Alexander Lasch

Das mutet besonders gegenwartsnah an (*That appears to be particularly topical*) – *anmuten* with a (deverbal) adjective as a non-agentive construction

This paper presents the system of non-agentive passive constructions in German as part of a usage-based construction grammar, providing an avenue for further discussion (following Lasch 2016). The constructions of ASCRIPTION (assigning properties), COMMUTATION (designating a change of state) and ACCEPTATION (acceptance) are presented in detail with regard to their inherent capacity to express different perspectives. The embedding of *anmuten* (appear) in the construction of ASCRIPTION serves as an example in a qualitative analysis, representing as it does an interesting special case concerning the relationship between cognitive and communicative perspectives. *Anmuten* can be embedded as a filler in both agentive (1) and non-agentive constructions (3) under various conditions. The transition between these extremely diverse variations from a cognitive perspective is marked in use by the realization of deictic personal pronouns from a communicative perspective (2) which identify a specific experiencer (namely the speaker him/herself) as the one who 'experiences' an *Anmutung* (impression). As *anmuten* (in contrast to *anfassen* (touch)) has no underlying concrete activity or deed in its 'dated poetic' meaning (1), and as the communicative perspective expressed by the personal pronoun corresponds to the cognitive perspective of the construction of ASCRIPTION, it is suited to stand for the non-factuality of a perceptive impression in the construction of ASCRIPTION, in a similar way to *wirken* (appear). In this case the realization of an experiencer in the form of a personal pronoun is no longer necessary as this is not licensed by the construction (3 and 4).

(1) BE // Walser, Martin, Ehen in Philippsburg, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1957, p. 204 // *Hans lernte diesen Mann in wenigen Sekunden kennen, als wäre er jahrelang mit ihm befreundet gewesen. Der war etwa gleich alt, vielleicht aus einem Dorf in der Nähe von Kümmertshausen,* **der Dialekt in dem einen Satz hatte ihn recht heimatlich angemutet**.

(2) *Der Dialekt in dem einen Satz* **hatte mich** *recht* **heimatlich angemutet**.

(3) *Der Dialekt in dem einen Satz* **hatte** *recht* **heimatlich angemutet**.

(4) *Der Dialekt in dem einen Satz* **hatte** *recht* **heimatlich gewirkt**.

In the modal relation between the meaning of the construction and the meaning of the verb in the construction of ASCRIPTION, as is the case with *anmuten* and a (deverbal) adjective (3), the following meaning can be assigned to the construction, namely 'a specified object (SOB) is allocated a property expressed by a qualitative (QUAL) whose *non-factuality* is marked by the speaker (*der Dialekt ist heimatlich*/*the dialect is homely* vs. *der Dialekt mutet heimatlich an*/*the dialect appears to be homely*)'. The data for the qualitative analysis presented in this paper, as in (1), were taken from the KERN-Korpus of the Digital Dictionary of the German Language („Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache", DWDS), complemented by the corpus of the weekly newspaper, „Die Zeit", which is part of the same project. These data reveal that even though (or maybe precisely because) the construction of ASCRIPTION with *anmuten* in the modal relation between the meaning of the construction and that of the verb has a low frequency and will presumably continue to be restricted to a very narrow field of realization, this special case can, firstly, be used to

demonstrate the limitations of closed categorizations on the one hand and, secondly, provides a plausible argument on the other that a usage-based description is what makes it possible to reveal transitions in categorization in the first place. Thirdly, the analysis clearly reveals that the *choice* of a construction as one variation alongside others cannot be explained exclusively from the construction itself on the level of a periphrase but needs to be embedded in a context and consequently requires the interpretation of findings based on construction grammar. A comparison with alternative realizations reveals specific contexts of use, including striking collocations which, in turn, facilitate the description of the meaning of the construction and the relationship between the meaning of the construction and that of the verb by being able to state, in the concrete case, in which ways *anmuten* permits the marking of non-factuality. Fourthly and finally, this paper points out that from the perspective of construction grammar, it would be untenable to reduce *scheinen*, *erscheinen*, *wirken*, *aussehen* and *anmuten* (all of which can be translated with *appear*/*seem* in English) to the mere status of 'auxiliaries', not only formally but also semantically. They all have their own meaning, which becomes relevant when updating the more abstract meaning of the hierarchically superior construction of ASCRIPTION in the modal relation between the meaning of the construction and that of the verb in relation to cognitive and communicative perspectives – otherwise alternatives would not take root and neither would they be selected in varying domains and contexts of use.

References

Lasch, Alexander (2016): Nonagentive Konstruktionen des Deutschen. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter. (= Sprache und Wissen 25).