* and *go* or adverbs *left* and *right* according to the conceptualiser’s point of view; then, perspective includes the notion of “directionality”, which reflects the speaker’s subjective direction of perceiving reality; finally, the term “subjectification” is used with reference to the relationship between the conceptualiser and the construed scene, meaning the degree of the subject’s involvement in the situation: in a subjective situation, the speaker is only an observer, and in an objective one the speaker is also the object of the process of conceptualisation.

A good example of how imagery influences the grammar of linguistic expressions has been presented by Cetnarowska (2012:201-202), who analyses verbo-nominal constructions with *give*, *have* and *take*, and shows that, for instance, in the sentence *He had a walk in the wood*, the process is construed as a whole, while in *He walked in the woods*, the construal involves a sequential scanning of the event. It can be also said that using a verb, for instance *to call* in *She called him* profiles an event, while using the noun *a call* in *She gave him a call* profiles a thing.

In the following part we will introduce the idea of the theory of the linguistic picture of the world, which assumes that by analysing the way we conceptualise reality it is possible to identify our knowledge and beliefs about the world.

1.2 The linguistic picture of the world

In the theory of the linguistic picture of the world, language includes an interpretation of reality, which can be expressed by means of a set of judgements about the world. The linguistic picture of the world is the effect of the process of conceptualisation entrenched in the system of language, that is, its grammar and lexicon (Grzegorczykowa 1999:41; Bartmiński 2006:7).

Moreover, according to Bartmiński (2006:12), the linguistic picture of the world can be reconstructed by analysing both the judgements based on the matter of language: grammar, vocabulary, phraseology, as well as the ones implied by linguistic forms at the level of knowledge and beliefs.

The origins of this theory can be traced back to the so-called Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, formulated on the basis of research by Sapir (1921)

and his student Whorf (1956). In fact, it can be said that the hypothesis combines the idea of linguistic relativity, whose main claim is that there exists no limit to the structural diversity of languages, explained by the cultural diversity in the world, with linguistic determinism, whose main thesis states that language determines thought. There exists a strong version of this hypothesis, which says that people are at the mercy of a particular language because it is impossible to see and hear and otherwise experience in terms of the categories encoded in language, and a weak version, according to which language only suggests and facilitates the understanding of the world (Lyons 1981:304; Bartmiński 2006:14).

Similarly, in the theory of the linguistic picture of the world, language depends on culture and is influenced by it. This interaction of culture and language is observed in such areas of language use as grammar, word formation, syntax, vocabulary, phraseology, text structure, as well as semantics and stylistics (Anusiewicz, Dąbrowska, Fleischer 2000:31). What is important, this approach aims not to isolate the various levels of language organisation: on the contrary, grammar should be analysed together with vocabulary and various uses of language. In fact, the notion of the linguistic picture of the world has become a tool for a holistic description of language in its cognitive and communicative aspects. Through the analysis of linguistic data, it is possible to understand and describe the ways of people's perception and conceptualisation of the world (Bartmiński 2006:13).

Maćkiewicz (1999:52) has argued that the linguistic picture of the world holds two functions: it interprets reality encountered by people and regulates human attitudes towards it. Thus, the view of the world is connected with two kinds of human activity: thinking and acting. It is thanks to the process of categorisation, which is responsible for organising and interpreting human experiences, that people can build their view of the world. Actually, its nature is originally conceptual, and only later can it be verbalised and expressed by means of language (*ibid.*:52-53).

Additionally, the notion of the linguistic picture of the world implies a certain subject of viewing: a kind of virtual language user, his or her point of view and perspective. The notion of the "point of view" involves the subjective and cultural aspects. The term "perspective" means a group of features of the semantic structure, which arise as a consequence of the point of view (Bartmiński 1999:103-106).