POLITENESS IN 13–16TH CENTURY CATALAN: REQUESTS IN THE COMPUTERIZED CORPUS OF OLD CATALAN

KATALIN NAGY C.

MTA-DE-SZTE Research Group for Theoretical Linguistics, Eötvös Loránd Research Network (ELKH)

Abstract: The present study aims to discuss some politeness strategies in 13–16th century Catalan, based on a corpus pragmatic analysis of requests from the Computerized Corpus of Old Catalan (*Corpus Informatitzat del Català Antic* [CICA]), found by searching for occurrences of the speech act verbs *pregar* 'ask, pray' and *suplicar* 'supplicate, beg, beseech'. Results of the present study provide evidence that politeness in 13–16th century Catalan was realized by different linguistic means than in contemporary Catalan. It focuses on some conventionally indirect strategies that consisted in using the verb *voler* 'want' to transfer the imperative force from the performance of the requested act to the hearer's willingness. At the intersection of speech act research, politeness studies, historical pragmatics and corpus pragmatics, this study also discusses some methodological challenges of these areas.
Keywords: Corpus Pragmatics, Historical Pragmatics, Old Catalan, Politeness, Requests.

Resumen: El objetivo del presente estudio consiste en discutir el uso de algunas estrategias de cortesía en la lengua catalana desde finales del siglo XIII a finales del siglo XVI. La investigación se centra en el análisis de un gran número de peticiones procedentes del *Corpus Informatitzat del Català Antic* [CICA], halladas mediante la búsqueda de ocurrencias de varias formas gramaticales de los verbos catalanes *pregar* y *suplicar*. Se estudiarán varias estrategias indirectas para formular un ruego, con particular énfasis en el uso del verbo *voler* 'querer' como fórmula de cortesía, con el fin de mitigar la fuerza imperativa de la petición. En el punto de intersección del estudio de los actos de habla, la investigación de la cortesía, la pragmática histórica y la pragmática de corpus, este estudio también pretende reflexionar sobre algunas cuestiones metodológicas de estas áreas de la lingüística.
Palabras clave: catalán antiguo, cortesía, peticiones, pragmática de corpus, pragmática histórica.

1. Introduction

The present paper aims to highlight patterns of usage of polite directives in Old Catalan, based on a corpus pragmatic analysis of requests from the Computerized Corpus of Old Catalan *(Corpus Informatitzat del Català Antic* [CICA]). Requests belong to the category of directive speech acts and are often performed by indirect means because of requirements of politeness (cf. Searle, 1975). The present study focuses on linguistic means of expressing politeness in Catalan from the late 13th century on and describes the use of some constructions that were conventionally used in polite requests up to the end of the 16th century. Politeness strategies are identified with

corpus linguistic tools in a large dataset composed of historical Catalan texts, covering a substantial period of several centuries. At the intersection of speech act research, politeness studies, historical pragmatics and corpus pragmatics, this study also discusses some methodological challenges of these areas.

2. Theoretical background

Speech act theory originated in the field of philosophy of language, with implications for methodology: classical authors of this research area studied related phenomena on the basis of intuition, introspection, and thought experiments (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969, 1975). Later, researchers in the CCSARP-project (Blum-Kulka – Olshtain, 1984; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) emphasized that intuitive data had to be complemented with empirical research in the study of speech acts. According to this principle, they collected data from DCTs, in order to have a large amount of examples produced in well-defined situations, which made possible an intercultural comparison of speech act phenomena. Unfortunately, these data sources are not accessible for historical research, where, according to Fischer (2004: 730), historical documents are the only firm source of knowledge. Although historical research is necessarily corpus-based, the notion of corpus data is more complex than it seems to be at first sight, and researchers' intuition as an additional data source is always present (cf. Nagy C., 2013; Nagy C. et al., 2018; Németh et al., 2019). Since the study of speech act phenomena has always been an important issue within historical pragmatics, various possibilities of studying speech acts on the basis of written sources have been outlined (cf. Jucker – Taavitsainen, 2000). Taavitsainen and Jucker (2007) summarize the main directions of speech acts studies within historical pragmatics (see also Arnovick, 1999; Jucker – Taavitsainen, 2000; Kohnen, 2000; Traugott – Dasher, 2004 [2002]; Kohnen, 2007; Jucker – Taavitsainen, 2008). They define two substantial methods of studying speech acts historically. The first method is based on searching for speech act verbs, and the second one consists of a thorough qualitative analysis of texts in order to identify each and every realization of a certain speech act type (cf. Kohnen, 2007). This latter method implies a manual analysis, unless pragmatically annotated corpora are accessible.

While corpora have always been a central data source for historical pragmatics, synchronic pragmatics has also become corpus-based to a great extent in the last few decades in the sense that relying on the empirically observable occurrences of various linguistic and pragmatic units in spoken or written corpora has become a methodological norm by now (see Németh T. et al., 2020). With the development of corpus pragmatics, research on language use faces the challenge of how to search for functional phenomena in large electronic corpora (see Aijmer – Rühlemann, 2015; Rühlemann – Aijmer, 2015; Aijmer, 2018; Jucker, 2018; O'Keffee, 2018; Németh T. et al., 2020). The new methodologies elaborated in corpus linguistics and the accessibility

of more and more large electronic corpora can provide new impetus and orientation for historical pragmatics research too.

Issues of speech acts have been at the core of historical pragmatics from the beginning. Of the two basic approaches of corpus linguistics, namely, the corpus-informed and the corpus-driven method, corpus pragmatics traditionally uses the former (cf. Tognini-Bonelli, 2001; O'Keffee, 2018; Simon, 2018). Corpus-based research can follow a form-to-function direction, taking a linguistic form as a starting point, or apply the opposite function-to-form approach (cf. Jucker, 1994; Jacobs – Jucker, 1995). These perspectives are not easy to separate from each other in pragmatics, since in the research practice they usually go together, even if O'Keffee (2018) and Aijmer (2018) summarize corpus pragmatic studies belonging to these two main perspectives separately. O'Keffee (2018) reports, among others, the following three function-to-form studies concerning English language. Schauer and Adolphs (2006) provide a study about expressions of gratitude relying on corpus and DCT data in a way that data collected via DCTs have been used as a basis for concordance searches in a corpus of spoken English. Deutschmann (2003) focuses on explicit apologies in the form of IFIDs (Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices) in a British English spoken corpus, collecting occurrences on the basis of variants of the following words: *afraid, apologise, apology, excuse, forgive, pardon, regret* and *sorry*. He analyzes each utterance via a manual analysis and classifies them functionally and pragmatically in their original contexts. Lutzky and Kehoe (2017) have also searched for apologies in a large electronic corpus, the Birmingham Blog Corpus, on the basis of IFIDs associated with apologies (e.g. *pardon, pardons, pardoned, pardoning*), establishing a collocational profile for each of them. Through combining different types of collocational analysis, unwanted hits can be identified and discarded. Although these studies are reported in a paper summarizing function-to-form analyses, they all – necessarily– start from some linguistic forms.

This is not a mistake, it only shows that the differentiation between form-to-function and function-to-form analyses in most of the cases actually is not a methodological distinction but refers to the focus of the research question. Corpus-based studies all start from a linguistic form, as methods used in the above mentioned studies illustrate. Studies with special focus on functions also search for linguistic units in corpora first, and then, after selecting relevant hits –at least in part– by manual analysis, they address functional issues. Real function-to-form studies are possible only relying on pragmatically annotated corpora (cf. Meyer, 2002), which are available for now only in limited numbers.

3. The speech act of requesting

In everyday language use requests are rarely performed by making explicit the propositional content only. They are usually linguistically more elaborated and are frequently not limited to a single utterance. In most cases they are realized in so-called

request sequences that include more than one utterance. Request sequences are formulated according to politeness and interpersonal considerations that can vary by culture and speech community. The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) studied request variations across languages, and the researchers divided request sequences into three main segments: (i) Attention Getter/Alerter (address terms, etc.), (ii) Head Act (core of the request sequence, the request proper), (iii) Supportive Move(s) (before or after Head Act). Consider the request sequence in (1) from Old Catalan.

(1)   –Si no me n'en gan vós me havets dit que sóts entrat en infern; e no solament una vegada, mas dues. Prech-vos que ·m vullats **dir**, si desplaer no y trobats, **què és infern**, car molt ho desig saber. (Lo somni 'The dream' [B. Metge], 1449)
'If I'm not mistaken, you told me that you had been in hell; and not only once, but twice. I ask you that you may want to **tell me**, if you don't mind, **what hell is like**, because I'd really like to know it.'

The utterance in (1) shows a request sequence from Old Catalan, formulated according to politeness considerations. The lexical items *dir què és infern* 'tell what hell is like' express the propositional content of the request. They would have been enough to perform this request in a single utterance with a simple imperative verbal form. However, the actual linguistic form is much more developed. The illocutionary point of directive speech acts, and among them requests, is that they are attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something (Searle, 1976: 11). Directives are face-threatening speech acts by nature, inasmuch as they limit the addressee's freedom of action (cf. Brown – Levinson, 1987 [1978]), thus speakers, in order to minimize the imposition, often employ indirect strategies rather than direct ones when performing them (cf. Searle, 1975), which makes directives a good source of linguistic means of indirectness and politeness. In the first utterance of the sequence in (1) ('If I'm not mistaken, you told me that you had been in hell; and not only once, but twice.'), the requester introduces his wish emphasizing that the hearer be able to comply with the request, which is the preparatory condition of directives [1]. The second utterance composes the *Head Act,* the request proper that combines different strategies of requesting. One of these strategies is using the 1Sg present indicative form of the speech act verb *pregar* 'ask, pray' as a performative, the other one is the use of a construction with the verb *voler* 'want'. The latter introduces a kind of indirectness: the speaker does not ask the hearer directly to provide a piece of information, but only to have the willingness to do so.

Finally, the passages *si desplaer no y trobats* 'if you don't mind' and *car molt ho desig saber* 'because I'd really like to know it' complete the request sequence, supposedly added due to politeness requirements. Example in (1) does not include any address term, thus, it

---

[1] "H is able to perform A" (Searle, 1975: 71)

can be interpreted in the theoretical framework presented above as follows: *Prech -vos que ·m vullats dir què és infern* 'I ask you that you want to tell me what hell is like', is the Head Act, and further segments of the sequence all belong to Supportive Moves and they are optional. A more thorough analysis of the sequence in (1) would be possible if we take into consideration further factors such as the participants, place and time of the conversation, information about the document that contains this written example, the social and cultural environment in which the document was produced, etc. But the more we broaden the context, the more we have to renounce automated methods of analysis. The corpus method is somewhat contradictory compared to a truly deep pragmatic analysis, and this is why it is usually complemented by manual analysis in pragmatics. The efficiency of relying on large corpora in pragmatics depends on how we can reconcile quantitative and qualitative methods (cf. Navarro, 2008).

4. Speech act verbs in the historical linguistic research into speech acts

Speech act verbs (hereinafter: SA-verbs) are lexical units that name an action performed in saying something, but the relationship between SA-verbs and the actions they name are far from straightforward[2]. Already Searle (1976: 2) emphasized that "[d]ifferences in illocutionary verbs are a good guide but by no means a sure guide to differences in illocutionary acts."

First of all, the occurrence of a SA-verb does not always coincide with the performance of the speech act named. SA-verbs can occur in descriptive or performative uses (see Austin, 1962, and for the same in historical pragmatics, see Taavitsainen – Jucker, 2007: 112-113). In the case of a descriptive use, the SA-verb occurs in a report on a performance of a speech act –although not each and every SA-verb is suitable for that– while in the case of a performative use the SA-verb occurs as an IFID in an utterance performing a speech act. Performative uses are usually characterized by certain formal features. The typical form of performative verbs is the first person present indicative verbal form. These formal constraints usually do not characterize speech act verbs in their descriptive uses. However, there are no obvious formal characteristics that would define performative and descriptive uses, therefore, they should be studied together (as for atypical performative verbs, consider examples 2 and 3 below, and examples provided in Austin, 1962; Traugott – Dasher, 2004 [2002]: 190-191 and Verschueren, 1999: 208).

There is no one-to-one correspondence between SA-verbs and speech acts, because the speech act verb occurring in an utterance does not always describe the speech act that is performed, thus, it is problematic to determine whether an utterance with the verb 'ask' is a request, supplication, an order, or a command. On this account, Taavitsainen and Jucker (2007) propose the joined research into speech acts belonging

---

[2] For a detailed discussion of theoretical and methodological issues concerning the relationship between speech act verbs and speech acts, see Nagy C. (2011).

to the same semantic space. In Taavitsainen and Jucker (2007: 110), they also posit that in the case of descriptive uses, SA-verbs and speech acts have a closer correspondence. These uses reveal minimally how somebody interprets the speech act s/he is reporting. In contrast, performative uses reveal the original linguistic form of the utterance more straightforwardly, while descriptive uses do not, even if they can also preserve some features of it.

In order to perform a speech act it is not necessary to use any SA-verb at all, performative occurrences can vary according to speech acts and speech communities. Languages can differ in the respect that they name different speech acts lexically (for problems of these phenomena in speech act research, see Verschueren, 1999: 132), and they apply different SA-verbs in performative uses (Traugott – Dasher, 2004 [2002]: 225). Some languages exhibit a preference for performative verbs in speech act realizations, while others avoid them. For instance, in Japanese performative verbs are rare, while indirect speech acts are used more often. The variable concept of politeness across cultures and languages implies that every speech community judges acceptable forms of language use in different communicative situations in their particular ways (Traugott – Dasher, 2004 [2002]: 193-194). The frequency of occurrence of performative verbs does not only depend on languages but also on type of speech acts. For instance, in earlier historical periods of English, a frequent use of performative verbs was documented when performing directives, while speech acts in the field of verbal aggression were documented almost exclusively in descriptive uses (cf. Taavitsainen – Jucker, 2007: 135).

Old Catalan does not avoid the use of performative verbs when performing directives (cf. results in Nagy C., 2011, 2020). Performative strategies to utter requests are abundantly documented in 14–16th century texts of the Computerized Corpus of Old Catalan [CICA], which makes possible to study Old Catalan politeness phenomena starting from occurrences of SA-verbs. Performative strategies belong to the most direct strategies described in Blum-Kulka and Olhstain's (1984) categorization. In their famous cross-cultural study on speech act realization, they differentiate between nine request strategies at three levels of directness: (i) the level of direct, explicit requests, (ii) the level of conventional indirectness, and (iii) the level of non-conventional directness. Describing the interlanguage behavior of Catalan learners of English in making requests, Pérez i Parent (2002) also refers to request strategies available in modern Catalan. She does not find any examples of an explicit performative strategy, but she adds in a footnote that this strategy does exist in Catalan. The example she provides, however, (*Et dic que callis* 'I tell you to be [lit. that be] silent', Pérez i Parent, 2002: 151) is not an example of this strategy, because the verb *dir* 'say, tell' refers only to the locution but does not describe the illocutionary point of the utterance. The explicit performative strategy means that the speaker names explicitly the illocutionary point of the utterance (for example, *us prech que* 'I ask you that'). A hedged performative strategy is similar, but the lexeme that describes the illocutionary force of the utterance is

embedded in another grammatical structure (for example, *vos vul pregar que* 'I want to ask you that'). Mediaeval Catalan seems to be different in this regard. Examples of performative strategies are abundant in 14–16th century historical documents, so we can find several directive utterances performed by these strategies through searching for SA-verbs. Since speakers usually combine more than one strategy (cf. example 1), with this method we can find other linguistic means of politeness as well that we can study independently of SA-verbs in a further step.

5. Data and methods of the present study

The aim of the present study is to retrieve as many request sequences as possible by searching for occurrences of SA-verbs and to have in this way enough examples for an effective analysis of linguistic means of politeness in Old Catalan. By searching for SA-verbs, directives performed by other strategies remain invisible, but this method offers the possibility of checking large corpora and –as we research similar contexts– to retrieve a large number of functionally similar utterances (cf. Fischer, 2004, 2007: 15-17).

The present pilot study has been accomplished relying on the *Corpus Informatitzat del Català Antic* (CICA) ['Computerized Corpus of Old Catalan'] (http://www.cica.cat, see Clavería – Torruella, 2012), a collection of literary and non-literary Catalan texts from the origins of the language to the 18th century, compiled in a project directed by Joan Torruella, Manuel Pérez Saldanya, and Josep Martines. It aims to show how politeness phenomena can be studied on large corpora, in a historical perspective. The central issue of the study is the realization of directive speech acts in earlier stages of the Catalan language. The methodology combines the form-to-function and the function-to-form perspectives. It consists in searching for occurrences of two frequent SA-verbs of mediaeval Catalan that name directive speech acts, namely, *pregar* 'ask, pray' and *suplicar* 'supplicate, beg, beseech'. The concordances include utterances that are Head Acts of requests or descriptions of requests. The main clauses contain an occurrence of either *pregar* or *suplicar*, while the subordinate clauses express the propositional content of the request. However, the latter frequently contains some "extra" constructions that can be related to politeness (cf. example in 1). By sifting through the hits manually, utterances that include such verbal constructions have been selected for further formal and functional analysis in their original contexts.

I have searched for both present and past tense forms of *pregar* and *suplicar* in order to find descriptive uses as well as performative uses of these SA-verbs. Since grammatical forms reflect orthographic and dialectal variation in the way they are written, I have not yet searched for every possible variant. As regards the verb *pregar* 'ask, pray', I have checked 3,286 occurrences altogether. The number of occurrences in CICA is provided in parenthesis for each grammatical form: *prec* (212), *prech* (733), *pregam* (743), *prega* (110), (-)*pregà* (487), *preguí* (10), *pregue* (120), *pregué* (15), *pregava* (196), *pregave* (38), *pregar* (371), and *pregant* (251).

The checked variants of the verb *suplicar* were the following: *suplicar* (81) / *supplicar* (114), *suplic* (17) / *supplic* (3) / *suplich* (184) / *supplich* (139), *suplicam* (64) / *supplicam* (106), *supliquí* (4), *suppliqué* (1), *suplique* (77), *supplique* (59), *suplica* (71), *supplica* (172), *suplicá* (73), supplicá (58), *suplicava* (32), *supplicava* (17), *suplicave* (5), *suplicant* (129), *supplicant* (159), *soplicar* (35) / *sopplicar* (2), *soplic* (19) / *sopplic* (0) / *soplich* (33) / *sopplich* (0), *soplicam* (8) / *sopplicam* (0), *sopliquí* (5), *soppliqué* (0), *soplique* (189) / *sopplique* (0), *soplica* (15) / *sopplica* (1), *soplicà* (4) / *sopplicà* (0), *soplicava* (3) / *sopplicava* (0), *soplicave* (2), *soplicant* (68), and *sopplicant* (1). CICA contains altogether 1,950 occurrences of these verbal forms of *suplicar*.

6. Politeness strategies in 13–16th century Catalan

6.1. Directive utterances in CICA with the verbs *pregar* and *suplicar*

The CICA corpus categorizes historical texts according to time intervals of half a century. Temporal distributions of the checked variants of *pregar* and *suplicar* are illustrated in Figure 1 and show a century's worth of discrepancy in time.
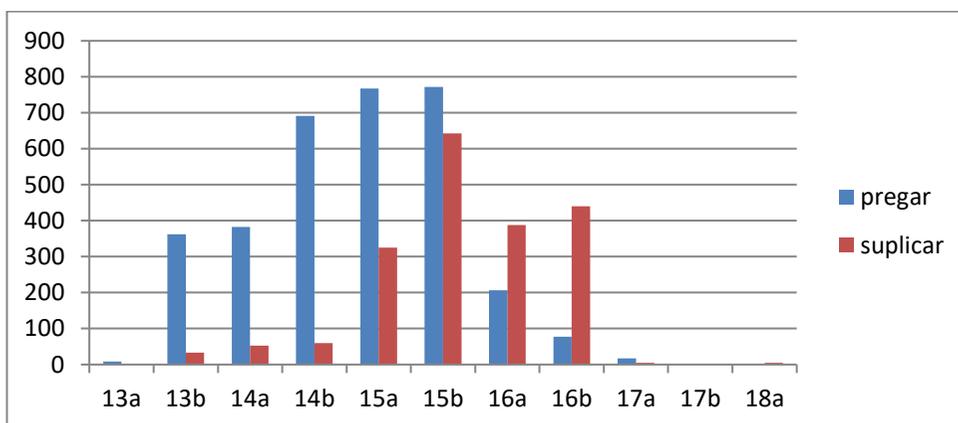

Figure 1. *Temporal distribution of checked variants of* pregar *and* suplicar

As for the 3,286 occurrences of *pregar*, in 512 cases I have found some extra grammatical constructions in the Head Act of the request sequence that do not contribute to the propositional content of the request. This is a relatively high number, given that directives could be performed in Old Catalan with a simple imperative or subjunctive verbal form[3]. Moreover, these 512 examples of polite grammatical constructions include only the most frequent constructions and only verbal

---

[3] As in other Romance languages, imperative mood exists in Catalan only for second person singular and plural, for other persons the present subjunctive forms are used, while in the case of negative orders the subjunctive forms preceded by *no* 'not' are used for all persons.

constructions[4]. The most frequent verbal periphrasis in these contexts is the one with a subjunctive form of the verb *voler* 'want', which occurred 358 times independently, and in another 31 cases in combination with another verbal construction. In contexts of *pregar,* the most frequent combinations involve the verbs *voler* 'want' and *plaure* 'please'.

The proportion of verbal constructions of politeness in contexts of *suplicar* was more than twice that in contexts of *pregar,* I have found 689 verbal periphrases of politeness. Verbal constructions with *voler* 'want' were the most frequent also in contexts of *suplicar.* They occurred 281 times independently, and another 63 times they were combined with other periphrases. In contexts of *suplicar,* constructions with *voler* tend to appear together with occurrences of the construction *ser de su mercè* 'be at your mercy' (cf. Table 1).

The directive utterances found mostly include constructions of politeness that refer to H[earer]'s willingness with respect to a future action, such as the following: *voler (SUBJ)[5] que* 'may want (SUBJ) that', *voler (SUBJ)* + infinitive (hereinafter: INF) 'may want (SUBJ) + INF', *plaure (SUBJ) que* 'may it please that', *plaure (SUBJ)* + INF 'may it please + INF', *ser (SUBJ) (de) su merçè que* 'may it be at your mercy that', *ser (SUBJ) (de) su merçè* + INF 'may it be at your mercy + INF', *fer (SUBJ) gràcia/ mercé que* 'may show grace/mercy that', *fer (SUBJ) gràcia/ mercé (de/en)* + INF 'may show grace/mercy + INF'. The only exception has been the construction *deure (SUBJ)* + INF 'have to (SUBJ) + INF', which concerns reasons for complying with the request. Distributions are presented in Table 1.

	pregar (n=3,286)	*suplicar* (n=1,950)
voler	358 (~11%)	281 (~14%)
plaure	94 (~3%)	159 (~8%)
ser/ fer mercé/ gràcia	1	145 (~7%)
deure	27	11
mixed	with *voler* (31) + 1	with *voler* (64) + 29
total	**512 (~16%)**	**689 (~35%)**

Table 1. The most frequent polite constructions in contexts of the speech act verbs *pregar* and *suplicar*

Politeness constructions attach to both SA-verbs in different ways. *Pregar* is a neutral lexeme, while *suplicar* emphasizes the humility of the request instead. Speakers opt for the verb *suplicar* supposedly in situations with higher politeness requirements. While

[4] In the present study I only take into consideration the most frequent politeness constructions. Some occurrences of the following constructions have also been found: *us sia de plaer que, fes plaer de INF, que ·ls fos plasent que, ·ls fos plassent FI, sia de sa benignitat i clemència FI, sia de son servei / sia servit + INF és dignarse de + INF,* as well as if-clauses as e.g. *si us és plasent,* and some non-verbal constructions, such as *per sa mercé, per sa gràcia.* The description of all of these exceeds the limitations of the present paper.
[5] Subjunctive mood.

constructions with *voler* 'want' distribute more evenly in contexts of *pregar* and *suplicar*, constructions with *plaure* 'please' and *ser (de) (SUBJ) su merçè que* 'may it be at your mercy that' are distributed differently: they are both associated more strongly with the verb *suplicar*. Overall, contexts of *suplicar* contain more constructions of politeness than those of *pregar*.

6.2. Speech act verbs in performative and descriptive uses

As discussed above in section 4, SA-verbs can occur as performatives or in a description of the performance of a speech act. In the former case, the verb form is usually characterized by certain formal features: first person singular, indicative mood, present tense. However, there are kinds of performative use when the performative verb is embedded in another grammatical construction (hedged performative strategy), and in these cases the SA-verb can appear virtually in any grammatical form. In the case of a descriptive use, the SA-verb reports on a past, present or future realization of a speech act. This use does not necessarily reflect the linguistic shape of the original utterance, but certain –actual or possible– features can appear. Instances of the *voler*-constructions have been found in both types of context. Consider examples (2)–(4).

(2)   e axí us **prech** que vós me **vullats dir** son nom e tant com sapiats de sos fets. (Curial e Güelfa, 1474)
        'so I **ask you that you may want to tell** me his name and all that you know about his deeds.'[6]

(3)   Ý perquè jo puga donar bona rahó de mi mateix, vos **vul pregar** que vosaltres **vullau testificar** la veritat de totes coses, ý com l'é servit molt leyalment.» (Un memorial de la guerra contra el turc 2, 1549)
        'And to the end that I could justify myself, **I want to ask** you that you **may want to testify** the truth of everything, and that I have served him very faithfully.'

(4)   Desijant lo venerable confessor saber alguna de les coses que la benaventurada sancta vist havia, carament la **pregà li volgués revelar** algun d'aquells divinals secrets que ab tan incomparable glòria havia mostrat veure. (Vida de santa Caterina de Sena, 1499)
        'Since the venerable confessor wished to know some of the things the blessed Saint woman had seen, he kindly **asked her** [if] **she might want to reveal** some of those divine secrets that she had shown to having seen with such an incomparable glory.'

---

[6] As far as the politeness constructions discussed in this study, I always provide a literal translation of the original.

While the verb *pregar* appears in (2) as a performative in the typical 1Sg present tense form, in (3) it occurs as an embedded infinitive (*vos vul pregar* 'I want to ask you'). In contrast, the example in (4) demonstrates a descriptive use. All three utterances, however, include a *voler*-construction in their subordinate clauses, while the requested action is expressed in the infinitive. Although occurrences of the *voler*-construction have been found in contexts of SA-verbs in both performative and descriptive uses, they were more commonly documented in performative contexts, independently of whether they were used alone or in combination with other constructions (cf. Tables 2 and 3). This is maybe due to the fact that authors of texts aimed to reflect a realistic picture of communication. Descriptive parts also contain politeness constructions, even if to a lesser extent, so they can also reveal some formal characteristics of polite communication.

pregar	*voler que / voler* FI	*voler + plaure*	*voler + fer gràcia*
performative	206	28	0
descriptive	152	2	1
total	**358**	**31**	**1**

Table 2. Distribution of *voler*-constructions in performative vs. descriptive uses of *pregar*

suplicar	*voler que / voler* FI	*voler + ser de su mercè*	*voler + plaure*	*voler + fer gràcia/mercé*	other combinations
performative	180	27	6	5	5
descriptive	101	12	3	0	7
total	**281**	**39**	**9**	**5**	**12**

Table 3. Distribution of *voler*-constructions in performative vs. descriptive uses of *suplicar*

In the case of requests directed at a divine person, the question arises whether the utterance can be conceived of as a directive speech act (request) at all, or rather as an expressive (expression of a wish) (cf. also examples in Nagy C., 2020). Furthermore, in some of these contexts it is not easy to decide whether the SA-verb is in a descriptive or a performative use. Consider utterances in (5) and (6).

(5)   ý per aquella gran dolor que la vostra santíssima Mare tingué al peu de la creu, humilment vos **supplique**, dolç Jesús, **vullau resucitar** la mia peccadora ànima que en lo sepulcre del meu cos stà morta. (Vida de Sant Vicent Ferrer, 1524)
         'by the great pain your very blessed Mother had at the foot of the cross, **I** humbly **beseech** you, sweet Jesus, **you may want to resurrect** my sinful soul that is dead in the sepulchre of my body.'

(6)   E dexant-me de vanes paraules, perquè tenim la mort vehïna, dich que no som ara en temps ni en hora de tenir moltes rahons, sinó recórrer al divinal auxili, per què **suplich** a la misericòrdia del meu senyor Jhesucrist **que vulla haver mercé** de la mia ànima e de la tua. (Tirant lo Blanch, 1499)
'And leaving behind valueless words, because I am close to death, I say that this is no time to talk too much, but only to appeal to God's aid, so **I beseech** my Lord Jesus Christ's mercifulness **that he may want to have mercy** on my soul and yours.'

The utterance in (5) is directly addressed to Jesus and contains also an address term (*dolç Jesús* 'sweet Jesus'), thus the verbal form *supplique* 'I beseech' is obviously used performatively. In contrast, the utterance in (6) is not directly addressed to Jesus, but it is a sort of description of S[peaker]'s own performance of a request, but he seems to perform the speech act hereby. A similar use is when somebody performs a speech act on someone else's behalf, as in (7):

(7)   – Senyor –dix lo missatger–, [...] per què la duquessa lo **prega** molt que **vulla tornar**, (Curial e Güelfa, 15th century)
'– My Lord –said the messenger–, […] so the duchess **asks** him very much that **he may want to return**,'

These are problematic cases from the point of view of the performative vs. descriptive distinction, but they are still useful sources of information concerning linguistic means of politeness.

6.3. Polite constructions in contexts of *pregar* and *suplicar*

The most frequent politeness construction is formed with a subjunctive form of the verb *voler* (cf. 8). According to the literal interpretation of these occurrences, the speaker does not ask the addressee directly to perform a certain action, but only to have the willingness to do so.

(8)   – Johan, sobre totes quoses **te prech que vulles aconsolar** la mia Mare. (Les Corts de Jerusalem, 1424)
'Johan, first of all I **ask you that you may want to comfort** my Mother.'

The utterance in (9) shows a construction with the verb *plaure* (for a detailed analysis of the formation and use of *plaure*-constructions, see Nagy C., 2020 and Nagy C., forthcoming).

(9)   E **prech a vós**, Tirant lo Blanch, **vos plàcia dir-me** los noms de tots aquests
        senyors que açí present stan, perquè la mia ànima ne reste aconsolada. (Tirant
        lo Blanch, 1499)
        'And **I ask you**, Tirant the White, **may it please you to tell me** the names of
        all these gentlemen here, in order to bring me a peace of mind hereby.'

Further constructions that refer to H's willingness are *ser (de) su merçè que / ser (de) su
merçè* + INF 'be at your mercy that / + INF', *fer gràcia/ mercé que / (de/en)* + INF 'show
grace / mercy that / (of) + INF', as the one in (10).

(10)   Per què **supplich** a vostra senyoria **que sia de sa mercé donar** al dit en
        Leonard fe e creença de tot ço que a aquella dirà de ma part sobre les dites
        coses. (Epistolari de Ferran I d'Antequera, 15th century)
        'So **I beg** your lordship that **may it be at your mercy to accept** the truth of
        everything that the before-mentioned Leonard will tell you on my behalf about
        those things.'

Constructions with the verb *deure* 'have to, be obligated to' also appear in some
contexts. These occurrences do not concern H's willingness but the necessity or
obligation to comply with the request, consider (11).

(11)   Cor yo veg moltz christians duptar de la vida de la ànima aprés la mort de la
        carn, **prec**-te que tu ·m **deges dir** ço qui per rahon se ·n pot proar hó per
        exempli mostrar, per tal que aquels qui y dupten sàpien que la ànima no fenex
        ne mor ab la carn, ans viu per tostemps. (Diàlegs [St. Gregori], 1349)
        'For as much as I perceive that many Christians do doubt of the immortality of
        the soul, after the dissolution of the body: **I beseech** you that you **have to
        provide** some reasons for proof thereof: or the examples of some souls which
        have testified the same: to the end that those which be troubled with any such
        temptations, may learn that the soul doth not die together with the body, but
        lives forever.'[7]

In some contexts more than one construction appears together with others,
providing a wide grammatical variety of combinations. In most of the cases an element
of the combination is a construction with *voler* 'want' (cf. 12–13).

---

[7] Translation in (11) is partially based on The Dialogues of Saint Gregory the Great. Access date:
August, 11, 2021. Available at: http://www.saintsbooks.net/books/Pope%20St.%20Gregory
%20the%20Great%20-%20Dialogues.pdf.

(12)   Carament vos **pregam** que **us plàcia vuylats creura** d'açò que us dirà de part nostra e … (Els primers documents del primer president de la Generalitat de Catalunya, 1374)

      '**We** kindly **ask you** that **may it please you** (that) **you may want to believe** him what he tells you on my behalf and …'

(13)   Com Tirant véu que ja eren a la fi del dinar, dreçà les noves a la emperadriu e **supplicà**-la que **fos de sa mercé li fes gràcia que** la altesa sua li **volgués declarar** una qüestió en què stava molt duptós. (Tirant lo Blanch, 1499)

      'When Tirant saw that the meal was nearly over, he told the empress the news and **supplicated** her that **might it be at her mercy [that/and] she might show him mercy that** Her Majesty **may want to clear up** a matter he was uncertain about.'

As examples (12)–(13) demonstrate, these grammatical constructions appear in directive utterances, where the speaker attempts to get the addressee to do something. The strategies exemplified above are theoretically interesting from at least two points of view. According to their literal interpretations, S asks H to have the willingness to perform a certain action (secondary illocutionary act), however, s/he actually tries to get her/him to perform that action (primary illocutionary act). That is, the propositional contents of the primary and secondary illocutionary acts are slightly different. However, they both are directive speech acts, in contrast with indirect requests provided in Searle (1975: 64-67), where the primary and the secondary illocutionary acts have different illocutionary forces. Even so, there is a kind of indirectness within the illocutionary act type: a directive speech act is performed by performing another directive speech act with a different propositional content.

Furthermore, these utterances do not fit Searle's (1975: 72) generalization about indirect requests, which he made on the basis of English data:

> S can make an indirect directive by either stating that or asking whether there are good or overriding reasons for doing A[ction], **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)

Searle (1975: 72) later added that "[t]hese are generalizations and not rules", and Catalan utterances really differ from this generalization: S neither states, nor asks whether H wants to do A, but S asks H to want to do so. Moreover, this strategy seems to be very common in 14–16th century Catalan. Due to length constraints of this paper, I will only discuss the use of the *voler*-construction in detail below. Since I have examined the use of grammatical constructions formed with subjunctive forms of the

verb *plaure* 'please' in some earlier papers (cf. Nagy C., 2011, 2020 and forthcoming), I also provide a brief summary of my results concerning these strategies.

7. Constructions with the verb *plaure* 'please'

The *Diccionari català-valencià-balear* [Catalan–Valencian–Balear Dictionary] mentions polite uses of the subjunctive form *plàcia* (of the verb *plaure*), describing various uses together:

> *Plàcia:* forma de subjuntiu emprada per a suplicar o expressar desig ['Form of subjunctive, used to ask something or express a wish.']. *Plàcia a Déu que en la sua santa glòria nos pugam trobar*, Llull Blanq. 5. *E plàcia-us ensenyar a mi tant*, Llull Gentil 60. *Plàcia't que vages pendre aquell regne*, Muntaner Cròn., c. 54. *Senyor, plàcie-us fer-me gràcia la vege*, Paris e Viana 23.

From a grammatical point of view, however, the issue concerns two structures: (i) the 3Sg subjunctive form of *plaure (plàcia, plagués)*[8] + indirect object (Experiencer) + *que* 'may it please somebody that', (ii) the 3Sg subjunctive form of *plaure (plàcia, plagués)* + indirect object (Experiencer) + infinitive 'may it please somebody to do something'. The grammatical structure in (ii), with 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 (Nagy C., forthcoming).
Consider examples in (14) and in (15) from CICA:

(14)   E **jo pregué** misser Johan Corí que **li plagués et fos son plaer que jo** pogués anar a la ciutat d'Estives al senyor inffant; et ell dix que per amor de mi que m' espararia ·IIII· jorns, la qual cosa jo li grahí molt. (Crònica [R. Muntaner], 1374)
'And **I begged** micer Juan Corí that **might it please him and might it be his pleasure that I** could go to the city of Thebes, to the Lord Infante; and he said that, for love of me, he would wait for me four days, for which I was very grateful to him.'[9]

(15)   O, amichs meus! Yo us **prech** hajau mercé de mi! Hajau mercé de mi e **plàcia-us veure e mirar** la tribulació mia e la gran angústia en què só posada! (Vita Christi [I. de Villena], 1499)

---

[8] *Plàcia* is present tense subjunctive, while *plagués* past tense subjunctive form of the verb *plaure*.
[9] The translation in (14) is partially based on the English translation of Ramon Muntaner's Chronicle, translated by Lady Goodenough. Cambridge, Ontario: In Parentheses Publications, 2000. Access date: August, 11, 2021. Available at: http://www.yorku.ca/inpar/muntaner_goodenough.pdf.

> 'Oh, my friends! I **ask** you (that) you may have mercy on me! You may have mercy on me and **may it please you to look and see** my tribulation and the anguish I am in there.'

The utterance in (14) is a permission requesting directive, in other words, a request aimed at getting the addressee to allow the speaker to do a certain action. The addressee would be able to give that permission by expressing her/his pleasure, because the verb *plaure* 'please' was used as a performative in mediaeval Catalan, suitable to give permission[10]. In this sense, the utterance can have a literal interpretation.

In contrast, in (15) the speaker asks H's permission concerning an action that is H's own action. One of the consequences is that infinitival subordination becomes available, and the other one is that the literal interpretation is not possible anymore. Indirectness emerges, because S actually aims to get H to do something, and not only to get her/him to express her/his pleasure. The imperative force of the utterance, however, is transferred from the action itself to H's willingness. The most obvious reason for this can be politeness. In the following sections I turn to the description of constructions formed with the verb *voler* 'want'.

8. Constructions with the verb *voler* 'want'

The Catalan–Valencian–Balear Dictionary (https://dcvb.iec.cat/) makes reference to polite uses with the verb *voler*:

> VOLER v. tr.: cast. querer. (…) En el llenguatge antic s'usava sovint voler expletivament com a complement de cortesia de verbs com pregar, demanar, plaure, etc. Plàcia-us que vullats que nós nos recullam ab vós (frase que podria reduir-se a «Plàcia-us que nós nos recullam ab vós», suprimint-se la frase que vullats, com també es podrien suprimir frases anàlogues en els exemples que segueixen)[11], Muntaner Còn., c. 49. *E'ls pregam justament que ells ab bon cor y ferm volguessen-nos servir (=els pregam que ab bon cor e ferm ens servissen)*, Pere IV, Cròn. 304. *Plàcie-us donchs que la muller mia me vullau restituir,*

---

[10] Consider the following fragment from the same dictionary: "e) Plau al senyor Rei: fórmula usada antigament en els documents, per expressar l'acceptació que el Rei atorgava d'allò que li demanaven o proposaven. (Cf. doc. a. 1365, ap. Bofarull Mar. 82; doc. a. 1378, ap. Capmany Mem. ii, 151; etc.)." ['e) *Plau al senyor Rei* 'It pleases the King': a formula used in ancient documents to express the King's acceptance of something that was asked or proposed to him'].

[11] 'VOLER v. tr. ['want', transitive verb]: cast. *querer* [Spanish *querer* 'want']. In the ancient language *voler* was frequently used expletively, as a politeness complement of verbs, such as *pregar*, *demanar*, *plaure*, etc. *Plàcia-us que vullats que nós nos recullam ab vós* (sentence that could be reduced to «Plàcia-us que nós nos recullam ab vós», omitting the phrase *que vullats*, just like the analogous phrases could be omitted in the following examples).'

Katalin Nagy C.

Metge Somni iii. *Us tindré a molta gràcia que us vullau emprar de mi*, Tirant, c. 87. *Per ço't soplich, per cortesia, | vulles venir ab mi allà*, Somni J. Joan 1682.

The dictionary mentions the verb *plaure* in parallel with the SA-verbs *pregar* and *demanar* and refers to the construction with *voler* as an expletive, "a politeness complement" of theirs. In fact, the verb *plaure* had a dual function in that period. It had uses as a performative (cf. fn. 10), but in other contexts it appeared in the subordinate clause as a politeness construction (cf. examples in 9, 14 and 15). Different uses of *plaure* appear together in this dictionary entry, in spite of the fact that this verb occurred as a performative only in non-infinitival constructions with the conjunction *que* 'that'. Furthermore, the entry does not provide any example of infinitival constructions where *plaure* would form part of a politeness strategy. In summary, the verbs *plaure, pregar* and *demanar* do not have always the same grammatical and functional status. This is also reflected in the fact that the example *Plàcia-us que vullats que nós nos recullam ab vós* 'May it please you to order that we embark with you' could be complemented with a performative verb: *[Vos **pregam** que] plàcia-us que vullats que nós nos recullam ab vós* '[We ask you that] may it please you to order that we embark with you'.

At a previous stage of research I already studied constructions with *voler* on a small corpus (cf. Nagy C., 2011), with a methodology different from the present one. Nagy C. (2011) presents an analysis of texts published in the volume *Parlaments a les corts catalanes*, a compilation of various speeches, delivered at the Catalan Courts between 1355 and 1519. I searched for subjunctive forms of *voler*, and then studied the hits in their broader contexts in order to find SA-verbs that helped to reveal the illocutionary point of utterances. I found occurrences of the verbs *pregar* 'ask, pray', *suplicar* 'supplicate, beg, beseech', *encarregar* 'order, entrust', *requerir* 'require', *amonestar* 'admonish', and *exortar* 'exhort' in the performative use, while examples of the verbs *dir* 'say, tell', *pregar* 'ask, pray', *suplicar* 'supplicate, beg, beseech', *demanar* 'ask', *encarregar* 'order, entrust', and *cridar* 'call' appeared in the descriptive use.

Sporadic references in the literature regarding the strategy of appealing to H's willingness suggest that it was in use in the Middle Ages in a wider geographical area covering various languages. Montgomery (1998: 105) discusses possible ways of performing directives in mediaeval Spanish epic and mentions the construction "*querer* 'want' + INF" as a periphrasis used to mitigate the imperative force of requests. Menéndez Pidal, as quoted in Beardsley (1921: 34), maintains that the construction "*querer* + INF" "makes requests more powerful" and characterizes it as an "almost fully superfluous periphrasis" in the sense that it does not contribute to the meaning of the utterance. The characterization as an expletive in the above mentioned dictionary reflects a similar explanation for Old Catalan. However, Beardsley (1921: 36) itself considers that the use of this periphrasis makes requests more polite, because the imperative form could be avoided. This is not correct, because the imperative is not avoided: it only appears on another verb. In addition, Beardsley mentions a similar

French construction with the subjunctive form of the verb 'want' (*veuillez*), which supposedly was a polite form. In summary, according to previous literature, the parallel Spanish and French constructions mitigated, made more intensive, or more polite the directive utterances.

Occurrences of the Old Catalan *voler*-construction have appeared evenly in contexts of the checked variants of *pregar* and *suplicar*, their temporal distributions are given in Figure 2.
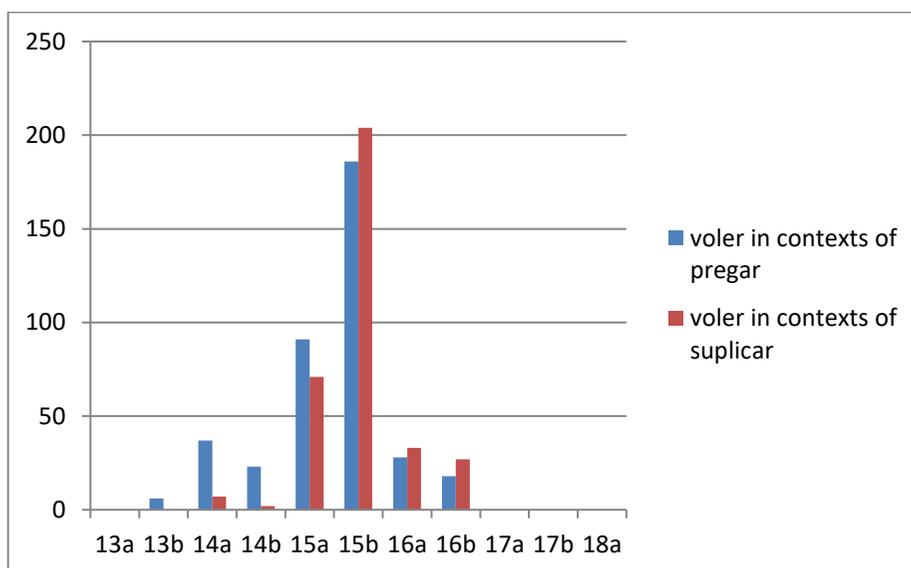

Figure 2. *Temporal distribution of* voler-*constructions in contexts of the verbs* pregar *and* suplicar

As Figure 2 shows, constructions with *voler* appear in contexts of both speech act verbs nearly in the same period, from the second half of the 13th century to the second half of the 16th. Their distributions do not follow the discrepancy in time between the uses of these SA-verbs (cf. Figure 1), which perhaps means that the *voler*-construction had an independent usage and we can expect occurrences also in utterances without SA-verbs. Occurrences begin to appear by the end of the 13th century and are still found in the 16th century, when their use begins to decrease. Occurrences are very common in the 15th century, when both *pregar* and *suplicar* were in use.

As it has been the case with the verb *plaure*, the verb *voler* can also occur in different grammatical constructions. Distributions are shown in Table 4.

pregar (n=358 + 31)		*suplicar* (n=281 + 63)	
pregar que voler (SUBJ) + FI	247	*suplicar que voler* (SUBJ) + FI	149
pregar voler (SUBJ) + FI	95	*suplicar voler* (SUBJ) + FI	123
pregar que voler que + SUBJ	15	*suplicar que voler (que)* + SUBJ	2
pregar (de) voler + FI	1	*suplicar (de) voler* + FI	7
voler + plaure	30	*voler + sia de su mercè*	38
voler + fer gràcia	1	*voler + plaure*	8
		voler + fer gràcia/mercé	5
		other combinations (*voler + ser plasent* (3), *voler + deure* (3), *voler + es de son servey* (1), *voler + ser servit* (1), *voler + ser de sa benignitat e clemència* (1), *voler + plaure + ser sa mercé* (2), *voler + ser sa mercé + fer gràcia* (1))	12

Table 4. Grammatical constructions with *voler* in contexts of *pregar* and *suplicar*

In contexts of politeness, the verb *voler* can occur in a subordinate clause introduced by the conjunction *que* 'that' or in an infinitival construction (cf. 16 and 17, respectively). The former construction (*voler que*) is based on the social and power relations in the situation: the hearer has the power to allow a situation to exist by expressing her/his wish with respect to that situation, and the speaker asks her/him to do so. In other words, a literal interpretation is possible. This use has been sporadically documented in the corpus.

(16)   De so vos **prech** [que] vós ho **hulats que** vaja an vostre [com]paiya. E dix que li plau. (Questa del sant grasal, 1399)
         'So **I ask** you [that] **you may want that** I go in your company. And he said that it pleased him well.'

The other type includes infinitival subordinations. The most elaborated variant is when the speech act verb is followed by the conjunction *que*, the subjunctive form of *voler* and the infinitive, as in the following example (presented in section 5.2 as 2 and repeated here for convenience as 17).

(17)   e axí us **prech que vós me vullats dir** son nom e tant com sapiats de sos fets. (Curial e Güelfa, 1474)
         'so I **ask you that you may want to tell me** his name and all that you know about his deeds'

The conjunction *que* is optional, as the grammatical elaboration of (18) without *que* illustrates.

(18)   **Pregam**-vos ab molta affecció la **vullau pendre** al vostre spital e nodrir-la en aquell, per reverència de nostre senyor Déus. E més, vos **pregam vullau pagar** a la dona Na Úrsola, filla d'En Berthomeu Martí, de la Pobla, per cinch setmanes que l'à alletada. (Epistolari de la València Medieval II-3, 1474)
'**We ask** you with great affection **you may want to admit** her to your hospital and to nourish her there, for reverence of our Lord God. Furthermore, **we ask** you, **you may want to pay** to Lady Ursula, Berthomeu Martí's daughter, from Pobla, for five weeks of breastfeeding.'

The infinitival variant cannot have a literal interpretation: the illocutionary point is to get the addressee to perform the action expressed in the infinitive. This allows the spread of the construction to new context types. A good illustration of this are utterances where verbs with a non-agentive subject enter the construction, as the infinitive *oblidar* 'forget' in (19) and the infinitives *alegrar e conortar* 'be happy and be comforted' in (20). In these cases the action described in the infinitive is not a deliberate action on the part of the subject.

(19)   La mia mà scriu ab gran dolor a tu, e **prech**-te que si m' às oblidat, **no vulles** almenys, membrant-te de la mia amor, **oblidar de legir** esta letra, la qual te tremet per dues rahons: (Stòria del amat Frondino e de Brisona, 15th century, 1424)
'My hands are writing you full of pain, and **I ask** you, if you have forgotten me, at least **do not want to**, remembering my love, **forget to read** this letter that I am sending you for two reasons:'

(20)   E **prech**-te que ·t **vulles alegrar e conortar**, (Tirant lo Blanch, 1499)
'And **I ask** you that **you may want to be happy and take comfort**'

We can find sporadic occurrences of the construction *pregar/suplicar (de) voler* + INF, as the one in (21).

(21)   E per ço, senyor emperador, **suplich** a vostra magestat **de voler-me perdonar**, (Tirant lo Blanch, 1499)
'And thus, Lord Emperor, **I beg** your Majesty **to want to forgive me**,'

The duality of infinitival and non-infinitival constructions and their difference in meaning seem to be valid not only in the case of the verbs *plaure* and *voler*, but also in occurrences of *ser de su mercé* 'be at your mercy', but this will require further research. Consider examples (22)–(24).

(22)   e agenollà ·s als peus de l'emperador e **supplicà ·l molt fos de sa merçé** que aquell scuder no prengués mort, perquè les males gents no aguessen a dir que moria per haver dit mal del seu capità. (Tirant lo Blanch, 1499)
'and he knelt at the emperor's feet and **begged** him very much **might it be at his mercy** not to have the squire killed so that wicked people could not say that it was done because he had spoken badly about his captain.'

(23)   Com foren a l'Evangeli Tirant se agenollà davant lo rey e **supplicà ·l** que **fos de sa merçé** li deixàs fer un vot. (Tirant lo Blanch, 1499)
'During the reading of the Gospel, Tirant knelt before the king and **begged** him that **might it be at his mercy** [that] let him make a vow.'

(24)   Per què, senyor molt virtuós, a vostra altesa humilment **supplich** que **sia de sa mercé manar scriure** a mi què li serà plasent yo faça en lo dit negoci. (Epistolari de Ferran I d'Antequera, 1424)
'So, very virtuous Lord, **I** humbly **beseech** your Majesty that **may it be at your mercy to order to write** me what would you like me to do in this business.'

Example (22) shows an occurrence of the construction *ser de su mercé* 'be at his mercy' in a subordinate clause introduced by the conjunction *que* 'that' that describes a situation concerning which the speaker asks for the addressee's permission. In contrast, in (23) the requested action is the addressee's own action. In this case both non-infinitival and infinitival constructions are available (cf. 23 and 24, respectively). They both include indirectness and cannot be interpreted literally, but only as conventionalized forms of politeness.

9. Summary

The present study has discussed some politeness strategies in 13–16th century Catalan. Using methods of corpus pragmatics, directive utterances have been found in the Computerized Corpus of Old Catalan (CICA) by searching for occurrences of the speech act verbs *pregar* 'ask, pray' and *suplicar* 'supplicate, beg, beseech'. The linguistic forms of occurrences have been then analyzed by a manual analysis in their original contexts. With this method utterances with SA-verbs in both descriptive and performative uses have been found. Both types of contexts have been suitable to examine linguistic means of politeness in Old Catalan, because they contain various constructions that do not contribute to the propositional content of the request. These "extra" constructions have supposedly been used due to politeness considerations.

Results of the present study provide evidence that politeness in 13–16th century Catalan was realized by different linguistic means than in contemporary Catalan. On the

one hand, performative strategies were widely used, as well as some conventionally indirect strategies that in modern Catalan are not available anymore. The most frequent strategy in contexts of the SA-verbs *pregar* and *suplicar* consisted in using the verb *voler* 'want' to transfer the imperative force from the performance of the requested act to H's willingness. With this strategy addressee's freedom of action is formally respected. The use of the *voler*-construction and other similar constructions is not only interesting as regards the Catalan language, but also from an intercultural point of view. Parallel strategies were supposedly used in a wider geographical area in the Middle Ages. Possible relationships and mutual effects between languages concerned will require further research. The present study should be also complemented by searching for all possible grammatical forms of *pregar* and *suplicar*, as well as forms of other speech act verbs that name directives. Finally, politeness constructions that have been found in the present study by searching for SA-verbs can be studied independently on large corpora, and directives that do not contain any SA-verb should be also taken into consideration.

Acknowledgements

Works cited

Aijmer, Karin (2018). Corpus pragmatics: From form to function. In: Jucker, Andreas H. – Schneider, Klaus P. – Bublitz, Wolfram (eds.). *Methods in pragmatics*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. 555-585.

Aijmer, Karin – Rühlemann, Christoph (eds.) (2015). *Corpus Pragmatics: A Handbook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Arnovick, Leslie K. (1999). *Diachronic Pragmatics: Seven Case Studies in English Illocutionary Development* [Pragmatics & Beyond New Series 68]. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins.

Austin, John L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Beardsley, Wilfred A. (1921). *Infinitive constructions in old Spanish*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Blum-Kulka, Shoshana – Olshtain, Elite (1984). Requests and Apologies: A Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP). *Applied Linguistics,* 5(3). 196-213.

Blum-Kulka, Shoshana – House, Juliane – Kasper, Gabriele (eds.) (1989). *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies* (Advances in Discourse Processes XXI). Norwood: Ablex Publishing.

Brown, Penelope – Levinson, Stephen C. (1987) [1978]. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage.* (Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics 4). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Clavería Nadal, Gloria – Torruella Casañas, Joan (2012). El corpus informatizado del catalán antiguo (CICA) y su herramienta de explotación (Estación de Análisis Documentales). In: *Nuevas perspectivas para la edición y el estudio de documentos hispánicos antiguos* (Fondo Hispánico de Lingüística y Filología 12). 405-425.

Deutschmann, Mats (2003). *Apologising in British English.* (Skrifter från moderna språk 10). Umeå: Institutionen för moderna språk, Umeå University.

Diccionari català-valencià-balear [Dictionary Catalan-Valencian-Balear]. Electronic version of the *Diccionari català-valencià-balear* by Antoni Maria Alcover and Francesc de Borja Moll (Editorial Moll). Access date: August, 11th, 2021. Available at: https://dcvb.iec.cat/.

Fischer, Olga (2007). *Morphosyntactic change: Functional and formal perspectives.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fischer, Olga (2004). What counts as evidence in historical linguistics? *Studies in Language,* 28(3). 710-740.

Jacobs, Andreas – Jucker, Andreas H. (1995). The historical perspective in pragmatics. In: Jucker, Andreas H. (ed.). *Historical pragmatics.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 3-27.

Jucker, Andreas H. (2018). Data in pragmatic research. In: Jucker, Andreas H. – Schneider, Klaus P. – Bublitz, Wolfram (eds.). *Methods in Pragmatics.* Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. 3-36.

Jucker, Andreas H. (1994). The feasibility of historical pragmatics. *Journal of Pragmatics,* 22. 533-535.

Jucker, Andreas H. – Taavitsainen, Irma (eds.). (2008). *Speech acts in the history of English.* Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins.

Jucker, Andreas H. – Taavitsainen, Irma (2000). Diachronic speech act analysis. Insults from flyting to flaming. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, 1(1). 67-95.

Kohnen, Thomas (2007). Text types and the methodology of diachronic speech act analysis. In: Fitzmaurice, Susan M. – Taavitsainen, Irma (eds.). *Methods in historical pragmatics* (Topics in English Linguistics 52). Berlin/New York: de Gruyter. 139-166.

Kohnen, Thomas (2000). Explicit performatives in Old English: A corpus-based study of directives. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, 1(2). 301-321.

Lutzky, Ursula – Kehoe, Andrew (2017). "I apologise for my poor blogging": Searching for Apologies in the Birmingham Blog Corpus. *Corpus Pragmatics,* 1. 37-56.

Meyer, Charles F. (2002). *English Corpus Linguistics: An Introduction.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Montgomery, Thomas (1998). *Medieval Spanish Epic: Mythic Roots and Ritual Language.* University Park (Pennsylvania): The Pennsylvania State University.

Nagy C., Katalin (forthcoming). (Polite) directives in medieval Catalan: Constructions with the verb *plaure* 'please'. To appear in *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*.

Nagy C., Katalin (2020). *Plàcia a Déu* 'May it Please God': Constructions with the Verb *Plaure* 'Please' in Medieval Catalan. *Corpus Pragmatics,* 3. 293-332.

Nagy C., Katalin (2013). Adatforrások integrációja a történeti nyelvészetben: a nyelvtörténeti korpuszadat fogalmáról [Integrating data sources in historical linguistics: The notion of historical corpus data]. *Argumentum,* 9. 56-78.

Nagy C., Katalin (2011). A diakrón beszédaktus-kutatás egyes módszertani problémáiról [Some methodological problems of diachronic speech act research]. In: Gécseg, Zsuzsanna (ed.). *LingDok10: Nyelvész-doktoranduszok dolgozatai [LingDok10: Papers by doctoral students in linguistics].* Szeged: SZTE Nyelvtudományi Doktori Iskola. 155-179.

Nagy C., Katalin – Németh T., Enikő – Németh, Zsuzsanna (2018). Merging various data analysis techniques in pragmatics. *Sprachtheorie und Germanistische Linguistik,* 28(2). 155-183.

Navarro, Federico (2008). Análisis histórico del discurso: Hacia un enfoque histórico-discursivo en el estudio diacrónico de la lengua. In: Moreno Sandoval, Antonio (ed.). *El valor de la diversidad [meta]lingüística.* Actas del VIII Congreso de Lingüística General. Madrid: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Access date: August, 11th, 2021. Available at: http://www.lllf.uam.es/clg8/actas/pdf/paperCLG85.pdf.

Németh, Zsuzsanna – Nagy C., Katalin – Németh T., Enikő (2019). Fuzzy Boundaries in the Research into Talk-in-Interaction. In: Furkó, Péter B. – Vaskó, Ildikó – Dér, Csilla Ilona – Madsen, Dorte (eds.). *Fuzzy Boundaries in Discourse Studies: Theoretical, Methodological, and Lexico-Grammatical Fuzziness.* Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. 113-128.

Németh T., Enikő – Nagy C., Katalin – Németh, Zsuzsanna (2020). Ami a korpuszokból kimarad: rejtőzködő pragmatikai jelenségek [What is missing from corpora: Hidden pragmatic phenomena]. In: Simon, Gábor – Tolcsvai Nagy, Gábor (eds.). *Nyelvtan, diskurzus, megismerés* [Grammar, discourse, and cognition]. Budapest: ELTE Eötvös Kiadó. 333-356.

O'Keffee, Anne (2018). Corpus-based function-to-form approaches. In: Jucker, Andreas H. – Schneider, Klaus P. – Bublitz, Wolfram (eds.). *Methods in pragmatics.* Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. 587-618.

Pérez i Parent, Montserrat (2002). The production of requests by Catalan learners of English: Situational and proficiency level effects. *Atlantis,* 24(2). 147-168.

Katalin Nagy C.

Rühlemann, Christoph – Aijmer, Karin (2015). Introduction. Corpus pragmatics: laying the foundations. In: Aijmer, Karin – Rühlemann, Christoph (eds.). *Corpus Pragmatics: A Handbook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1-26.

Schauer, Gila – Adolphs, Svenja (2006). Expressions of gratitude in corpus and DCT data: vocabulary, formulaic sequences, and pedagogy. *System,* 34(1). 119-134.

Searle, John R. (1976). A Classification of Illocutionary Acts. *Language in Society,* 5(1). 1-23. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Searle, John R. (1975). Indirect speech acts. In: Cole, Peter – Morgan, Jerry L. (eds.). *Syntax and semantics 3. Speech acts.* New York: Academic Press. 59-82.

Searle, John R. (1969). *Speech Acts. An essay in the philosophy of language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Simon Gábor (2018). Az igei jelentés metaforizációjának mintázatai. Nyelvtan- és korpuszvezérelt esettanulmányok [On linguistic patterns of metaphoric verb meanings. Grammar-driven and corpus-driven case studies]. *Jelentés és Nyelvhasználat,* 5. Access date: August, 11th, 2021. Available at: 1-36. http://www.jeny.szte.hu/images/issues /2018/JENY-2018-SimonG.pdf.

Taavitsainen, Irma – Jucker, Andreas H. (2007). Speech act verbs and speech acts in the history of English. In: Fitzmaurice, Susan M. – Taavitsainen, Irma (eds.). *Methods in historical pragmatics* (Topics in English Linguistics 52). Berlin/New York: de Gruyter. 107-138.

Tognini-Bonelli, Elena (2001). *Corpus Linguistics at Work* (Studies in Corpus Linguistics 6). Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs – Dasher, Richard B. (2004) [2002]. *Regularity in semantic change.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Verschueren, Jef (1999). *Understanding Pragmatics.* London: Arnold.