CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS

In this study, I have primarily tried to integrate the studies in word-class flexibility of CC object words into a coherent system grounded in the theoretical substrate of cognitive linguistics, namely cognitive grammar and radical construction grammar. I had to deal with all important aspects of the linguistic phenomenon. In building the edifice of the system, or the interpretative net as I called it in the introduction, I was not able to avoid tackling issues of general theory of language, specifically the anatomy and ecology of adverbial modification in the cognitive and radically constructional perspective, and issues of theory of CC grammar in particular, specifically the semantic map of the language and the extremely complex problem of word classes and the mutual relationships between syntax and lexicon within it. Although these issues are not the main topic of the monograph, I still consider them to be overly important parts of it and I believe that the chapters contain reasonably well structured thoughts of sometimes relatively far-reaching general theoretical relevance. These parts are not just a methodological introduction, as I see it—I consider them an integral part of the core of my work. It has become evident that the concept of semantic map and a certain specific version of it can be instructively applied to CC; on the other hand the task of modifying and supplementing the present version based for a large part on morphology has emerged, since the situation of CC has revealed its weak points in this respect. Attempts at a full-fledged solution to it await theoreticians both of language in general and of CC in particular. Likewise, I have proposed a topography of the conceptual space, which is intended to also incorporate adverbial modification and adverbs and to enlarge the semantic map by another dimension. This has turned out to be useful for my purposes, and I think that the relationship of adverbial modification to other regions of the conceptual space has been relatively successfully captured, nonetheless, theoretical linguistics is not the field of my expertise and those who do work in this field, or more precisely in the framework of radical construction grammar and related branches, will have to assess whether my solution is plausible in more general terms.

It has become obvious that—as anticipated—the HY phenomenon must be analyzed against the background of an adequate theory of word classes, both in general and in particular for CC. In order to delineate linguistic processes of distinct kinds and to confine the so-called HY to its genuine
domain on the basis of these distinctions, one must pay attention to the difference between the occurrence of a lexeme in different propositional act functions, which essentially does not involve semantic-lexical derivation, as the constructional meaning is added to the lexical meaning of the respective word, and derivation basically internal to the semantic structure of the lexemes themselves, of which there are at least two kinds: systematic derivation resulting in systematic polysemy and unsystematic derivation resulting in unsystematic polysemy of a single lexeme or a nest of more or less independent lexemes related to each other genetically and semantically. The HY as understood here belongs to the last type of linguistic processes, though the boundaries between the types are not always clear-cut and sometimes overlap, the systematic derivation representing an intermediate region between the syntactic (propositional act functions) and lexical (word formation proper) poles. However, the various subtypes of HY differ in this respect too—while the N-V HY is characterized by the lexical type of semantic derivation, the adverbial use of object words is closer to the syntactical type of flexibility. Note that it is also in accordance with the organization of the conceptual space, where object words and action words are maximally opposed while object words and property/circumstance words are contiguos.

It has been shown that it is possible to unite many different observations regarding noun-verb transitions in CC as well as in other languages—morphologically poor and linguistically well-described English foremost of all—with some adjustments and modifications and that it is even viable to devise a cross-linguistically valid framework for description of denominal verbs and their formation. This naturally only concerns literature of similar theoretical orientation, characterized by essentially non-generative functional approaches with an emphasis on semantics and lexicology and by integrating language into a broader context of human cognitive abilities. A comparative study of derivation of action words from object words at all planes of language is a challenge worth considering. It would be groundless to repeat here all the conclusions to which I arrived throughout the study or all my approaches and the reasons for them. In very general terms, the so-called HY in the broad sense of the word basically represents a process functionally identical, or at least analogous, to word formation, namely derivation of novel “denominal verbs.” From this point of view, any object word can potentially occur in HY, although its semantic structure, conceived encyclopedically, heavily influences the probability of this happening and the regularity and predictability of the derivation. Other factors, however, are also involved, the most important of which is context. Both the conventional meaning and contextual information are centered on the crucial point—the mutual knowledge of the speakers participating in the communication and its conceptual organization. The interplay of various sources of information