



# *Plàcia a Déu* ‘May it Please God’: Constructions with the Verb *Plaure* ‘Please’ in Medieval Catalan

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Received: 21 June 2019 / Accepted: 11 May 2020 / Published online: 19 June 2020  
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## Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to discuss some uses of subjunctive constructions formed with the verb *plaure* ‘please’ in medieval Catalan. These constructions were used as permission requesting directives, and later, as indirect directives. In a group of the medieval Catalan occurrences the speaker applies for God’s or another divine persons’ consent. This paper demonstrates that the construction (*no*) *plàcia a Déu* ‘may it (not) please God’ became a conventionalized phrase with a special role in interpersonal interactions, arguing that it followed a specific path of semantic change and underwent subjectification. As to the methodology of diachronic speech act analysis, the aim of the present paper is to argue for a comparative stance and for a qualitative contextual analysis in order to identify illocutionary values of utterances surviving in written form. The findings show that, instead of analyzing only the speech act verbs themselves, it is important to take into account further factors as well, e.g. the social context of the interaction, encyclopedic information, the content and “weight” of the request, the cultural context of the period, and the structure of the interaction. Moreover, it is worth considering the whole semantic and functional field, investigating together constructions that are suitable to perform illocutionary acts belonging to the same type.

**Keywords** Diachronic speech act analysis · Historical pragmatics · Medieval Catalan · Subjectification

## Abbreviations

- 1 First person
- 2 Second person
- 3 Third person

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ACC	Accusative
AUX	Auxiliary
COND	Conditional
DAT	Dative
FUT	Future
IMP	Imperative
INF	Infinitive
PART	Participle
PL	Plural
PREP	Preposition
PST	Past
REFL	Reflexive
SBJV	Subjunctive
SG	Singular

## Introduction

The study presented in this paper addresses an issue of diachronic speech act analysis (see Arnovick 1999; Traugott and Dasher 2004 [2002]; Taavitsainen and Jucker 2007; Kohnen 2000, 2007; Jucker and Taavitsainen 2000, 2008). It aims to reveal some uses of medieval Catalan constructions based on subjunctive forms of the verb *plaure* ‘please’. These constructions were used to perform directives, in later occurrences in an indirect way (Nagy C. forthcoming). There is a number of occurrences, hitherto undiscussed, where by using the *plaure*-construction the speaker applies for God’s or another divine persons’ consent. The aim of the present paper is to demonstrate that the construction (*no*) *plàcia/plagués a Déu* ‘may/might it (not) please God’ became a conventionalized phrase with a special role in interpersonal interactions, followed a specific path of semantic change, and underwent subjectification. A further aim of this paper is to find effective ways to conduct historical pragmatic research on speech acts. Methodological issues discussed here primarily concern the identification of the illocutionary force of written utterances.

The structure of the paper is as follows. After presenting the data and methodology of the study in Sect. 2, Sect. 3 deals with Searle’s (1975) generalization about possible ways of performing indirect directives. In Sect. 4, after introducing some historical data, I discuss sporadic mentions provided in the previous literature concerning the use of *plaure* ‘please’ in medieval Catalan language. In Sect. 5 I turn to various uses of some medieval Catalan structures formed with the verb *plaure* ‘please’ (namely, *plaure* (subjunctive) + indirect object + *que* ‘may it please sb that’, and *plaure* (subjunctive) + indirect object + infinitive ‘may it please sb to do sth’), while Sect. 6 discusses theoretical considerations about the illocutionary force of these utterances. In Sect. 7 I argue that one of the uses of these constructions, namely, (*no*) *plàcia/plagués a Déu* ‘may

**Table 1** Medieval Catalan texts of the corpus

Jau	Desc	Munt	Per	Parl	EpC	Ger
13th c.	13th c.	14th c.	14th–15th c.	1355–1519	1478–1577	16th c.
Literary, chronicle	Literary, chronicle	Literary, chronicle	Literary, narrative	Non-literary, records of parliamentary speeches	Non-literary, letters	Non-literary, narrative

it (not) please God' underwent subjectification. Section 8 addresses methodological issues of diachronic speech act analysis, with special emphasis on the role of speech act verbs. Finally, Sect. 9 is dedicated to the discussion of findings and conclusions of the study.

## Data and Methodology

For the present study I used a corpus of medieval Catalan texts from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries (cf. Table 1, for more details see *Historical sources* at the end of this paper). My aim was to compile a historical corpus that contains a body of texts of different genres, covers a substantial period, and comprises a high enough number of occurrences to analyze the phenomenon under study.

Methodology of the present study was aimed at meeting the challenges of identifying and analyzing speech act types in a historical corpus (cf. Kohnen 2000, 2007; Jucker and Taavitsainen 2000). I primarily adopted the form-to-function perspective (cf. Jacobs and Jucker 1995), based on a search for subjunctive forms of the verb *plaure* 'please'. The occurrences were then qualitatively analyzed in their broad contexts (for a more detailed discussion of methodological issues, see Sect. 8).

## Theoretical Background: Possible Ways of Performing Indirect Directives

Research on directives has revealed various linguistic means of indirect and polite ways of communication. Searle (1975: 64) claimed that when we perform directives, we usually seek to find indirect means because of requirements of politeness. Concerning possible ways of performing directives in an indirect way, Searle (1975: 72) made the following generalization, on the basis of his observations about English language use:

S<sup>1</sup> can make an indirect directive by either stating that or asking whether there are good or overriding reasons for doing A, **except where the reason is that H wants or wishes, etc., to do A, in which case he can only ask** whether H wants, wishes, etc., to do A. (emphasis added)

However, Searle (1975: 72) later added that “[t]hese are generalizations and not rules”.

Some medieval Catalan constructions with imperative or subjunctive forms of the verbs *voler* ‘want’, *pensar* ‘think’ and *plaure* ‘please’,<sup>2</sup> and parallel constructions in medieval Spanish, were used to perform directives in an indirect way that is not included in Searle’s generalization and has not so far been discussed in the literature: the speaker does not ask, nor does s/he state that the hearer wants to perform a certain action, but s/he asks her/him to want to do the action wished for or to have the pleasure of doing it. In previous papers (Nagy C. 2011, forthcoming) I have discussed some of these ways of performing indirect directives, relying on a corpus of medieval Catalan and Spanish texts from the twelfth–sixteenth centuries. They are interesting from a theoretical point of view, because they call attention to the fact that the generalization above can be complemented.

In the next section I introduce some historical data regarding these specific uses and discuss previous findings on the use of *plaure* ‘please’ in medieval Catalan.

## Directives in Medieval Romance Languages and Use of the Catalan Verb *Plaure* ‘Please’

Consider the following two examples where the speaker performs a directive by appealing to the hearer’s willingness to do a certain action.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The abbreviation “S” refers to the speaker, “H” to the hearer, and “A” to the act in question.

<sup>2</sup> Consider that all these constructions have an imperative meaning. Imperative forms exist in Catalan and Spanish for second person singular and plural, for other persons the subjunctive present forms are used. For negative orders the subjunctive forms preceded by *no* are used for all persons.

<sup>3</sup> The abbreviations used in the glosses are given under *Abbreviations* at the beginning of this paper. The glosses are not intended to capture all morphological properties of Catalan and Spanish words but indicate the necessary ones for the present purposes.

<sup>4</sup> Some historical texts in my corpus have an English translation available, I partly used these to translate historical examples. Translations sometimes could seem strange, because they tried to preserve the archaic style of these medieval texts. Moreover, given that they are literary translations, sometimes I have had to modify the English version for the linguistic purposes of the present discussion. I have not adopted the translation entirely when it does not reflect the grammatical form of constructions examined in the present paper. In these cases I rather provide a literal translation for convenience. For bibliographic data of the translations, see *Historical sources* at the end of the paper.



The Catalan text fragment in (1a) from Muntaner's *Chronicle*, includes two constructions that refer to the hearer's wish in relation with a certain state of affairs: one with the verb *plaure* 'please', the other with *voler* 'want'.

The speakers direct a request to the king; they ask for permission to embark on the journey, using the verbs *plaure* 'please' and *voler* 'want'. The constructions with these verbs occur together in subordination, however, they could also be used separately to perform directives.

The Spanish text fragment in (1b), from the famous medieval epic poem written in the Castilian language, *Cantar de mio Cid*, includes a directive performed in a similar way. The speaker would like the hearer to carry out an action, which is described in an infinitive, while the imperative formally belongs to the verb *pensar* 'think'. However, the speaker probably aims to get the hearer to actually do the action and not only to think about it. Imperative forms of the verbs meaning 'think' and 'want' were used to perform indirect directives in a similar fashion in both medieval Catalan and Spanish, specifically, the verb *querer* 'want' in medieval Spanish had uses similar to (1a), while the medieval Catalan verb *pensar* 'think' had uses similar to (1b). The verbs 'want', 'think' and 'please' are worth considering together, because they all are linguistic means appropriate to perform directives in medieval Catalan. In the present paper I concentrate on the medieval Catalan constructions involving the verb *plaure* 'please' (cf. 1(a)).

Previous literature does not mention the Catalan construction involving the subjunctive forms of the verb *plaure* 'please'. Although this Catalan verb already was in use at the end of the sixteenth century, by the end of the nineteenth century it was displaced by the verb *agradar* 'please' (Alturo and Chodorowska-Pilch 2009: 24). However, it has survived in modern Catalan in some stereotyped expressions, for instance, in *si a Déu plau* 'if God pleases', and *si us plau, sisplau* 'please'. The grammaticalization of this latter expression is directly related to the issue discussed in this paper. *Sisplau* 'please' originates from a conditional construction (*si* + indirect object + *plau* 'if it pleases sb'), but later adopts a discourse function. This process has been investigated by Alturo and Chodorowska-Pilch (2009). The authors mention similar semantic change processes in other languages as well, such as the English *please* < *if you please*, the French *s'il vous plaît* or *s'il te plaît*, and the Occitan *si a vos platz*. They relate the beginnings of this grammaticalization process<sup>5</sup> to contexts where the speaker performs a directive speech act. By using this conditional clause making reference to the hearer's willingness, the speaker politely admits that the hearer has the right not to take into account the speaker's wish. The original conditional construction changed into a stereotyped politeness formula, which is still used in current Catalan (*sisplau* 'please'). In contrast, Alturo and Chodorowska-Pilch (2009) do not deal with the cognate form, which is the topic of the present paper: when the speaker uses subjunctive forms of the verb *plaure* 'please', asking the addressee to have the pleasure of doing a certain action. In a previous study (Nagy C. forthcoming) I have already discussed some uses of this

<sup>5</sup> The authors consider that this is a grammaticalization process from a conditional construction into a discourse marker, arguing convincingly that it involves both formal as well as functional changes typical of grammaticalization.

medieval Catalan construction. Therefore, in the next section I just summarize these briefly, whereas I will consider other uses in more detail.

## Medieval Catalan Constructions with Subjunctive Forms of the Verb *Plaure* 'Please'

In a previous paper (Nagy C. forthcoming) I have discussed occurrences of constructions with *plaure* in a corpus of medieval Catalan texts from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries and classified them into two main groups: in 44 examples the speaker(s) aim(s) to win the approval of God, Jesus Christ, or the Virgin Mary, while in further 58 that of another person. The reason for dividing the occurrences according to these context types lies in the fact that, according to the findings of my historical study, illocutionary forces of the speech acts performed by these utterances can be different, and they underwent different paths of semantic change. The present study aims to emphasize the role of constructions in semantic change: the same lexeme can follow different paths of semantic change in different constructions (for the role of constructions in grammaticalization, see Traugott 2003).

Constructions<sup>6</sup> with the verb *plaure* 'please' making reference to the addressee's willingness occur often in the corpus studied when the speaker performs a directive speech act. From a grammatical point of view, the issue concerns two structures, although their meanings and functions seem to be the same: (i) the 3Sg subjunctive form of *plaure* (*plàcia*, *plagués*)<sup>7</sup> + indirect object (Experiencer) + *que* 'may it please sb that', (ii) the 3Sg subjunctive form of *plaure* (*plàcia*, *plagués*) + indirect object (Experiencer) + infinitive 'may it please sb to do sth'. The grammatical structure in (ii), that is, an infinitival clause can be used, when the person asked to be pleased (i.e. the experiencer) and the agent of the action requested coincide. The distribution of occurrences is shown in Table 2.

### Directive Speech Acts Performed by Using the *Plaure*-Construction

In a previous study (Nagy C. forthcoming), I have already discussed the speech acts performed by using a construction involving *plaure* 'please' with a human Experiencer, therefore, I mention them here only for the sake of a brief summary. Usually we find these occurrences in directive contexts when the addressee is a person at the top of the social hierarchy (in the corpus of the present study: the king, the pope, the Infante, etc.). Therefore, we can suppose that it was a very respectful

<sup>6</sup> Throughout the present paper I use the word *construction* in a pre-theoretical way. However, I aim to highlight that lexical items take new functions in constructions, i.e. in certain specific morphosyntactic and pragmatic contexts. Therefore, the present analysis is not at all incompatible with Construction Grammar approaches (e.g. in Traugott 2008; Hoffmann and Trousdale 2013). Constructions with *plaure* (i) and (ii) could be conceived of as micro-constructions pertaining to the same meso-construction, as defined in Traugott (2008: 236).

<sup>7</sup> *Plàcia* is present tense subjunctive, while *plagués* past tense subjunctive form of the verb *plaure*.

**Table 2** Distribution of occurrences of the subjunctive *plaire*-constructions in the historical texts (cf. Nagy C. forthcoming)

	Jau 13th c.	Desc 13th c.	Munt 14th c.	Per 14th–15th c.	Parl 1355–1519	EpC 1478–1577	Ger 16th c.	Total
<i>plàcia que</i>	3	3	35	1	8	4	2	56
<i>plagués que</i>	3	–	22	–	–	–	–	25
<i>plàcia (de) + infinitive</i>	–	–	–	–	9	9	–	18
<i>plagués (de) + infinitive</i>	–	–	–	–	1	2	–	3
	6	3	57	1	18	15	2	102

Nagy C. (forthcoming) and the present paper discuss the use of a different set of occurrences with *plaire* ‘please’ shown in this table

form. I have distinguished between two main functions and claimed that they developed one after the other:

- (i) **Type 1.** Permission requesting directives: the speaker wishes to do a certain action, but s/he needs permission from the addressee and asks for it. This use can be related to the fact that in the state of the language under study the verb *plaire* ‘please’ was also used to give permission, approval or consent in behabitive utterances (cf. Austin 1962: 78–85). Therefore, the permission requesting directives are not indirect speech acts: the speaker asks the hearer to perform the speech act of approval, that is, to say *em plau* ‘it pleases me’.
- (ii) **Type 2.** Indirect directives: occurrences found in contexts where the action wished for is the hearer’s action cannot be interpreted as permission requesting directives. We have to assume that these occurrences with *plaire* ‘please’ convey a different meaning in these contexts: the speaker aims to get the hearer to do the wished-for action, although the literal meaning only refers to be pleased. In this sense, this second type is an indirect directive.

In the following let us consider examples of both types.

### Permission Requesting Directives

Permission requesting directives are requests aimed at getting the addressee to permit that the speaker or a third party do a certain action. As an illustration, consider the following text fragment in (2). Muntaner relates in his *Chronicle* that King Charles decided to arrange a marriage between his son Philip and the Princess of Morea.



(2) <sup>8</sup>	<i>E</i>	<i>abans</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>enans</i>	<i>enaniàs,</i>	<i>ell</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>féu</i>
and	before	that	further	proceed.SUBV.3SG	he	REFL	made.3SG	
<i>venir</i>	<i>davant</i>	<i>son</i>	<i>fill,</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>dix-li</i>	<i>con</i>	<i>aquell</i>	
come.INF	in_front_of	his	son	and	said.3SG_him	that	that	
<i>matrimoni</i>	<i>havia</i>	<i>fermat,</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>ell</i>	<i>ho</i>	<i>volia.</i>		
marriage	AUX.PST.3SG	conclude.PART	if	he	it	wanted.3SG		
<i>Monsenyey</i>	<i>En</i>	<i>Felip</i>	<i>respòs-li</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>li</i>	<i>plàcia</i>	<i>molt,</i>	
monseigneur	En <sup>9</sup>	Felip	answered.3SG_him	that	him	pleased.3SG	much	
<i>ab</i>	<i>una</i>	<i>cosa:</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>plagués</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>ell</i>	<i>que li</i>	
with	a	thing	that	please.PST.SUBI.3SG	PREP	he	that him	
<i>donàs</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>do.</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>el</i>	<i>rei</i>	<i>Carles</i>	<i>dix-li</i>	<i>que</i>
give.PST.SUBI.3SG	a	favor	and	the	king	Carles	said.3SG_him	that
<i>demanàs</i>	<i>què</i>	<i>es</i>	<i>volgués</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>atorgat</i>	<i>li</i>		
ask.PST.SUBI.3SG	what	REFL	want.PST.SUBI.3SG	that	grant.PART	him		
<i>fòs.</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>sobre</i>	<i>açò</i>	<i>ell</i>	<i>li</i>	<i>besà</i>	<i>la</i>	
be.PST.SUBI.3SG	and	upon	that	he	him	kissed.3SG	the	
<i>mà,</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>dix-li: -</i>	<i>Senyor,</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>us</i>	
and	and	said.3SG_him	Lord	the	favor	that	you.DAT.PL	
<i>deman</i>	<i>és</i>	<i>aquest: (...</i>	<i>Per</i>	<i>què</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>prec,</i>	<i>pare</i>	
ask.1SG	is	this	for	what	you.DAT.PL	ask.1SG	father	
<i>senyor,</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>plàcia</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>haja</i>	<i>per</i>		
Lord	that	you.DAT.PL	please.SUBI.3SG	that	have.SUBI.3SG	as		
<i>muller</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>germana</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>princesa,</i>	<i>ab</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>baronia</i>
wife	the	sister	of	the	princess	with	the	barony
<i>de</i>	<i>Matagrifó,</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>abdues</i>	<i>germanes</i>	<i>sien</i>	<i>núvies</i>	<i>a</i>
of	Matagrifó	and	that	both	sisters	be.SUBI.3PL	brides	PREP

<i>una</i>	<i>missa</i>	<i>aquell</i>	<i>dia</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>rei</i>	<i>Carles</i>	<i>molt</i>	<i>alegre</i> ,
one	mess	that	day	and	the	king	Charles	very	happy
<i>atorgà-li-ho</i> ;	(Munt II 153–154)								
granted.3sg_him_it									

‘But before they proceeded further, he summoned his son to his presence and told him that he had agreed to this marriage, **if he wished it**. And monsenyer En Philip answered that **it pleased him well**, on one condition: that **may it please him that** he grant him a favor. And King Charles told him to ask for what **he wanted that** it would be granted to him. And upon this he kissed his hand and said: “Lord, what I ask of you is this: [...] Wherefore I pray you, Father and Lord, that **may it please you** that he take to wife the sister of the Princess, with the barony of Matagrifon, and that the two sisters be brides at the same mass on that day.” And King Charles, very happy, granted him this.’

<sup>8</sup>A short fragment of this example has already been discussed in Nagy C. (forthcoming). However, the present example (2) contains more occurrences of the verb *plaire*, followed by a more thorough analysis

<sup>9</sup>*En* was prefixed to the proper names of nobles in Catalan, it is equivalent to *Don* in Spanish

From the fragment in (2) we get to know that the king asks for his son's consent to the marriage, using the expression *si ell ho volia* 'if he wished it'. Another matter is whether the son has an effective decision making right, anyway, he has to formally consent to the marriage. Consider that the Infante Philip performs this approval with the verb *plaure* (*li plaïa molt* 'it pleased him well', i.e. he agreed). This occurrence shows that the verb *plaure* was conventionally used to express approval in the language use of the period (see Nagy C. forthcoming).<sup>10</sup> Philip, King Charles's son agrees to marry the Princess, but on one stipulation. The occurrence of the verb *plaure* here (*que plagués a ell que li donàs un do* 'may it please him that he grant him a favor') is an indirect directive, belonging to Type 2 (see next Sect. 5.1.2). The condition Philip refers to is a request concerning a state of affairs, for which permission from his father is needed: namely, that his friend, the son of the count of Aria could take to wife the princess's sister, and both marriages would be celebrated together. This request belongs to Type 1: the Infante performs the permission requesting directive by using the construction with *plaure* 'please' (*us plàcia que* 'may it please you that'). Two speech act verbs appear in the fragment in a performative use: *prec* 'I ask/pray' and *us deman* 'I ask/request you'.

The addressee's approval as a prerequisite for a state of affairs or action can occur independently as a clause (the politeness expression *sisplau* 'please' grammaticalized from this usage, see above in Sect. 4). Among these occurrences we can find cases where the emphasis is transferred from the literal meaning of *plaure* 'please' to the action itself, as in the case of the example in (3):

(3)	<i>E</i>	<i>com</i>	<i>los</i>	<i>catalans</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>veeren</i>	<i>així</i>	<i>ordonats</i>	
	and	when	the	Catalans	REFL	saw.3PL	thus	settle.PART	
	<i>al</i>	<i>ducat</i>	<i>d'Atenes</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>senyors</i>	<i>d'aquell</i>	<i>país,</i>	<i>ells</i>	
	to_the	duchy	of_Athens	and	lords	of_that	country	they	
	<i>trameteren</i>	<i>llurs</i>	<i>missatges</i>	<i>en</i>	<i>Sicília</i>	<i>al</i>	<i>senyor</i>	<i>rei</i>	<i>de</i>
	sent.3PL	their	messengers	into	Sicily	to_the	lord	king	of
	<i>Sicília,</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>ell</i>	<i>plàia</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>sos fills</i>
	Sicily	that	if	PREP	he	pleased.3SG	one	of	his sons
	<i>trametre</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>ells,</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>ells</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>jurarien</i>	<i>per</i>	
	send.INF	PREP	they	that	they	him	take_oath.	as	
							COND.3PL		
	<i>senyor</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>li</i>	<i>lliurarien</i>	<i>totes</i>	<i>les</i>	<i>forces</i>	<i>que</i>	
	lord	and	him	deliver.	all	the	fortresses	that	
				COND.3PL					
	<i>tenien;</i>	(Munt II 125)							
	possessed.3PL								

'And when the Catalans saw themselves thus settled in the Duchy of Athens and lords of the country, they all sent their messengers to Sicily, to the Lord King, to say that, **if it pleased him to send** them one of his sons, they would take the oath to him as their lord and would deliver up to him all the fortresses they possessed.'

<sup>10</sup> Although the verb *plaure* appears in a descriptive use in this example, it could be used in a performative manner, too, as evidenced by some occurrences in the historical corpus (cf. examples provided in Nagy C. forthcoming).

Consider that in the above context the promise of taking the oath concerns the case of performing the action requested, and not that of being pleased. We could also translate it as ‘if he sent/agreed to send them one of his sons’.

### Indirect Directives: Request for the Addressee to do a Certain Action

Type 2 includes utterances in that the activity referred to is the hearer’s own action, so, by uttering them, the speaker does not ask for permission but rather tries to get the hearer to perform a certain action. In the text fragment above in (2), one of the occurrences of *plaure* functions exactly like this: the Infante Philip asks his father with the following words, *que plagués a ell que li donàs un do* ‘may it please him that he grant him a favor’. Also in the following example in (4), the action in question is the addressee’s own action.

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(4)	<i>Per</i>	<i>què,</i>	<i>pare</i>	<i>sant,</i>	<i>açò</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>demana</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>us</i>
	for	what	father	holy	that	YOU.DAT.PL	asks	and	YOU.DAT.PL
	<i>requer,</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>plàcia</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>ho</i>	
	requests	and	that	YOU.DAT.PL	please.SBJV.3SG	that	not	it	
	<i>tardets.</i>	(Munt I 88)							
	delay.SBJV.2PL								
	‘Wherefore, Holy Father, this he asks and requests of you, and that <b>may it please you that</b> you do not delay.’								

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In these utterances, it is reasonable to suppose that the speaker would like to get the hearer not only to be pleased, but also to perform the action in question (e.g. in 4, not to delay), in other words, they are indirect requests and we can assume that this indirectness is part of a politeness strategy. For more details on the use of these constructions, see Nagy C. (forthcoming). The following section deals with those occurrences in more detail where the experiencer of the verb *plaure* ‘please’ is God and that have not been discussed in Nagy C. (forthcoming).

### Speech acts with the *Plaure*-Construction Addressed to God

In some occurrences the Experiencer of the verb *plaure* ‘please’ is a divine person: the speaker aims to win the approval of God, Jesus Christ, or the Virgin Mary. These utterances may appear at first sight to be supplications to God. However, they are “public prayers”, which seem to fulfill a specific role in the verbal interaction between human participants, too. In order to analyze these occurrences we have to take into consideration the theocentric worldview of the Middle Ages, according to which God is the one who governs and controls the world. Only what He allows to happen will happen. This worldview manifests itself also in the language use and interpersonal verbal interactions of the period, not only in some linguistic forms, but also in the organization of interactions and argumentation. Reference to God’s will

is possible with constructions formed with the verbs *plaire* 'please' and *voler* 'want' as well. In my corpus many examples like this can be found, such as *plach a Déu/Déus volch* 'it pleased God/God wished it' or *no plach a Déu/no ho volch nostre Seyor* 'it did not please God/Our Lord did not wish it', and similar expressions that are conventionally used to express that a state of affairs or an event occurred or did not occur, respectively. The example in (5) shows an occurrence with the verb *plaire* 'please' and that one in (6) occurrences with the verb *voler* 'want':

(5)	<i>E</i>	<i>plac</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>nostre</i>	<i>Senyor</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>el</i>	<i>rei</i>	<i>Manré</i>	<i>hi</i>
	and	pleased.3SG	PREP	our	Lord	that	the	king	Manré	there
	<i>morí.</i>	(Munt I, 66)								
	died.3SG									
	'And it pleased Our Lord that King Manfred was there killed.'									

James I relates in his chronicle how he was conceived and born in the following way:

(6)	<i>E</i>	<i>aquela</i>	<i>nuyt</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>abdós</i>	<i>foren</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Miravals</i>	<i>volch</i>	
	and	that	night	that	both	were.3PL	PREP	Miravals	wanted.3SG	
	<i>nostre</i>	<i>Seyor</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>nós</i>	<i>fóssem</i>	<i>engenrats.</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>quan</i>	<i>la</i>	
	our	Lord	that	we	be.PST.SBJV.1PL	beget.PART	and	when	the	
	<i>reyna,</i>	<i>nostra</i>	<i>mare,</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>sentí</i>	<i>prenys,</i>	<i>entrà-se'n</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Montpesler.</i>	
	queen	our	mother	REFL	felt	pregnant	went_in.3SG	to	Montpellier	
	<i>E</i>	<i>aquí</i>	<i>volch</i>	<i>nostre</i>	<i>Seyor</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>fos</i>	<i>lo</i>		
	and	here	wanted.3SG	our	Lord	that	be.PST.SBJV.3SG	the		
	<i>nostre</i>	<i>naximent</i>	<i>en</i>	<i>casa</i>	<i>d'aquels</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>Tornamira,</i>	<i>la</i>		
	our	birth	in	house	of_those	of	Tornamira	the		
	<i>vespra</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>Nostra</i>	<i>Dona</i>	<i>Sancta</i>	<i>Maria</i>	<i>Candaler.</i>	(Jau 5,		
	night	of	our	Lady	Saint	Mary	Candlemas	7-11)		
	'And it was that night, when both were together at Miravals, that our Lord wanted me to be begotten. And when the Queen, my mother, perceived that she was with child, she and my father went to Montpellier. And it was here that our Lord wanted me to be born, in the house of the Tornamira, the eve of our Lady Saint Mary, Candlemas day.'									

Everything begins with God and ends with God. The last word in Muntaner's Chronicle is *Amen*, and it begins with these words:

(7)	<i>En</i>	<i>nom</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>Nostre</i>	<i>Senyor</i>	<i>ver</i>	<i>Déus</i>	<i>Jesucrist</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>la</i>
	in	name	of	our	Lord	true	God	Jesus_Christ	and	of	the
	<i>sua</i>	<i>beneita</i>	<i>mare,</i>	<i>madona</i>	<i>Santa</i>	<i>Maria,</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>tots</i>	<i>los</i>	<i>seus</i>
	his	blessed	mother	lady	Saint	Mary	and	of	all	the	his
	<i>beneïts</i>	<i>sants</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>santes,</i>	<i>amén.</i>	(Munt I 21)					
	bless.PART	saints	and	saint_women	Amen						
	'In the name of Our Lord the true God Jesus Christ, and His blessed Mother, Our Lady Saint Mary, and of all His blessed saints, Amen.'										

In the first chapter, Muntaner relates how he was inspired to write his chronicle: an apparition came to him and made him begin the book. One day an old notable came to him in a vision and said:

(8)	–	<i>Muntaner,</i>	<i>lleva</i>	<i>sus</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>pensa</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>fer</i>	<i>un</i>		
		Muntaner	get.IMP.2SG	up	and	think.IMP.2SG	PREP	do.INF	a		
		<i>llibre</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>les</i>	<i>grans</i>	<i>meravelles</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>has</i>	<i>vistes</i>	<i>que</i>	
		book	of	the	great	marvels	that	AUX.2SG	see.PART	that	
		<i>Déus</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>fetes</i>	<i>en</i>	<i>les</i>	<i>guerres</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>tu</i>		
		God	AUX.3SG	do.PART	in	the	wars	where	you		
		<i>és</i>	<i>estat,</i>	<i>com</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Déu</i>	<i>plau</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>per</i>	<i>tu</i>	
		AUX.2SG	be.PART	because	PREP	God	pleases	that	by	you	
		<i>sia</i>	<i>manifestat.</i>	(Munt I 22)							
		be.SBJV.3SG	manifest.PART								
		'– Muntaner, get up and <b>think of making a book</b> of the great marvels that thou hast seen, which God has worked in the wars in which thou hast been. For <b>it pleases God that</b> by thee he should be manifested.'									

In the example in (8) we can see another directive, this time performed with a construction involving the verb *pensar* 'think', but this fragment also exemplifies how God's will motivates the actions of humans. The old men enumerates four reasons, one of them being the following:

(9)	<i>La</i>	<i>terça</i>	<i>raó</i>	<i>és</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Déu</i>	<i>plau</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>tu</i>
	the	third	reason	is	that	PREP	God	pleases	that	you
	<i>recontes</i>	<i>aquestes</i>	<i>aventures</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>meravelles</i>	<i>con</i>				
	recount.SBJV.2SG	these	adventures	and	marvels	because				
	<i>altre</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>és viu</i>	<i>qui</i>	<i>ho</i>	<i>pogués</i>	<i>així</i>	<i>ab</i>	<i>veritat</i>	
	other	not	is alive	who	it	can.PST.SBJV.3SG	thus	with	truth	
	<i>dir.</i>	(Munt I 22)								
	tell.INF									
	'The third reason is that <b>it pleases God that</b> thou shouldst recount these adventures and marvels, for there is not another alive to-day in the world who could relate them as truly.'									

God's will appears everywhere when relating the events, and also in the verbal interactions, as in (10):

(10)	–	<i>Sènyer,</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>Déus</i>	<i>ho</i>	<i>vol,</i>	<i>l'armada</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>SSissília</i>	
		Lord	if	God	it	wants	the_army	of	Sicily	
		<i>vendrà</i>	<i>en</i>	<i>breu</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>ab</i>	<i>ella</i>	<i>ensemps</i>	<i>guanyarem</i>	<i>molt</i>
		come.FUT.3SG	in	short	and	with	it	together	gain.FUT.1PL	much
		<i>per</i>	<i>mar</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>per</i>	<i>terra,</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Déu</i>	<i>plau.</i>
		PREP	sea	and	PREP	land	if	PREP	God	pleases
		'– Lord, <b>if God wishes</b> , the army of Sicily arrives soon, and together with them we will make much gain on sea and land, <b>if it pleases God</b> .'								

All the above examples in (5)–(10) are linguistic manifestations of the faith that God's will and consent are prerequisites for anything to happen. These linguistic forms occur frequently in verbal interactions, so it is not surprising that some of them underwent specific semantic changes. In Sect. 5.1 above I have noted how the imperative *plaire*-construction was used to perform directives toward human addressees in the medieval period. But what happens in the case of occurrences that refer to God's pleasure? In this section I discuss this type of use of the *plaire*-construction. The distribution of relevant occurrences in the historical texts is shown in Table 3.

The religious worldview and frequent references to God's will are present also in the political discourse of the period. The records of medieval Catalan parliamentary speeches and also relevant parts of chronicles reflect correctly how these meetings took place and what the structure of the verbal interaction was like during them. Consider the example in (11), from James I's *Chronicle*. The context is the following: the king organizes a meeting of the *Corts* (the Catalan Parliament), assembling the archbishop, the bishops, and the nobles, and then he opens the parliament, speaking in the majestic plural, with the following words:

**Table 3** Distribution of subjunctive occurrences with *plaire* with God as Experiencer

Jau 13th c.	Desc 13th c.	Munt 14th c.	Per 14th–15th c.	Parl 1355–1519	EpC 1478–1577	Ger 16th c.	Total
3	3	21	1	8	6	2	44

(11) Illumina cor meum, Domine, et verba mea de Spiritu Sancto:

<i>pregam</i> ask.1PL	<i>a</i> PREP	<i>nostre</i> our	<i>Senyor</i> Lord	<i>Déus</i> God	<i>e</i> and	<i>la</i> the	<i>Verge</i> Virgin	<i>sancta</i> saint	<i>Maria,</i> Mary	<i>On,</i> thereby	<i>nós</i> we
<i>mare</i> mother	<i>sua,</i> his	<i>que</i> that	<i>nós</i> we	<i>puxam</i> can.SBV.1PL	<i>tell.INF</i> tell	<i>dir</i> some	<i>algunes</i> words	<i>paraules</i> that	<i>que</i> les		
<i>sian</i> be.SBV.3PL	<i>a</i> to	<i>honor</i> honor	<i>de</i> of	<i>nós</i> we	<i>e</i> and	<i>de</i> of	<i>vós,</i> you.PL	<i>qui</i> who	<i>les</i> them		
<i>escoltareis,</i> listen.FUT.2PL	<i>e</i> and	<i>que</i> that	<i>sten</i> be.SBV.3PL	<i>a</i> to	<i>plaer</i> pleasure	<i>de</i> of	<i>Déu</i> God	<i>e</i> and			
<i>de</i> of	<i>la</i> the	<i>sua</i> his	<i>mare,</i> mother	<i>nostra</i> our	<i>Dona</i> Lady	<i>sancta</i> saint	<i>Maria, (...)</i> Mary	<i>E</i> and			
<i>plássia</i> please.SBV.3SG	<i>a</i> PREP	<i>él</i> he	<i>que</i> that	<i>nós</i> we	<i>les</i> them	<i>puxam</i> can.SBV.1PL	<i>adiur</i> bring	<i>a</i> to			
<i>acabament.</i> (Jau 48) completion											

'*Illumina cor meum, Domine, et verba mea de Spiritu Sancto.* Wherefore I beseech my Lord God and the Virgin Saint Mary, His mother, that I may speak words to my honor, and to the honor of you who listen, and that they be pleasing to God and to His mother our Lady Saint Mary; [...] And may it please Him [i.e. God] that I can bring the said words to performance.'



In the continuation, the king refers to God in one way or another in six of his seven utterances. Then, Berenguer Girart delivers a speech, in a reply to the king's opening speech, on behalf of the citizens:

(12)	" <i>Nostre</i>	<i>Seyor,</i>	<i>qui</i>	<i>és</i>	<i>seyor</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>vós</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>nós,</i>
	Our	Lord	who	is	lord	of	you.PL	and	of	we
	<i>vos</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>mes</i>	<i>en</i>	<i>volentat</i>	<i>d'aquesta</i>	<i>bona</i>			
	you.ACC.PL	AUX.3SG	put.PART	in	volition	of_this	good			
	<i>paraula</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>vós</i>	<i>nos</i>	<i>havets</i>	<i>dita.</i>	<i>E</i>			
	word	that	you.PL	us	AUX.2PL	say.PART	and			
	<i>plàcia</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>él</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>nos</i>	<i>puscam</i>	<i>respondre</i>	<i>en</i>		
	please.SBJV.3SG	PREP	he	that	we	can.SBJV.1PL	answer.INF	in		
	<i>tal</i>	<i>manera,</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>vós</i>	<i>puscats</i>	<i>complir</i>	<i>vostra</i>	<i>volentat a</i>		
	so	manner	that	you	can.SBJV.2PL	fulfill.INF	your	volition to		
	<i>honor</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>Déu</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>vós.</i> "	(Jau 49)			
	honor	of	God	and	of	you.PL				

'The Lord, who is your Lord and ours, has put into your will those good things that you just said to us; and **may it please Him that** our reply be such that you may fulfill your wish to God's honor and your own.'

The above occurrences in (11)–(12) as well as other examples in the parliamentary speeches show what an essential role the religious expressions and references to God's will played in the structure of the argumentation and verbal interaction in the political discourse of the period. At first sight the above utterances with subjunctive forms of the verb *plaure* seem to be examples of directives toward God: the speaker expects God's help in achieving a wished-for state of affairs. However, it is also true that s/he expresses this wish verbally; consequently, s/he would like to make other people be aware of it as well. In other words, the speaker performs a speech act toward God and toward the other participants of the speech event at the same time. In addition, in most of these contexts the speakers do not direct their words directly at God. Therefore, the interpretation of these utterances is not straightforward. Are they directed at God or at the other participants of the speech event? How can we identify the illocutionary force of these utterances? These questions are addressed in the following section.

### On the Illocutionary Force of Utterances with God as Experiencer of *Plaure*

From a present-day perspective it is hard to recognize the illocutionary intentions behind these utterances with God as experiencer object of the verb *plaure* 'please'. Anyway, these uses of the *plaure*-construction can be related to two speech act types: directives and expressives. If speakers express feelings about themselves or

the world, the speech act is called expressive. If the psychological state expressed is a wish, the speech act in question is only one step away from directives, because the sincerity condition of directives is exactly the speaker's wish that the hearer do a certain act. The essential condition of directives is to get the hearer to act according to the propositional content, in other words, the speaker does not only have a wish but also wants that the hearer play a role in the realization of the state of affairs wished for. The question is whether the essential condition is fulfilled or not. Therefore, if the speaker only expresses a wish but does not attempt to get the hearer to do the act wished for, the speech act is an expressive. In contrast, if the speaker expresses a wish and, by performing this act, attempts to get the hearer to do the act wished for, it is a directive.

In what follows, let us use the analysis of the fragment in (12) as an illustration of the problem of identifying the illocutionary force of these utterances. How should we interpret the speech act performed by the speaker in (12)? First of all, it is important to note that it is impossible to exclude subjectivity when judging the illocutionary force of utterances. However, on the basis of our encyclopedic knowledge about the religious worldview of the period, we can assume that the first utterance of the fragment in (12) is sincere, and the speaker believes in God paving the way for the people by influencing their intentions. As far as the second part is concerned, we cannot disregard two facts. On the one hand, Berenguer Girart addresses the utterance to the king. On the other hand, although probably it is God from whom he expects the realization of a state of affairs, he expresses this wish verbally, that is, he makes those present aware of it. Therefore, the utterance should be interpreted as part of the verbal interaction between human participants. In a first approach, this utterance can be interpreted in two different ways: (i) as a directive, in which sense the speaker asks for God's consent for the things to go right, or (ii) as an expressive, in which sense the speaker merely expresses a wish. According to the interpretation in (i), the utterance belongs to the type of permission requesting directives. I have already characterized this use above, in Sect. 5.1.1, as directed to human addressees (when the speaker asks for a superior's consent in relation to an act or event). This use seems to be possible also in those cases when God is the experiencer of *plaire*, as the one in the highest place of the social hierarchy. However, the interpretation in (ii), as an expressive is also plausible. Next, I present arguments in favor of the analysis of these occurrences as expressives.

One of the arguments can be the grammatical form: the indirect object of these occurrences is in the 3rd person singular, that is, they are not addressed directly to God. The other argument is an indication of a contemporary speaker's linguistic intuition. In the example in (13), Simó Salvador, bishop of Barcelona, cites Saint Augustine and offers a Catalan translation in his parliamentary speech delivered on 19 October 1442. He talks about evil people's role in the world and uses a Latin quotation in his argumentation: "Utinam ergo qui nos modo exerceant conuertantur et nobiscum exerceantur", then he translates the Latin word *utinam* meaning 'if only!' to Catalan with the construction with *plaire*, in the following way:

---

(13)	<i>Plàcia</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Déu</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>aquests</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>convertescan</i>
	please.SBJV.3SG	PREP	God	that	those	REFL	convert.SBJV.3PL
	<i>e</i>	<i>ab</i>	<i>nosaltres</i>	<i>sien</i>	<i>exercitats.</i>	(Parl 189, 20)	
	and	with	we	be.SBJV.3PL	exercise.PART		

---

'May it please God that they be converted and exercised with us.'

---

This translation is an indication of a contemporary speaker's linguistic intuition: he judges this Catalan construction with *plaire* convenient to translate the Latin adverb *utinam* 'if only!', used in expressives.

The next occurrence in (14) is also worth considering because of its grammatical properties. It is uttered by the Saracen admiral, "who was a wise seaman and had been in many feats of arms and had proof of what the Catalans are", to his people before a battle:

---

(14)	<i>E</i>	<i>plagués</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Déu</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>jo</i>	<i>els</i>	<i>fos</i>
	and	please.PST.SBJV.3SG	PREP	God	that	I	them	be.PST.SBJV.1SG
	<i>lluny</i>	<i>cent</i>	<i>milles,</i>	<i>mas</i>	<i>pus</i>	<i>així</i>	<i>és,</i>	<i>jo</i>
	away	hundred	miles	but	as	thus	is	I
	<i>coman</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Déu</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Mahomet.</i>	(Munt I 47)	
	commend.1SG	PREP	God	and	PREP	Mahomet		REFL

---

'Might it please God that I were a hundred miles away from them; but as things are as they are, I commend myself to God and Mahomet.'

---

In the case of the utterance in (14), the speaker asks for God's consent concerning a situation contrasted with the present one. However, the subsequent utterance makes it clear that he has expressed only a wish, and he actually does not expect from God the realization of the situation wished for but accepts the present state of affairs. Therefore, the interpretation as an expressive speech act is plausible here. Tense and mood of the verb are other reasons for this interpretation in this context. The form *plagués* is the past subjunctive form of the verb *plaire* 'please', which also appears in conditional and optative sentences. From the 102 occurrences found in the corpus, 28 examples of *plaire* are conjugated in past subjunctive (cf. Table 2). However, in 24 cases the past tense is motivated by the past narrative context (cf. the past form *plagués* in 2). The remaining 4 examples appear in utterances with God as the experiencer of *plaire* 'please'. Their contexts are similar to the one in (14), and we can assume that the past tense form of *plaire* in them indicates the interpretation as expressives.

A further argument for the hypothesis that we should not analyze these utterances exclusively as directives toward God is that they tend to appear at particular points of the discourse and play a particular role in its organization. For instance, they are used very often at the end of a stretch of discourse. We could characterize this function as a kind of "concluding evaluation", maybe directed at God and the discourse participants at the same time. In the example in (15), the king, after having

discussed strategies of war with the gentlemen, finishes the interaction with these words:

---

(15)	<i>Dix</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>senyor</i>	<i>rei: –</i>	<i>Així</i>	<i>plàcia</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>nostre</i>	
	said.3SG	the	lord	king	thus	please.SBJV.3SG	PREP	our	
	<i>senyor</i>	<i>Déus</i>	<i>que es</i>	<i>faça.</i>	(Munt I 213)				
	lord	God	that REFL	do.SBJV.3SG					

---

‘Said the Lord King: – “**May it please God that** this be done this way.”’

---

The king’s utterance can be regarded as a closure of the interaction, by which he expresses a wish, and in this sense it is an expressive. But how do we know whether he expects somebody to play a role in the realization of this wish or not? And who does he expect to do something? Is it God? Or the other participants in the speech situation? Does he want to suggest to the listeners that they have to act the way they agreed to act before? I argue that these functions of the utterance are hard to distinguish from each other in the actual language use, and the illocutionary force of these utterances cannot be identified in a straightforward manner.

We can find the construction with *voler* ‘want’ in similar contexts, conveying similar meanings, as in the fragment of a letter in (16), where the writer extends his good wishes.

---

(16)	<i>Lo</i>	<i>senyor</i>	<i>en</i>	<i>Vallcanera</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>dit</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>vostra</i>	
	the	mister	En	Vallcanera	AUX.3SG	say.PART	that	your	
	<i>muller</i>	<i>és</i>	<i>prenyada,</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>què</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>diem</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>ens</i>
	wife	is	pregnant	of	what	we	tell.1PL	that	REFL
	<i>en</i>	<i>som</i>	<i>molt</i>	<i>alegrats.</i>	<i>Nostre</i>	<i>Senyor</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>guard</i>	
	about_it	are.1PL	very	happy	our	lord	her	keep.SBJV.3SG	
	<i>e</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>vulla</i>	<i>deslliurar</i>	<i>sana</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>salva</i>	<i>així</i>	<i>com tots</i>
	and	her	want.SBJV.3SG	deliver.INF	sound	and	safe	thus	as all

---

*desitjam,* *amén.* (EpC2or 143)

wish.1PL amen

‘Vallcanera has said that your wife is pregnant, regarding to which we tell you that we are very happy about it. **May Our Lord** keep her and **want to protect** her health and safety in the delivery, as we all wish, amen’.

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We can see a more negative evaluation in the following interaction in (17). In this context, the king sends a messenger to the Pope. The messenger has to tell the Pope everything the Lord King ordered him to say: he asks for assistance and money for a crusade, but the Pope refuses to give these. The messenger, indignant, utters the following words immediately before leaving:

(17)	-	<i>Pare</i>	<i>jo</i>	<i>me'n-vaig</i>	<i>ab</i>	<i>cruel</i>	<i>resposta</i>	<i>que</i>
	father	I	go_away.1SG	with	cruel	answer	that	
	<i>m'havets</i>	<b>Plàcia</b>	<i>a</i>	<i>nostra</i>	<i>senyor</i>	<i>ver</i>	<b>Déus</b>	
	me_AUX.2PL	please.SBIV.3SG	PREP	our	lord	true	God	
	<b>que</b>	<i>per</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>vostra</i>	<i>resposta</i>	<i>vé'n</i>	<i>mal</i>	
	that	by	the	your	answer	comes	evil	
	<i>crestiandat</i> ,	<i>tot</i>	<i>sia</i>	<i>sobre</i>	<i>l'arma</i>	<i>vostra</i>	<i>a</i>	
	Christendom	all	be.SBIV.3SG	upon	the_soul	your.PL	PREP	
	<i>de</i>	<i>aquells</i>	<i>qui</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>han</i>	<i>consentit</i>	<i>the</i>	
	of	those	who	you.DAT.PL	<i>consent.PART</i>	<i>consent.PART</i>	<i>ne</i>	
	<i>consellada</i>	<i>resposta</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>ab</i>	<i>aitant</i>	<i>pensà</i>	and	
	counsel.PART	answer	and	with	this	thought.3SG	<i>de</i>	
	<i>receller</i> ,	<i>venç-se'n</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Alcoll</i> .			of	
	embark.INF	went_away.3SG	PREP	Alcoll				
	***Holy Father, I am going away with the cruel answer you have made; and may it please Our Lord the true God that if, through your answer, evil befall Christendom, it may be upon your soul and upon that of all those who have counselled and are counselling this answer.*** And with this he embarked and went to Collo.							

With the utterance in (17), the speaker expresses a wish and asks for God's pleasure concerning its realization. However, if we take into account the whole discourse, we should interpret the utterance in its context as one directed at the Pope, as the second person pronouns (*vostra* 'your', *us* 'to you') also suggest. However, it is not possible to judge with certainty whether the noble only expresses his psychological state, his anger (expressive), he performs a threat, or he wants to provoke – in an indirect way – a certain reaction as well (directive).

The function of closing the interaction is also present in the parliamentary discourses, as in the closure of Peter III's parliamentary speech on 9 March 1370 in Tarragona. The king finishes his speech with a quote from the Bible, which says that if the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch. The king encourages the participants to be similarly vigilant in the affairs of the country:

(18)	<i>Per</i>	<i>què</i>	<i>plàcia</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>nostra</i>	<i>Senyor</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>nós</i>	
	because	what	please.SBJV.3SG	PREP	our	lord	that	we	
	<i>siam</i>	<i>així</i>	<i>vetlans</i>	<i>en</i>	<i>les</i>	<i>obres</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>havem</i>	<i>a</i>
	be.SBJV.1PL	so	vigilant.PL	in	the	actions	that	AUX.1PL	PREP
	<i>fer</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>nostra</i>	<i>regiment,</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>vosaltries</i>	<i>en</i>	<i>ço</i>	<i>que</i>
	do.INF	of	our	regiment	and	you.PL	in	that	that
	<i>n'havets</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>obeir,</i>	<i>que,</i>	<i>mitgençant</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>sua</i>		
	of_AUX.2PL	PREP	obey.INF	that	by	the	his		
	<i>misericòrdia,</i>	<i>obtingam</i>	<i>deçà</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>sua</i>	<i>gràcia</i>	<i>e,</i>	<i>finalment,</i>	
	clemency	obtain.SBJV.1PL	here	the	his	grace	and	finally	
	<i>allà</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>sua</i>	<i>glòria.</i>	<i>Amén.</i>	(Parl 51, 18)			
	over_there	the	his	glory	amen				

'Because of that **may it please Our Lord that** we be similarly vigilant in our actions that we have to do when we reign and you in those you do when you obey, in order to, by his clemency, we obtain his grace in this world and, finally, his glory over there. Amen.'

The utterance in (18) illustrates that the construction was probably employed as a rhetorical device as well: we should have no doubt that the wish expressed toward God in (18) is sincere, but we cannot exclude the possibility that the utterance is employed at the same time as a warning or advice directed at the participants of the parliamentary assembly. A similar closure appears in a later parliamentary speech, delivered by Martin I on 26th January 1406:

(19)	<i>E</i>	<i>plàcia</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>nostre</i>	<i>senyor</i>	<i>Déu</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>ell</i>	<i>nos</i>
	and	please.SBJV.3SG	PREP	our	lord	God	that	he	us
	<i>dó</i>	<i>tanta</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>gràcia</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>puixam</i>		
	give.SBJV.3SG	as_much	of	grace	that	you.ACC.PL	can.SBJV.1PL		
	<i>regir</i>	<i>per</i>	<i>tal</i>	<i>forma</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>sia</i>	<i>servir</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>glòria</i>
	reign.INF	PREP	so	form	that	be.SBJV.3SG	service	and	glory
	<i>sua</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>benefici</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>vosaltres,</i>	<i>en</i>	<i>guisa</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>deçà</i>
	his	and	benefit	of	you.PL	in	manner	that	here
	<i>merescam</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>sua</i>	<i>gràcia</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>dellà</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>sua</i>	<i>glòria.</i>
	merit.SBJV.1PL	the	his	grace	and	over_there	the	his	glory
	<i>Amén.</i>	(Parl 72, 12)							
	amen								
	'and may it please God, Our Lord, that he give us as much grace that we can reign in a way that would serve his glory and your benefit, and so that we merit his grace here and his glory over there. Amen.'								

This type of closure is very common in the parliamentary orations: the king explains that he would like to reign according to God’s wishes and for the people’s benefit at the same time. Based on its frequency it can be assumed that it has to be interpreted as a conventional way of finishing a speech, a routine formula, characteristic of the genre. However, it is impossible to judge the speakers’ intentions with certainty. By this utterance the speaker asks for God’s pleasure in connection with a certain state of affairs. At the same time, s/he directs the utterance at the participants of the speech event, and it can be interpreted as a closure of the speech addressed to them.

It is worth adding that the duality documented in the case of utterances with the verb *plaure* addressed to a human addressee (cf. Type 1 and 2 discussed in Sect. 5.1) can also be observed in utterances with God as the experiencer of ‘please’. The action wished for can be (i) the speaker’s act or some independent matter or (ii) God’s own act. While in the former case the speaker seems to try to achieve God’s consent, in the latter case s/he tries to get God to do something, using the verb *plaure* ‘please’ as a linguistic means of indirectness (Table 4).

As a summary, we can analyze these linguistic forms as directed toward God and toward human participants at the same time. Such an analysis can be provided in a theoretical framework that presupposes the presence of lateral speech acts in linguistic interactions. In their paper on speech acts, Clark and Carlson (1982)

**Table 4** Distribution of types of the subjunctive *plaure*-construction according to the action wished for

	Jau 13th c.	Desc 13th c.	Munt 14th c.	Per 14th–15th c.	Parl 1355–1519	EpC 1478–1577	Ger 16th c.	Total
<i>not God’s action</i>	3	2	14	1	4	1	2	27
<i>God’s action</i>	–	1	7	–	4	5	–	17
	3	3	21	1	8	6	2	44

introduce the concept of *informative speech acts*. They argue that in the context of verbal interaction with multiple participants we have to distinguish between addressees and other participants. The authors claim that the speaker performs two types of illocutionary act with each utterance: a “traditional” kind of speech act, directed at the addressees, and, in addition, an informative speech act, directed at all the participants in the conversation. With the informative act the speaker informs the addressee and the other participants of the illocutionary act that s/he is simultaneously performing toward the addressee(s). Moreover, Clark and Carlson (1982: 333) claim that “[a]ll addressee-directed illocutionary acts are performed by means of informatives”. Clark and Carlson (1982: 336) distinguish between two distinct types of indirect illocutionary acts, called *linear* and *lateral* indirect illocutionary acts, respectively. In linear indirect illocutionary acts the direct and indirect addressees are the same, while in lateral indirect illocutionary acts, which can occur in conversations involving more than two people, they are different.

It is not easy to reveal the communicative intentions of speakers of the medieval period (or of present day speakers, for that matter). However, the occurrences presented above, associable with two speech act types, could be analyzed in this theoretical framework according to the following possibilities:

- (i) analysis of the utterances as directives: we suppose that the speaker asks for God’s or the participants’ activity in the realization of a state of affairs
  - (a) this is a request performed by means of an informative act, the addressee is God
  - (b) linear indirectness: a directive performed by means of an expressive, the addressee can be God or the other human participant(s)
  - (c) lateral indirectness: the directive is intended to be directed at the human participant(s) in the conversation, but the addressee is God
  
- (ii) analysis of the utterances as expressives: we suppose that the speaker purely expresses a wish
  - (a) the addressee can be God, the other human participants are informed by an informative speech act of the performance of the expressive
  - (b) the addressees are the human participants of the speech situation: since the speaker expresses his/her wish directed at God verbally, s/he probably intends the speech act to be understood by the others.

In summary, the main question is who the addressee is (God or the people listening to the utterance) and who is simply a participant of the speech event, and whether there is—either lateral or linear—indirectness (cf. Clark and Carlson 1982: 336).

Finally, it is worth noticing that although in the majority of contexts, the speaker does not address God directly, that is, the indirect object is in 3rd person singular, there are seven occurrences with a 2nd person singular indirect object, directly



addressing God. These forms appear in only one text (Muntaner's *Chronicle*), so perhaps they can be due to the chronicler's personal narrative style, who may have aimed to reach a lifelike effect in this way. Nevertheless, these uses show that we cannot analyze these utterances in every case as expressives, instead, we have to take into account the interpretation as directives addressed directly to God. Consider the following example:

(20)	–	<i>Sènyer</i>	<i>ver</i>	<i>Déus,</i>	<i>plàcia't</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>em</i>	
		Lord	true	God	please.SBJV.3SG_you.SG.DAT	that	not	me	
		<i>desempar</i>		<i>ans</i>	<i>l'ajuda vostra sia</i>	<i>ab</i>	<i>mi</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>ab</i>
		forsake.SBJV.2SG		rather	the_aid your be.SBJV.3SG	with	me	and	with
		<i>mes</i>	<i>gents.</i>	(Munt I 196)					
		my	people						
		"“Lord and true God, <b>may it please Thee</b> not to forsake me; rather be Thy aid with me and with my followers.”"							

But sometimes also in the case of occurrences with a 3rd person singular indirect object, non-verbal communication (facial expressions, gestures, or eye contact) contradicts spoken words. Although according to its linguistic form, the utterance in (21) does not seem to be directly addressed to God, the speaker's nonverbal gestures seem to suggest a direct recourse to God:

(21)	<i>E</i>	<i>levà</i>	<i>les</i>	<i>mans</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>nostre</i>	<i>Senyor</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>dix:</i>	<i>“Jo</i>
	and	raised.3SG	the	hands	PREP	our	Lord	and	said.3SG	I
	<i>grasch</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Déu</i>	<i>quan</i>	<i>aquí</i>	<i>comanen</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>mi</i>	<i>la</i>	
	thank.1SG	PREP	God	that	here	commit.	PREP	me	the	
						SBJV.3PL				
	<i>paraula;</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>plàcia</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Déu</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>jo</i>	<i>la</i>		
	word	and	please.SBJV.3SG	PREP	God	that	I	it		
	<i>pusca</i>	<i>dir</i>	<i>en</i>	<i>tal</i>	<i>manera</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>sia</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>honor</i>	
	can.SBJV.1SG	tell.INF	in	so	manner	that	be.SBJV.3SG	PREP	honor	
	<i>del</i>	<i>rey</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>bé</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>l'infant</i> ”.	(Jau 519)		
	of_the	king	and	PREP	profit	of	the_infante			
	‘and he raised his hands towards Our Lord, and said, “I thank God that they have committed the speech to me. And <b>may it please God</b> that I may utter words to the honor of the king, and profit of the Infante.”’									

How should we analyze the body language described in (21)? Does the speaker assign the role of addressee with these gestures? Or does he only want to add emphasis to the content of the utterance and emphasize the sincerity of his request? Anyway, these uses suggest that we should take into account the analysis as a directive speech act addressing God, too.

Be they directives or expressives, all of the utterances presented above tend to appear at certain points of the discourse and seem to play a special role in its

structure. The contexts of occurrences with 2nd and 3rd person singular pronouns are similar: they are all used when the speaker intends to express his/her own evaluation in relation to an issue. They all seem to convey the speaker's attitude, in this sense the request for God's help or anger seems to play a special role in the discourse. To conclude, these findings suggest that the construction followed a particular path of semantic change: it became a conventionalized phrase and underwent subjectification. In the next section I turn to elaborate on this idea.

## Subjectification

In Sect. 6 I have discussed two groups of utterances with the *plaire*-construction. First, this construction is used in contexts where it seems to express the speaker's desire, as in optative sentences (cf. examples in 13–14). Second, the *plaire*-construction appears at the closure of an interaction (cf. examples in 15–19), conveying the speaker's own subjective evaluation on a certain issue. These functions are close to the uses presented in this section, when the speaker expresses subjective feelings in relation to a content present in the discourse context. The process whereby a linguistic expression acquires meanings that convey the speaker's subjective attitude or viewpoint is called *subjectification*.<sup>11</sup> I use this concept in the Traugottian sense (cf. Traugott 1989, 2010), which connects subjectivity to the meaning of a morpheme, word, phrase or construction.<sup>12</sup> Another significant view of *subjectification* is provided in Langacker (2006). The following two collections of papers represent these two different points of view on *subjectification*: Athanasiadou et al. (2006) represents the Langackerian view, while Cuyckens et al. (2010a) the Traugottian view. After her early research on subjectivity (Traugott 1982), in her later work Traugott (1989: 34–35) explains the process in more details, mentioning three main related semantic change tendencies. For the focus of the present paper the third one is relevant: "Tendency III: Meanings tend to become increasingly based in the speaker's subjective belief state/attitude toward the proposition" (Traugott 1989: 35). There are some contexts which suggest that the meaning of the *plaire*-construction has changed according to this tendency, and it has undergone subjectification. It has begun to convey the speaker's subjective attitude: affirmative utterances with the construction express the speaker's wish and positive attitude, while the negative version of the construction

<sup>11</sup> While subjectivity is a synchronic phenomenon, the term *subjectification* refers to the diachronic process. For the concept of subjectivity, see Cuyckens et al. (2010b).

<sup>12</sup> For more details of this perspective, see Traugott and Dasher (2004 [2002]).

is used to express indignation and refusal concerning a proposition known from the previous context or mentioned subsequently in the discourse. We find one of these examples when Desclot tells the legend of the good count of Barcelona: he is going to defend the empress of Germany, who is falsely accused of adultery, in legal combat. The knights are indignant at his intention to go with only one companion and offer five hundred or a thousand knights to go with him. But the count says the following, expressing his refusal:

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(22)	–	<i>No</i>	<i>plàcia</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Déu</i>	–	<i>dix</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>chonte</i>	–,
		not	please.SBJV.3SG	PREP	God		said.3SG	the	count	
		<i>que</i>	<i>ja</i>	<i>ab</i>	<i>mi</i>		<i>no</i>	<i>irà</i>	<i>mas</i>	<i>·I·</i>
		that	already	with	me		not	go.FUT.3SG	but	one
		<i>·X·</i>	<i>escuders</i>	<i>qui·m</i>	<i>servequen;</i>		(Desc II 49,25)			<i>companyó</i>
		ten	squires	who_me	serve.SBJV.3PL					<i>e</i>
										and

---

‘– **May it not please God** [i.e. There is no way!] – said the count –, only one companion will come with me, and ten squires in my service.’

---

A similar shade of meaning can also be conveyed with the verb *voler* ‘want’ in a similar construction referring to God’s will.

These two examples above cannot be analyzed as directives: both cases concern the speaker’s own actions, on which the speakers can decide freely. Consequently, the speakers in (22) and (23) do not perform a directive but express their subjective attitude toward a content present in context: they refuse it, they are indignant, or perceive it as impossible, etc.

(23) E	<i>llavors</i>	<i>l'admirall</i>	<i>féu</i>	<i>una</i>	<i>cosa</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>li</i>	<i>dec</i>
and	then	the_admiral	did.3SG	a	thing	that	him	had_to.3SG
<i>més</i>	<i>ésser</i>	<i>notada</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>folia</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>seny:</i>	<i>que</i>
more	be.INF	count.PART	PREP	madness	than	PREP	sense	that
<i>dix</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>ja</i>	<b><i>Déus</i></b>	<b><i>no</i></b>	<b><i>volgués</i></b>	<b><i>que</i></b>	<b><i>ell</i></b>	<b><i>los</i></b>
said.3SG	that	already	God	not	want.PST.SUBJ.3SG	that	he	them
<i>ferís</i>	<i>dorment,</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>ans</i>	<i>volia</i>	<i>que</i>			
attack.PST.SBIV.3SG	sleeping	that	rather	wanted.3SG	that			
<i>tocassen</i>	<i>totes</i>	<i>les</i>	<i>galees</i>	<i>les</i>	<i>trompes</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>les</i>	
sound.PST.SBIV.3PL	all	the	galleys	the	trumpets	and	the	
<i>nàcares,</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>es</i>	<i>despertassen,</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>els</i>	
makers	and	that	REFL	wake_up.PST.SBIV.3PL	and	that	them	
<i>lleixaria</i>	<i>aparellar;</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>volia</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>null</i>	<i>hom</i>	<i>li</i>
let.COND.3SG	prepare.INF	that	not	wanted.3SG	that	none	man	him
<i>pogués</i>	<i>dir</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>els</i>	<i>hagra</i>	<i>vençuts</i>	<i>si</i>	
can.PST.SBIV.3SG	tell.INF	that	not	them	AUX.3SG	defeat.PART		
<i>dorment</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>els</i>	<i>hagués</i>	<i>trobats.</i>	(Munt I 127)			
sleeping	not	them	AUX.SBIV.3SG	find.PART				

'And then the admiral did a thing which should be counted to him more for madness than for sense; he said, **might God not want that** he attacked them in their sleep, rather did he wish the trumpets and makers to be sounded in the galleys to wake them up, and he would let them prepare. He did not wish that any man could say to him that he would not have defeated them if he had not found them asleep.'

In the following context, the speaker also expresses indignation concerning a proposition previously introduced into the context. The king asks whether those people wish much evil to the king of Aragon, but they answer in the following way:

(24)	<i>E</i>	<i>ells</i>	<i>resposeren:</i>	–	<i>Mal?</i>	<i>Ja</i>	<i>Déus</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>ho</i>	<i>vulla!</i>
	and	they	answered.3PL	evil	already	God	not	it	want.SUBJ.3SG	
	<i>Ans</i>	<i>li</i>	<i>volem</i>	<i>més</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>bé</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>senyor</i>	<i>que</i>
	rather	him	want.1PL	more	of	good	that	PREP	lord	that
	<i>sia</i>	<i>e'l</i>	<i>món,</i>	<i>crestià</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>moro.</i>	(Munt I 132)			
	be.SUBJ.3SG	in_the	world	Christian	nor	Moor				
	'And they answered: – Evil? <b>May God not want it!</b> Rather do we wish him more good than to any lord on earth, Christian, or Moor.'									

In the case of the utterance in (24), the interpretation that the speakers would direct a request at God can be excluded. This utterance does not refer to a future action but to a wish of the speakers themselves, and they are aware of whether it is true of them.

Finally, consider the text fragment in (25). In contrast with the negative utterances in (22)–(24), it contains the construction in an affirmative context, but also seems to convey a subjective meaning:

In (25), the *plaire*-construction occurs in a subordinate clause, in an expansion of the adverb before (*en tal bona ventura que* 'with such good fortune'), therefore, it is implausible that the speech act in question would be a directive directed at God. This fragment is also interesting because the chronicler expresses his own opinion, addressing the speech act to a later interpreter of his text. The function of the

(25)	<i>E</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>noble</i>	<i>En Roger de Lória</i>	<i>gità's</i>	<i>en</i>	<i>terra</i>	<i>e</i>	
	and	the	noble	En_Roger_de_Lória	threw_himself	on	ground	and	
	<i>bessà</i>	<i>los</i>	<i>peus</i>	<i>al</i>	<i>senyor</i>	<i>rei,</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>país</i>	<i>les</i> <i>mans,</i> <i>e</i>
	kissed.3SG	the	feet	to_the	Lord	king	and	then	the hands and
	<i>pres</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>verga</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>l'almirallat,</i>	<i>en</i>	<i>tal</i>	<i>bona</i>	<i>ventura</i>
	took.3SG	the	baton	of	the_admiralty	in	such	good	fortune
	<i>que</i>	<i>plàcia</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>nostre</i>	<i>senyor</i>	<i>Déus</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>tos</i> <i>los</i>
	that	please.SUBJ.3SG	PREP	our	lord	God	that	PREP	all the
	<i>oficials</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>el</i>	<i>senyor</i>	<i>rei</i>	<i>comanarà</i>	<i>sos</i>	<i>oficis,</i>	<i>que</i>
	officials	that	the	lord	king	entrust.FUT.3SG	their	offices	that
	<i>així</i>	<i>bé</i>	<i>los</i>	<i>li</i>	<i>aminstren</i>	<i>con</i>	<i>lo</i>		
	like_that	well	those.ACC	him	administer.SUBJ.3PL	as	the		
	<i>dit</i>	<i>noble</i>	<i>fét;</i>	(Munt I 116)					
	say.PART	noble	did.3SG						
	‘And the noble En Roger threw himself on the ground and kissed the feet of the Lord King of Aragon and then his hands and took the baton with such good fortune that <b>may it please God that</b> all the officials to whom the Lord King will entrust his offices in future will administer them as well as did the said noble.’								

construction seems to be to express Muntaner's subjective point of view and to add a certain emphasis. All these examples suggest that this construction referring to God's wish or pleasure took a specific path of semantic change and became a conventional way of expressing subjective attitudes, in other words, it underwent subjectification.

In summary we can say that the *plaire*-construction tends to appear at certain points of discourse and seems to play a particular role in its structure and in the argumentation. As regards the illocutionary force, we can analyze it either as a directive or as an expressive, but this is not straightforward in every context. The construction, mainly in its negated form, underwent subjectification, that is, it acquired a meaning that conveyed the speaker's subjective attitude or viewpoint at certain points of the interaction.

## Speech Act Verbs in the Context of the *Plaire*-Construction and the Illocutionary Value of the Utterance

### Methodological and Theoretical Issues

Diachronic speech act analysis raises several methodological questions. Some of them are discussed in Taavitsainen and Jucker (2007), who mention two methods of investigating speech acts from a historical point of view. The authors base their research on searches with speech act verb lists when investigating speech acts of verbal aggression in earlier stages of the English language. They examine the distribution of speech act verbs previously compiled with the help of dictionaries on a large corpus. This method does not guarantee the finding of all examples of verbal aggression in the corpus. According to Taavitsainen and Jucker (2007: 108), speech act verbs “do not give us any direct access to the speech acts that they name, but they provide an interesting ethnographic view of how a speech community perceives specific speech acts and which ones are important enough to be labelled with a speech act verb which the speakers use to talk about the speech act and—in some cases—even perform the speech act in question”. They classify the verbs into semantic fields and investigate neighboring speech acts together in a pragmatic space. Another method is applied by Kohnen (2007), who aims to find all realizations of a speech act type, including the so called *hidden manifestations* (see Kohnen 2007), which is possible only by manual search.

In the present study, speech act verbs play a different role. My research also goes in part from form to function (cf. Jucker 1994; Jacobs and Jucker 1995), although I do not search for speech act verbs but for occurrences of constructions with the verbs ‘want’, ‘think’ and ‘please’. Speech act verbs serve only as a complementary source of data when I try to identify the functions of these constructions. Therefore, I do not work with a predefined set of speech act verbs. This method presupposes manual search. One of the reasons why a manual search is necessary is that we cannot foreknow the inventory of speech act verbs in the medieval period. The other reason is that speech act verbs can occur in the very broad context of the construction, which in some cases covers more than one paragraph of text.

How can we reveal the illocutionary force of utterances, especially in historical investigations? One could assume that verbs describing speech acts in the utterances in question or in their contexts can be our primary source of information when judging the illocutionary force. But the issue is not that simple. Already Searle (1969: 70) has claimed that

[b]oth because there are several different dimensions of illocutionary force, and because the same utterance act may be performed with a variety of different intentions, it is important to realize that one and the same utterance may constitute the performance of several different illocutionary acts. There may be several different non-synonymous illocutionary verbs that correctly characterize the utterance.

Although speech act verbs—occurring in descriptive or performative uses—can be reference points, in some cases they can be misleading. Not even in the case of performative uses can we assume that the speech act verb denominates exactly the speech act performed. As regards the descriptive use, this is also not a reliable source: it reveals only the intuition of the person who reports the performance of the speech act. According to Ervin-Tripp (1976: 28),

[t]he verbs used in indirect speech are a source of information about native speakers' categories in the ethnography of speaking. The English verbs used in reporting are not necessarily the best analytic categories for classifying speech events, though they are a plausible first hypothesis.

In historical texts it also occurs that the narrator denominates the interaction by using a speech act verb in the description, which reveals how s/he interprets the utterance in question. Naturally, speech act verbs cannot occur only in narrative parts but also in text fragments describing verbal interaction. In addition, in most of the cases the quoted words are introduced by verbs that refer only to the locutionary act ('said', 'answered', 'told', etc.).

In the case of descriptive uses, the question arises whether the utterance described as an indirect quote corresponds word by word to the original utterance. We have to take into account that we usually do not remember the exact utterances, but the content of the interaction as a whole. In the description of interactions the narrator's interpretation plays an important role, in the formation of which s/he usually takes into account several pieces of information (e.g. the context of the utterance, formal markers, etc.). A usable theoretical framework is provided in van Dijk's (1977) paper on the macro-structures of discourses. The author relates the notion of illocutionary force not only to a single utterance, but he believes that it is applicable to larger units of discourse. In a global sense we can perform a speech act by uttering more than one sentence, which he calls macro-speech-act. He argues that discourse processing is complicated and we should assume a macro level in it, since we do not remember the exact words uttered, but organize information into structures of a manageable size. Functionally related speech acts are structured into larger units that we interpret as a single entity. Sentences and speech acts are ordered into macro-structures, in which the construction under study is only one of the linguistic means used to perform the directive.



If we aim to identify which constructions were used to perform directives in a certain language period, it is worth comparing the linguistic devices found in descriptive versus performative uses. For example, we can describe the performance of a speech act with the words *She asked me to carry her bag*, but it would be strange (in most situations) if we asked somebody in this way: *Carry my bag!* In some contexts we can perform a request by uttering a single sentence (*Carry my bag, please*), but in most cases we utter more sentences due to politeness considerations (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). Therefore, when we try to reconstruct the performance of a speech act relying on reports containing speech act verbs in descriptive use, we complete the linguistic form given in the description with information from our encyclopedic knowledge. For instance, we interpret a description like *asked* that 'he performed the request in a way appropriate/expected in that context', and we reconstruct a plausible way of performing the act in question relying on our pragmatic competence. According to that, in the case of a description like *He asked me to do the shopping*, the original utterance can be various, e.g.: *Would you mind if I asked you to do the shopping?* or *Could you do the shopping, please?* Moreover, descriptions also can be various. We can describe appropriately these speech acts also with the following words: *He asked me whether I could do the shopping* or *He kindly asked me to do the shopping*, etc. Anyway, we can presuppose a kind of pragmatic correspondence between the original utterance and its description: if the original was a directive, than the forms used in the description should be appropriate to perform a directive. We can also suppose that if some extra words appear in comparison with the propositional content of the request (in our case the expression *could*), it would have been used in the original context as well. In this way, although an exact formal reconstruction of the original utterance is impossible, we can have conclusions concerning the linguistic means usable to perform directives on the basis of the form of descriptive parts as well.

### Speech Act Verbs in the Context of the *Plaure*-Construction

In this section I discuss how research into speech act verbs and similar linguistic forms<sup>13</sup> helps us to identify the illocutionary force of utterances with the *plaure*-construction. They occur both in descriptive and performative uses. We can find the following verbs:

#### Speech Act Verbs in Descriptive Use

The verbs *pregar* 'ask, beg' (11),<sup>14</sup> *trameteren-lo a pregar* 'sent to beg him' (1), (*a precs* 'at his entreaty', 1), *demanar llicència* 'beg for leave' (1), *demanar* 'ask, beg, pray' (2), *suplicar* 'entreat' (4), *requerir* 'request, require' (1), and the

<sup>13</sup> E.g. the nominal form *a precs* 'at his entreaty' also appears in the corpus.

<sup>14</sup> The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of occurrences found in contexts of the *plaure*-construction.

expressions *tramís missatge* ‘I sent a message’, and *tramès-li a dir* ‘sent to tell him’ (2), which only reveal one aspect of the circumstances of performing the speech act.

### Speech act Verbs in Performative Use

The verbs *suplicar* ‘entreat’ (5), *pregar* ‘ask, beg, pray’ (3), and the verbs *requerir* ‘request, require’ (3), *demanar* ‘ask, beg, pray’ (2), and *exortar* ‘exhort’ (1), the latter three appearing only in coordination.

As I have mentioned above, there is no one-to-one correspondence between speech act verbs and illocutionary values. These speech act verbs only reveal the illocutionary act type of directives, the neutral verb ‘ask’ is the most frequent. However, we do not know whether the utterance is a request, a proposal, a demand or something else. In order to judge the degree of politeness of these forms in their particular contexts and their function, we have to take into account the broader context of occurrences: not only the co-text, but—among other things—the propositional content of the utterance, encyclopedic information concerning the “weight” of the request, the genre of texts, and the relationship between speaker and addressee. As for the latter one, addressees in early contexts almost exclusively belong to higher levels of social hierarchy: king, the Pope, Infante, admiral, prince, etc. In later contexts, other addressees are possible as well, and the use of the construction seems to be less polite: the speech act seems to be more pressing, and the content of the request can also be different. However, in order to use these pieces of information, we have to take into account the use of other forms of performing a directive and compare all of them (for instance, the use of the construction with the verb *pensar* ‘think’—cf. the example in (8)—seems to be a less polite strategy). Directive utterances can be interpreted in their relation to the others, taking into account the distribution of the different ways of performing directives across context types. Also, the speech act verbs in the contexts of various constructions used for performing directives have to be compared.

It is not surprising that the neutral verb *pregar* ‘ask’ is the most frequent, revealing the illocutionary act type (directive). The verb *suplicar* ‘entreat’, which expresses deference and refers to asymmetrical social relations, also occurs in high numbers. On the basis of this distribution we might assume that the construction was rather polite. However, there are also verbs that contradict this presupposition. For example, there is an occurrence of the verb *requerir* ‘require’: however, if we examine the context, we see that it is the Infante who is “required” to take the kingdom after the death of his father. Therefore, if we take into account the participants’ interests, this use does not seem impolite anymore. Kohnen (2007: 151, 157) also emphasizes that when judging which speech act is performed by an utterance we have to consider also the predicates and the broader context. This example illustrates that several factors (the content and weight of the request, the interests of speaker and hearer, etc.) play an important role when judging the

illocutionary force of utterances. The above analysis has shown that this is true even when in the context of the construction there is a speech act verb. On the basis of these considerations it is at least questionable whether we can gain a realistic picture of illocutionary force on the basis of only a quantitative analysis of the distribution of speech act verbs (cf. Taavitsainen and Jucker 2007).

We can also observe that not every verb can be used performatively to the same extent: the more neutral verbs, used to describe various illocutionary acts, occur more frequently in a performative use, while more specific verbs tend to occur in a coordinated way in specific genres, as part of conventional formulae. For instance, the verb *suplicar* 'entreat' has 5 occurrences, two of them in a coordinated phrase, supposedly used to add emphasis. This verb of a humble tone, however, occurs exclusively in the parliamentary speeches (namely, in speeches delivered between 1410 and 1421), thus, it can be considered an institutional formula characteristic of that period. Its use seems to mitigate the rough, crude tone of the verbs *exortar* 'exhort' and *requerir* 'require' at the beginning of the coordination and to make them more polite. However, the presence of these latter verbs may also suggest that the use of the *plaire*-construction perhaps could not be regarded as really polite in this period. Its contexts of use could have been extended, but to confirm this suggestion we have to check also other circumstances, e.g. the content of the request. In the parliamentary speeches containing these occurrences requests are always performed by a person of authority, who has the power to require (e.g. the king). Therefore, we can suppose that the person of authority aims to mitigate the face threatening directive by using this polite form. It should be noted that we have to differentiate between the politeness of performing a request (of a speech act) and the politeness of a linguistic form. Sometimes the speaker seems to aim to reduce the face threat by using polite formulae when they perform inherently face threatening speech acts. Certainly, even by using them, a request is still a request, and a demand is still a demand, and language users clearly perceive this.

Except for the parliamentary speeches, only Muntaner's *Chronicle* includes an occurrence of the verb *requerir* 'require' in the context of the *plaire*-construction. It is interesting that the context of this discourse (presented in Sect. 5.1.2 as 4 and repeated here for convenience as 26) is similar: the king is asking for material assistance for his campaign (the aim of parliamentary speeches often is the same). For this reason, he sends a messenger to the Pope, who has to replicate exactly those words that the king demanded that he say: to greet the Pope and the cardinals, to beg him to assemble the consistory, because he wished to say something on behalf of the king. Then he has to greet them again and say what the king commanded him to say. And at this point of the interaction we can see a very convincing argumentation, containing the expression *lo dit senyor rei vos requer de part de Déu* 'the said Lord King requires you in the name of God', finally the messenger ends the talk with the following words:

(26)	<i>Per</i>	<i>què,</i>	<i>pare</i>	<i>sant,</i>	<i>açò</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>demana</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>us</i>
	for	what	father	holy	that	you.DAT.PL	asks	and	you.DAT.PL
	<i>requer,</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>plàcia</i>		<i>que</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>ho</i>

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requests	and	that	you.DAT.PL	please.SUBJ.3SG	that	not	it
<i>tardets.</i>	(Munt I 88)						
delay.SUBJ.2PL							
‘Wherefore, Holy Father, this he asks and requests of you and that <b>may it please you that</b> you do not delay’.							

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Perhaps the aim of using this construction is to decrease the face threat of this imperative content. Anyway, there are only a few contexts as crude as this, the construction instead tends to appear in situations that require a high degree of politeness.

Taavitsainen and Jucker (2007: 114–116) argue that we have to consider the original context of the utterance, and also the genre of the text in which the utterance is evoked. The authors emphasize that there are two levels of considering the context: taking into account (i) the context formed by previous discourse, and (ii) the socio-cultural characteristics of the communicative event. In order to judge the illocutionary force of these utterances, we have to take into account who the addressee can be. Addressees in early contexts almost exclusively belong to higher levels of the social hierarchy: the king, the Pope, the Infante, the admiral, the prince, etc. When in later contexts other addressees are possible as well, the context also reveals a difference in tone: the content of the request seems to be less polite and the speech act seems to be more pressing (see Nagy C. forthcoming).

A further factor can be that the inventory of speech act verbs can be different not only in different languages but also in different historical periods of the same language. When interpreting utterances in historical documents we should consider that speech act verbs in use in earlier periods may be out of use today, or they may have acquired new meanings in the course of time.

Last but not least, it is important to mention that the investigation presented in this paper is only a part of a larger research project on constructions used to perform directives in medieval Catalan and Spanish in a comparative approach. This is important because it is almost impossible to identify the functions and degree of politeness of a single construction without situating it in a broader “pragmatic space”, in other words, without saying how and when it is used in relation with other linguistic means appropriate to perform similar illocutionary acts. Consequently, linguistic means used to perform directives should be investigated all together in a comparative approach. Apart from the construction presented in this paper, medieval Catalan used the pure imperative to perform directives and other constructions as well, e.g. with the verbs *pensar* ‘think’ (cf. ex. 6), *voler* ‘want’ (cf. 1, 14, 21 and 22) and *deure* ‘have to’.

## Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed some uses of constructions formed with subjunctive forms of the verb *plaure* 'please' in medieval Catalan. This study has emphasized the role of constructions in semantic change: the same lexeme can follow different paths of semantic change in different constructions. The verb *plaure* 'please' was used in some utterances as a linguistic means of indirectness when performing directives, while in other contexts it acquired specific meanings conveying the speaker's subjective attitude. The former use is interesting from a theoretical point of view, because its description complements Searle's generalization about possible ways of performing indirect directives (see Nagy C. forthcoming). However, the main focus of the present paper has been on occurrences where the verb *plaure* 'please' has a divine person as Experiencer, in other words, where the speech act is aimed to win God's approval. My findings have revealed that this construction became a conventionalized phrase with a special role in interpersonal interactions. It tended to appear at certain points of discourse and played a particular role in its structure and in the argumentation. As regards the illocutionary force, we can analyze these utterances either as directives or as expressives. However, this is not straightforward in every context, given that these speech acts can be interpreted as directed at God and the discourse participants at the same time and they fulfilled various interrelated functions in the interaction. They were used to express the speaker's desire in optative sentences, to convey a kind of "concluding evaluation" at the closure of interactions, or to reflect the speaker's own subjective evaluation on a certain issue. The construction *plàcia a Déu* 'may it please God' followed a particular path of semantic change and, mainly in its negated form *no plàcia a Déu* 'may it not please God', underwent subjectification.

Furthermore, I have claimed that qualitative analysis is indispensable in diachronic speech act analysis. Speech act verbs can be searched for in large corpora automatically and analyzed quantitatively, but they in themselves do not entirely reveal the illocutionary force and function of utterances. We should take into account a lot of additional information and keep in mind that different sets of speech act verbs can be used in different periods of a language's history, and the speech act verbs used nowadays may have been used differently at earlier stages.

As a next step of my investigations, I will include other constructions used in similar contexts in medieval Catalan and Spanish, in the hope that the role and function of the construction presented in this study may become even clearer.

**Acknowledgements** Open access funding provided by University of Szeged (SZTE). Work on the present paper was supported by the MTA-DE-SZTE Research Group for Theoretical Linguistics. The present paper is partly based on my talk "Diachronic speech act analysis: (polite) directives in medieval Catalan" at the 8th INPRA Conference (8–10 June 2018, Cyprus). I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Enikő Németh T. and the anonymous reviewers, for their helpful comments on several topics touched upon in this paper. I am grateful to Anna Fenyvesi for improving my English. All the remaining errors are my own.

## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of interest** The author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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were guilds of artisans in the Kingdom of Valencia, literally: 'brotherhoods' The text originates from the first half of the 16th century.

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