
**Building meaning through context:
A Cognitive Linguistic Analysis of John Henry Newman's
conception of university**

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the context-dependent emergence of meaning in the treatise-book *The Idea of a University* by John Henry Newman (1801-1890). The view of the old ideas on education, pronounced almost a hundred and seventy years ago by Newman, the Rector of the university in Dublin, has been treated as a voice in the educational debate on the future of the university in Europe, including Poland. In our search for the meaning of Newman's vision of university education, an interdisciplinary cognitive linguistics-based discourse model has been constructed, which combines Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) insights, given a particular focus on van Dijk's Sociocognitive Approach to Discourse, with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT) and its contextual extension, offered by Kövecses (2015, 2017a). As a consequence, our hybrid theoretical and methodological model, generated from van Dijk's idea of mental (context) models and Kövecses's contextual factors that prime metaphors, has enabled us, we believe, not only to reconstruct Newman's mental model but, most importantly, to learn about his very idea of a university. We have also proved that social context determined the meaning of the message enunciated by Newman in his educational discourse.

The thesis consisted of two main parts with two chapters in each. Part I set the theoretical framework of *Cognitive Linguistics*, giving emphasis on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980, 1999) and Kövecses's (2015, 2017a) *Conceptual Metaphor Theory* on the one hand (in Chapter 1), and on *sociocognitive approach* of the Critical Discourse Analysis, proposed by van Dijk (1998, 2014b, 2015a, 2017) on the other hand (in Chapter 2). Part II of the dissertation began with delineating the methodological tool with which the research of Newman's educational discourse was to be carried out. Hence, a hypothesis was put forward, namely, that the analysis of John Henry Newman's discourse would be best investigated by identifying three structures: (i) the *social structure* that signifies the superior power groups, institutions and symbolic elites,

with which the whole process of reproducing power began; (ii) a *communicative event* that was the discourse structure and all the communicative contextual factors of Newman's discourse on education around his Dublin years; and (iii) Newman's *personal and social cognition* that was shaped by the social groups in power throughout his entire life. We further assumed that Newman's educational discourse (i.e. the communicative event) would be structured by conceptual and linguistic metaphors, which, being *primed* by the social structure and cognition structure, would form the priming contextual factors and influence his mental model and vision of education. In this light, Chapter 3 of Part II was to outline the social structure and revealed how Newman's *personal and social cognition* was shaped. Consequently, it summarised the historical, social, religious and cultural context of John Henry Newman's life, in order to identify his life struggles against power groups and personal and mental development. Chapter 4 presented the detailed analysis of the *communicative event*, i.e. Newman's discourse on education, by using metaphorical conceptualisation. Thus, the desired objective of the research, namely, to reconstruct the context mental model of Newman and build the meaning of his vision of university education, which he used in his treatise-book *The Idea of a University* (1852-1858) nearly two centuries ago – has been obtained.

Accordingly, John Henry Newman was one of the 19th-century most important English-speaking writers, born in London, studied at Oxford's Trinity College. He, spent the first half of his life as an Anglican and the second half as a converted Roman Catholic. He became a priest, a Cardinal, a popular preacher, and eminent theologian. Importantly, in 1852 Newman was appointed a rector of the Catholic University of Ireland, known today as University College in Dublin. *The Idea of a University* is a series of lectures concerning the role and nature of education, which he was delivering as the rector between 1852 and 1858. On the ground of John Henry Newman's biographical facts and notes, we formulated a list of most influential power groups, institutions and symbolic elites of his times that constitute the *social structure*, and with which the whole process of reproducing power began. What is more, by tracing John Henry Newman's life, we have learnt not only about his major biographical events but have also identified the *social structure* which shaped his personality, mentality and faith, that is we delineated his *personal and social cognition*. The results obtained in the research on the Newmanian educational discourse that constitutes the *Communicative Event* reveal that there are three main networks of metaphorical entailments that structure Newman's meaning of the university ideal. These networks begin with the most generic conceptual metaphors, such as (1) LIFE IS A BUILDING, (2) IDEAS ARE LIVING ORGANISMS, and (3) LIFE IS A JOURNEY, all of which revolve around Newman's keystone metaphor **EDUCATION IS A FORMATIVE POWER**, triggered from his

metaphorical statement, viz. “[university education] is the action of a formative power” (Newman, 1852-1858: 134). By using metonymic relations +PART FOR WHOLE+, +WHOLE FOR PART+, and +THE PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION+ (Kövecses, 2010b: 172-173), Newman refers in his metaphors to *university* understood not only as a place in which the knowledge is instructed but also as university tutors, educators, and students as well as the process of learning. All these metaphors pertain to various spheres concerning human life, namely **the political and economic life: UNIVERSITY IS A NATION, EMPIRE; KNOWLEDGE IS POWER AND SOVEREIGNTY, WEALTH, FREEDOM, TERRITORY EXPANSION, TREASURE; the social sphere: UNIVERSITY IS A SHELTER, COMMUNITY; KNOWLEDGE IS A HABIT, POSSESSION, ENDOWMENT; the religious and philosophical aspects of human life: UNIVERSITY IS A PERSON; KNOWLEDGE IS TRUTH, GOOD, DIGNITY, ILLUMINATION, REWARD; EDUCATOR IS A PREACHER; and everyday life: UNIVERSITY IS A MOTHER, COMBINATION OF COLOURS KNOWLEDGE IS FOOD, HEALTH; LEARNING IS MOVEMENT, TRAVELLING; MIND IS A BOOKSTORE, ONE BODY EMBRACING BODILY ORGANS; LEARNERS IS TRAVEL COMPANIONS, PASSENGERS; and EDUCATOR / PREACHER IS A MARKSMAN.**

The *communicative event*, including the mental model of Newman and his meaning of a university that has been established on the ground of metaphors, is summarised in (i). Most importantly, the summary explicates to what extent these metaphors underlying Newman’s vision of university education have been primed by contextual factors, i.e. the *social structure* (with the powerful groups), the *personal and social cognition* (his personality, faith and mentality), and the *immediate local context*, that is the socio-cultural, religious and historical context of his period in Ireland.

(i) **The characteristics of the *communicative event*, with the mental model of Newman and his meaning of a university that has been established on the ground of metaphors, primed by contextual factors**

1. **UNIVERSITY IS A PLACE OF UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE** – university education is supposed to be as broad, universal, viz. “liberal” as possible, covering all branches of knowledge, including Science and Theology.

Priming factors: He knew well enough from his Oxford years and Noetics friends what threat “Liberalism” carried out, with its “free enquiry” and the anti-dogmatic principle (Fletcher, 1890/2016: 5). The establishment of the so-called “godless institution,” that is London University in 1827 by liberal Henry Peter Brougham (1778-1868), and the rejection of religious education by it was a fatal blow to the principles of English academic culture and education (Marchetto, 2008: LXXXIII-LXXXVII; Marchetto, 2015: 190). Apart from his English

experience, Newman had to face the danger of Liberalism when he arrived in Dublin. The “Queen’s Colleges” of Galway, Cork and Belfast, established by the British Parliament in 1845, represented by the so-called “godless colleges,” rejected faith and theology, while the “Holy and Undivided Trinity College” in Dublin, founded by the Queen Elizabeth I, was identified with the English Church and submitted the anti-Catholic prejudice and hatred, especially against the “snares of Papism” (McGrath, 1951: 3; Marchetto, 2015: 190-191). Yet, it was this group of liberal intellectualists who represented the superior power groups and symbolic elites, thus the *social structure* of that time, which reproduced their powerful influence once on young Henry, and later on the believers and students he was responsible for.

2. **REASON AND FAITH ARE VESSELS ON THE ROAD TO GOD; HUMAN CONSCIENCE (THE HUMAN EYE) IS THE ROAD TO TRUTH; TRUTH AS THE OBJECT AND GOAL OF UNIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE** – Newman’s ideal university is designed to strengthen, refine, and enrich the intellectual powers but without excluding Theology and religious education with values.

Priming factors: His voice as for the importance of faith and religious education is not a mere wish of a preacher – though he was an influential one – but a claim of an experienced educator and tutor, who knew how important religious education is to shape a perfect personality and mind.

3. **UNIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE IS FREEDOM, WEALTH AND TREASURE, POWER AND SOVEREIGNTY; KNOWLEDGE IS ACQUIRED ILLUMINATION, TERRITORY EXPANSION; LEARNING IS GAINING EXPERIENCE**

– Newmanian liberal education is meant to include Philosophy, and “the heart of his philosophy of education is simply the capacity to *think*” (Ker, 2011: 20). He stresses the ability and freedom of expressing one’s opinions make.

PHILOSOPHY AND RESEARCH ARE EMPIRE – these are the fundamental elements of university education. While the former science teaches students how to think and speculate, the latter broadens their horizons, inspires to inquire and discover the science.

Priming factors: Henry Newman, recognised as a diligent student of Oxford, ambitious and thought-provoking preacher both in the Anglican and Catholic Churches, knew the importance of a skilful and free opinion. Therefore, so frequently he was welcomed to present his lectures on the burning issues of the social, political and religious life, as was the case of the anti-Catholic Achilli, when Newman felt he ought to support the defence against the alleged guilt of the Catholic Church. Likewise, Newman defended his religious Catholic beliefs and other

believers against the authoritative discrimination of the state authorities. Then he wrote his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* as a reply to William Ewart Gladstone, the Prime Minister of England, who in 1874 promoted in his pamphlet the rejection of Catholics in England as loyal citizens, because of the definition of papal infallibility.

4. **KNOWLEDGE as the FINAL PRODUCT OF THE LEARNING PROCESS** – the individual and permanent “cultivation” of both the intellect and character, the mind and the virtue is performed by tutors and learners.

UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE IS A PLANT (/ THE WHEAT WEEDS FROM THE ERRORS); INTELLECTUAL EXCELLENCE IS THE OBJECT OF THE PLANT / KNOWLEDGE – The result received after the effort associated with learning and instructing pleases the person with its “intellectual excellence.”

Priming factors: If students’ knowledge is limited or narrowed, as Newman notices, it leads to biased and obstinate judgments (as he experienced it in his life, e.g. anti-Catholic prejudice of the authorities). That is why, Newman expects knowledge to be universal, so that the university curriculum would encourage learners and scholars to study in multiple fields and engage most challenging philosophical questions, social issues, and scientific problems.

5. **KNOWLEDGE IS GROWTH STIMULATOR; LEARNING IS MOVEMENT** – according to Newman, liberal education entails some dynamism in learning as “the locomotion, the movement onwards, of that mental centre” (Newman, 1852-1858: 134) of knowledge.

Priming factors: This corresponds with Newman’s personal principle of growth and change which was held throughout his entire life (Connolly, 2005: 16). He recognised his life as a journey towards the perfect shape of the humanity he was destined to reach.

6. **STUDENT’S MIND IN MOTION IS A TRAIN, VARIOUS METHODS OF STUDYING AND SUBJECTS ARE MEANS OF TRANSPORT; KNOWLEDGE IS FINAL DESTINATION OF A JOURNEY; LEARNERS AND TUTORS ARE TRAVEL COMPANIONS.**

Priming factors: Newman’s journey metaphors were primed by his personal memorable experience of travelling to Rome. To recall shortly, it was during this voyage back home, in the strait between Corsica and Sardinia, that Newman wrote in 1833 his most popular poem “Lead, Kindly Light” (published in 1884), which – being a prelude of his conversion – is a call for Divine help (to be given even ‘one step’) during his further journey of faith on ‘the narrow rugged path’.

7. **LEARNERS AND TUTORS ARE TRAVEL COMPANIONS; UNIVERSITY IS A MOTHER; UNIVERSITY IS ALMA MATER; KNOWLEDGE IS FOOD** – what makes Newman’s vision of university education distinctive is his focus on the person more than on the skills, university that contains the broad range of human knowledge, but reveals a general sense of anti-utilitarianism. If any peculiar science, research or teaching tactic is to neglect the prior duty of educators to “cultivate” students’ minds and character and care for them, then Newman criticises it.

Priming factors: Stigmatised with his long lasting experience of tutoring, Newman wants to treat students as travel companions, as family members, and as children of the mother-university, who are cared for and fed. It is worth mentioning that it was Edward Hawkins, the provost of Oriel College, who persecuted Newman for his views on the relation between tutor and pupils, which Newman summed up in the phrase, “I consider the college tutor to have a care of souls” (Fletcher, 1890/2016: 6). Thus, for Newman, tutors should be concerned with both the spiritual and the intellectual improvement of their students, while Hawkins regarded the office of tutor as a purely academic position (Connolly, 2005: 4).

8. **TRUTH IS THE OBJECT/GOAL OF KNOWLEDGE; KNOWLEDGE IS GOOD; UNIVERSITY IS THE COMBINATION OF COLOURS (ART WORKSHOP); KNOWLEDGE IS BEAUTY** – most of Newman’s concepts seem to pertain to values covering all domains of human life (‘political’ and ‘private’ ones). For Newman, the virtues, values, and all the universal knowledge obtained at the university are designed to protect, strengthen and “shelter the soul from the temptations of vice” (Newman, 1852-1858: 91) on the road to truth. Remarkably, Newman’s idea of truth is closely associated with goodness and beauty.

Priming factors: Being aware of the fact that secular institutions both in England and in Ireland were not open to any religious creed, were neither tutorial nor residential, but aimed at increasing the transmission of knowledge rather than the cultivation of mind, Newman’s vision of the university was a great opposition. His ideals were thoroughly engaged in promoting knowledge, prompting the cultivation of the moral virtue and religious minds of its students. In his vision of a university, all spheres of human life are involved into the university education, focused on the pursuit of truth and ‘supplying true principles’.

9. **KNOWLEDGE IS THE FINAL OBJECT AND FRUIT; KNOWLEDGE IS HABIT, DIGNITY, PERSONAL POSSESSION and INWARD ENDOWMENT** – Newman, who was formed by these social and personal contextual factors, emphasises in his vision of a university the idea of dignity, personal possession, treasure, and inner value.

Priming factors: Newman's life events stigmatised his personality, mentality, and faith. With his extremely eventful life, Newman obtained not only "the intellectual excellence," but also a perfect shape of his personality. In fact, the numerous misfortunes in his private life, such as the bankruptcy of his father, Newman's setback suffered when taking the final examinations for his undergraduate degree, his crisis of faith at Ealing, the death at the age of his favourite sister Mary, his serious illness with typhoid fever in Sicily in April 1833, the decades lasting broken relationships with his family members and friends due to his conversion), became the shaping factors of his mind, person and cognition. Additionally, his attitudes, perseverance, faithfulness and loyalty grew on the ground of so long experienced inequality, prejudice, suspicion, doubts, betrayal and even failure. The same case of inequality concerned the Catholic University established in Dublin and run by Newman, which from the beginning was, "a predestined failure, owing to its non-recognition by the state" (Lilly, 1885-1900: 346). Other obstacles that Newman had to face included the conflicts among the Irish bishops, problems with recruiting faculty, a lack of a suitable student body in Ireland, and Archbishop Cullen's interference in the affairs of the university (Connolly, 2005: 7). By challenging all these struggles and misfortunes, he developed his inner strength and courage. He learnt how to bear with dignity the betrayal and deceitful slanders from his friends, and stand for those persecuted and aggrieved with steadfast certainty.

This all characteristics, as listed in (i), constitutes the *communicative event*, i.e. John Henry Newman's discourse, whose meaning we have learnt by the analysis of Newman's underlying metaphors, which have been primed by contextual factors (the *social structure*, *personal and social cognition*, and the *immediate context of the communicative event*). As the results reveal, both the conceptual and linguistic metaphors that we generated from John Henry Newman's *The Idea of a University*, and the SCDS relationships between the discourse and its social conditions, ideologies and power-relations, contributed greatly to the reconstruction of Newman's context mental model and the meaning of university education. In addition, as assumed by us at the beginning of the thesis, there has proved to be a reciprocal influence between *personal and social cognition* and *social structure*, and between *communicative event* and *social structure*. In other words, not only power groups, institutions and symbolic elites, which represent the *discourse structure*, exerted their power-driven priming influence over Newman's discourse and personal and social cognition, but also the subjected structures seem to exert their impact on the powerful groups (e.g. Newman's vision and foreseeing views inspired his former friends, and the authorities, including Rome). Seen in this light, the discourse of education may be still recognised as a dominant instrument of social control with

its primary task to format human identity (Singh, 2014; Szkudlarek, 2011: 122; also Starego, 2017: 256).

To conclude, Newman deals with a number of stimulating statements, e.g. he launches an idea that the chief goal of a university is “intellectual, not moral” (“Preface”); that the influence of Church authority, yet given a primary significance, should not constrain university education (Discourse I). The university, in turn, should be established “on the grounds of human reason and human wisdom” (Discourse I). University education is expected to be as broad and liberal as possible, it should cover all branches of knowledge, including science and religion (Discourse II). Students’ knowledge, instead, may lead to biased and obstinate judgments if it is limited or narrowed (Discourse IV) (Hiner, 2015: online). With his university experience, both as a scholar and as rector, Newman’s old views on education, particularly his innovative approach to two fundamental issues in higher education seem to be still relevant today, namely, connecting knowledge rather than only accumulating information, and maintaining a harmonious relation between the secular and religious realms of education (cf. Magill, 1992: 452; cf. Cornwell, 2010). Let us give the final voice to Newman:

the University [...] has this object and this mission; it contemplates neither moral impression nor mechanical production; it professes to exercise the mind neither in art nor in duty; its function is intellectual culture; here it may leave its scholars, and it has done its work when it has done as much as this. It educates the intellect to reason well in all matters, to reach out towards truth, and to grasp it.

(Newman, 1852-1858: 125-126)

KEYWORDS:

John Henry Newman, conceptual metaphor, Critical Discourse Analysis, discourse, education

