

The courtesy-book and the phrase-book in modern Europe

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Published in:
The crisis of courtesy

Publication date:
1994

Document Version
Også kaldet Forlagets PDF

Citation for published version (APA):
Haastrup, N. (1994). The courtesy-book and the phrase-book in modern Europe. I J. Carré (red.), *The crisis of courtesy: studies in the conduct-book in Britain, 1600-1900* (s. 65-80). Brill Academic Publishers, Incorporated.

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NIELS HAASTRUP

THE COURTESY-BOOK AND THE PHRASE-BOOK
IN MODERN EUROPE

The theme of this book is the courtesy-book and related genres: the related genre in question here is the one I have called the phrase-book. A major topic of my contribution will be a comparison of the two genres: the courtesy-books and the ready-made dialogues found in the phrase-books. Whenever people write about courtesy-books they seem to run into problems of definition. The courtesy-book has many interfaces. Not even Manfred Beetz (see bibliography) appears to consider the related genre that I am going to introduce, and this is not because he excludes from his book types of texts that display model polite behaviour, or texts that are not in prose as courtesy-books used to be. Beetz mentions the monolingual model dialogues of, for example, A. Sommer's *Ein Hundert Teutsche Conversations-Gespräche* (1664), which covers not only the highbrow aesthetic dialogue as written by Castiglione (p. 65), but also everyday communication in typical situations (p. 66). Beetz (1988) analyses the stylistics, syntax and speech acts of the dialogues, and limits his perspective to the monolingual model-dialogues. No more than, for instance, Mason (1935) or Nicholls (1985), does he go into the hundreds of bilingual textbooks on 'modern language teaching' that are registered and often even described. Stating this I imply the relevance of a major point made in this paper: that in peripheral countries like Denmark, the 'making of the gentleman' had to be more closely related to the learning and teaching of the dominant foreign languages, which in the main in Denmark did not include English until the heyday of nobility was over. The next point of my article is that the two genres, the courtesy-book and the phrase-book (as defined below), in some ways complement each other, when looked upon from the perspective of a minor language community. In short, the advice about language use not to be found in the textbooks on grammar and rhetorics, may often be found in another type of text called 'courtesy-book.'

First, in order to give the necessary background, I want to introduce my research perspective, and the related genre I work with: the 'Phrase-book-project,' or, as I call it in Danish with an obsolete word borrowed from French, the '*Parleur-project*.' I am trying to build up an inventory of the situations and encounters treated in phrase-books with Danish as a source or

a target language. My aim is to contribute to the history of the colloquial discourse of the past within my professional field: the Danish language. In other words I am collecting information on dialogues in the Danish language which are contained in bilingual textbooks meant for the teaching of spoken language. Focus is on types of situations and types of interlocutors, and differences and variations in the repertoire in the course of time. The project is in progress, but so far I have focussed on fairly old texts up to 1800. In those days the English tongue played a minor part on the continent, and this applies also to the kingdom of Denmark. Nevertheless, the examples I am going to present will be English and not Danish, and the specific points I would have been able to make regarding the Danish texts must needs be transferred to examples taken from the English-speaking world.

Secondly I have to explain how I use the word 'phrase-book.' In my terminology it is used as an equivalent to the French *guide de conversation* and thus it does not refer to a dictionary or a collection containing proverbs, maxims and quotations. As I use the word phrase-book, it refers to a specific genre within the area of language teaching, the collections of ready-made, idealized dialogues, presented in at least two languages, the source language and the target language(s). These bilingual dialogue texts were seldom published separately. As often as not the collections of ready-made bilingual dialogues appear as parts of textbooks, or sets of textbooks, as a link in the chain of useful resources within the field of language teaching.

One table of contents looks like this:

1. A new and useful grammar
2. A copious and well-registered vocabulary
3. Phrases and idioms
4. A collocation of Proverbs
5. Familiar Dialogues
6. A Collection of choice Letters
7. An historical Account of the Magnificence and Splendour of the city of London.
8. Some examples of the most usual Cards
9. Proper Directions for addressing persons of every Rank in Conversation and Letters.¹

In textbooks of this kind various rules and examples are to be found. To improve your 'knowing that': rules and paradigms in grammar, i.e. contrastive grammatical descriptions of the source and target languages structured according to the traditional systematic levels of analysis from letters to sentences, illustrated by examples. To improve your 'knowing how': examples to show the use of language are found in the second part of

¹ J. King/ Koenig. *King's True English Guide* (Copenhagen, 1770).

the book, for instance, models for dialogues, letters, speeches, short stories. Of course the sections supplement each other. One can, for example, find specific vocabularies for each dialogue, or phrases arranged according to what we today, after Austin, would call speech acts. For instance, by Arnold, under these headings:

s.259: To confirm, to deny, to consent

s.261: To consult or consider

s.265: To ask a question

or classes of adverbs, of extreme importance for the indirectness of polite conversation, for instance by Festeau: "Adverbs of affirming (*sic*), of contradiction, of conclusion."²

However, rules of language use, i.e. 'knowing how' (what we today call pragmatic rules) will not be found in the grammar books. The proper place of pragmatics was in textbooks of Rhetorics, the discipline that supplemented Grammar in the traditional school curriculum handed down from antiquity. But Rhetoric gave no advice on performing dialogues, only on making different kinds of speeches, as Cicero himself states:

Contentionis praecepta rhetorum sunt, nulla sermonis, quamquam haud scio an possint haec quoque esse. Sed discentium studiis inveniuntur magistri, huic autem qui studeant, sunt nulli, rhetorum turba referta omnia, quamquam quae verborum sententiarumque praecepta sunt, eadem ad sermonem pertinebunt.³

The courtesy-book is in many respects a rhetoric of conversation, but as it was not handed down from antiquity, it had to be invented, and this is in fact what happened. Rhetoric and the courtesy-books are not structured in the same way. Rhetoric models the creative processes of speech production (*inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, pronuntiatio*). The dynamic of the dialogue, on the other hand, cannot be planned in the same way as a speech, because it is conducted by two persons. The courtesy-books underline general principles of reputation and good conduct, just as in textbooks of rhetoric the moral aspect is stressed (*orator, vir bonus*, etc.). These principles can be further explained by an experienced authority in rational deliberations (though the material used in the work quoted is offered for more specific ends). Or could be shown in textbooks by means of model dialogues (monolingual as for instance by Bellegarde, or bilingual as in the phrase-book in my use of the word), just as one finds self-explanatory model

² Adverbs by Th. Arnold (*Theodor Arnolds Grammatica Anglicana et Danica Concentrata*. 2^o ed. Copenhagen, 1791) and P. Festeau (*A New and Easy French Grammar*. London, 1667).

³ Cicero. *De officiis* I, 'On moral goodness' Lib.I. cap. xxxvii. marg. nr.132 ad finem. Loeb. p. 134.

speeches in textbooks of Rhetoric. These dialogues function as models, although they are based on two conflicting principles: on the one hand a 'knowledge of the world' (or 'business as usual'), shared by the fictitious interlocutors, is presupposed, and on the other hand—as no stage directions are found—he user needs an exposé of the situation, which is given—just as on stage—solely through the wording of the utterances of the interlocutors, a feature often parodied).

The rhetoric of conversation, which I venture to call the field of the courtesy-book, is seldom directly combined with the textbooks comprising grammar and dialogues. And yet, one may naturally find examples that show the family relationship. For instance, by Du Grain, who taught in Halle, a centre of Pietism and of great importance for Danish education in the 18th century; or by Bertram, the author of one of the larger Danish textbooks on the English language, *The Royal English-Danish Grammar* (Copenhagen, 1753), who edited a little pamphlet on ethics, *Ethics from Several Authors* (Copenhagen, 1751). This he later included in vol. II of his great work, which covered the whole range from phonetics, his special interest, to dialogues.

Let me now compare the courtesy-book and the phrase-book. First a puzzling problem: in courtesy-books, social encounters between persons identified as foreigners and natives are not foreseen to any great extent. But of course they are found. Although the phrase-books are constructed to give young persons a certain competence in foreign languages, for instance, as travellers on their 'grand tour,' one seldom, to my knowledge, finds in the dialogues reference to differences in manners between western nations. The fictitious interlocutors often seem to belong to the same speech community, i.e. in the one column one finds a pair of native speakers of the source language, in the other a parallel pair of native speakers of the target language. It is presupposed that other things are equal in the two language communities, and the dialogues often indirectly present themselves as general models—setting aside the choice of source and target languages—within the ethnocentric scope of western civilisation. But the different interlocutors of the user (i.e. the persona of identification, which is supposed to be the user of the ready-made dialogues—often a gentleman) are to a great extent defined sociologically according to class, age, professions, sex etc.

But insofar as the ready-made dialogues show encounters between foreigners and natives, structured according to prototypical situations, one finds here an important lack of congruity between the phrase-books and the courtesy-books. The strict parallel to the phrase-book, then, is not the prose of the ordinary courtesy-book, but the texts of books such as *The Gentleman's Guide in his Tour...* Yet these books are not in the first place

meant to inform young noblemen of problems of communication and the manners to be expected abroad. One finds, of course, some useful remarks on the topic, but most books on travelling—setting aside books on postal routes—are memoirs from, and narratives about, real or fictitious journeys and are to be found in itineraries. An example may be quoted from France, in the persona of a traveller, though the writer may often in such cases be relying on the works of his predecessors. The itineraries usually follow the postal routes, and are not systematized along the lines of typical encounters between natives and foreigners.

Thus to some extent the phrase-book shows what the courtesy-book prescribes. An important difference is that the dialogues do not show what the courtesy-books forbid. If one wants to have misbehaviour exemplified, one has to read the contemporary parodies and satires (as by Swift, Defoe, etc.). Also parodic dialogues are to be found. But satire or not, the linguistic norms underlying the criticism are up to date, I presume.

The pragmatic conversational rules one needs will often be arranged in two ways in the courtesy-books:

a) according to the general principles of polite and efficient language use, often in the imperative mood, addressed to the young person who is soon to be launched into society

b) as reflections on, and practical recommendations about personal behaviour and strategies, in a variety of situations in which you find yourself in conversation with different interlocutors.

The universals of politeness and efficiency are shown by the ready-made model dialogues—the degree and kind of politeness used being thoroughly adapted to the interlocutors, the purpose and the circumstances. In the courtesy-books, however, they are explicitly expressed. When one compares the advice of the courtesy-books with the Gricean maxims, it is striking to observe in the first place that they are all there, though not arranged as by Grice under four headings). To mention a text, well-known in Danish circles, which was translated into English, reference can be made to Baron Knigge's *Practical Philosophy of Social Life* or to Rohr (1715), not to mention the many German treatises not translated into Danish, such as Reich (1789), Trussler (1784) and Chladenius (1742).

It will no doubt be generally agreed that efficiency is not the main point of the courtesy-books. The principle of politeness is paramount, or even better the principle of adequate politeness. Note these headings from Knigge (1799):

III. Let your civility and kindness to inferiors always be well regulated

IV. Be not too intimate with people who have not had a polite education.⁴

Or these:

- I. On conversation with adventurers of the more harmless class
- II. On conversation with imposing adventurers.⁵

As we know from Brown and Levinson's book on *Politeness* (1978), the whole aim of politeness is not just to flatter and please, but to respect and be respected according to one's societal status. That is to say that one should be modest, but not accept nor unintentionally use face-threatening acts, the 'FTAs' made famous by Brown and Levinson—to be used in cases when you want to provoke a duel. We can quote Knigge (1799) once again, this time his first chapter, which has this heading: "Every man must render himself respected in the world." This is an essential point, because it tells you not only to please others, but to insist on your right to pursue your own ends. Thus the whole universe of the courtesy-book is suspended between two ends, on the one hand modesty, on the other hand the desire to prevail or at least to maintain one's position. The adequate degree of politeness should be chosen by taking into account the relations between oneself and one's interlocutors. This is expressed in a figure in one of the classics among courtesy-books, Guazzo's *De civili conversatione libri quattuor*, (Strasbourg 1614) Fol.I, verso: 'Schematismus generalis totius operis.' (see plate XIII)

With this end in view the dialogues of the phrase-books are equipped with a great reservoir of phrases, on the one hand the socially-oriented, tentative and indirect ones which include many modalities that you have to use when you address your betters, on the other hand the task-oriented, efficient ones, the shortcuts you are free to use when you address humble and subordinate people, as for instance, a coachman.

We come now to our next section on more specific hints given to guide you in a variety of practical situations with a variety of interlocutors. To study this it is necessary to look at the criteria according to which this information is distributed in the phrase-books and the courtesy-books respectively.

As a point of departure, a more detailed table of contents from a phrase-book may be illuminating:

- I To salute and enquire after one's Health
- II Before going to Bed, in Bed, and at rising in the Morning
- III A Gentleman dressing himself
- IV A Lady dressing herself

⁴ A. von Knigge. *Practical Philosophy of Social Life*. (London, 1799) Book I, Chapter IX.

⁵ Knigge. *Op. cit.* Book II, Chapter XIV.

V	To make a Visit in the Morning
VI	To Breakfast
VII	To order Dinner
VIII	Before and at the Dinner
IX	To drink Coffee and Tee
X	To speak English
XI	With an English Language-Master
XII	Of the Danish Tongue between two Englishmen
XIII	Between two Friends
XIV	With a Bookseller
XV	Between a Gentleman a Taylor and a Woollen-Draper
XVI	With a Shoemaker
XVII	With a Periwigmaker
XVIII	To hire Lodgings
XIX	Between two young Gentlewomen
XX	To play at Cards. Between two young Ladies
XXI	To go to see a Play
XXII	To desire one to sing
XXIII	To write a letter
XXIV	To make an Exchange
XXV	Going upon a Journey
XXVI	In an Inn
XXVII	To embark on the Packet-Boat
XXVIII	With a Coachman
XXIX	Between a sick Person and a Surgeon
XXX	Of a Christening, a Wedding and a Burial. ⁶

Let us now compare the structure of phrase-books and courtesy-books. The phrase-books are ordered in a variety of ways, often beginning with domestic dialogues, then proceeding via local merchants to the needs of travelling, etc. In the courtesy-books classes of interlocutors are constituted for example by their psychology (the four cardinal humours and their complexions), or by their present state of mind (sorrow, grief, joy or happiness). Let us look at some different ways of arranging advice on conversation in the courtesy-book. Reich arranges his advice under headings which all contain the word *Sprache* (language):

- On language in social conversation in general
- The language of the chatterbox
- The language of the silent or taciturn
- The language of the unsuccessful
- The language of the wag
- The language of the mockingbird
- The language of the debater
- The language of the stubborn
- The language of the thoughtless

⁶ C. Bertram. *The Royal English-Danish Grammar* (Copenhagen, 1753) I, Headings of chapters I-XXX, pp. 50-156.

The language of the sycophant
 The language of the laudator
 The language of the flatterer
 The language of the lyer
 The language of the boaster
 The language of the talebearer
 The language of the swearer
 The language of the promising
 The language of the gossipmonger
 The language of the backbiter
 The language of the adviser
 The language of the scolder
 The language of the teacher
 The language of the initiated
 The language of women
 The language of the complaining.⁷

The first chapter offers the usual general rules of efficiency and politeness, but later chapters, although they all contain the word *Language*, have different perspectives, from stylistics (choice of words) to moral and conversational advice. Exemplifications for some of these can be found in the ready-made dialogues. For instance:

III. *The language of the silent or the taciturn.* An often-used dialogue is the one concerning: '*Pourquoi on ne parle pas*' (Rodde, 1749, pp. 198-202).

VII. *The language of the debater.* An often-used dialogue is the one concerning: Conversation of two learned persons.

XVII. *The language of promise*, which resembles grammatical treatments of speech acts; how to promise, etc.)

Another book, that by Rohr (1715), is categorized by Germanists as a *Hausvaterbuch*, i.e. giving advice on the prudent and efficient administration of the domestic sphere. Nevertheless it is also a courtesy-book, giving general advice on language. It arranges the advice under headings that all of them contain the word *Klugheit* (prudence) used in chapters such as:

- | | |
|------|--|
| I | Von der Klugheit ins gemein |
| II | Von der Klugheit seine Actiones anzustellen |
| III. | Von der Klugheit eines Christen |
| IV | Von der Klugheit den Verstand zu schärfen, und
Wissenschaften zu erlangen |
| V | Von der Klugheit seinen Willen zu bessern und tugendhaft zu
leben |

It also includes special advice on many domestic matters, as do many ready-made dialogues, not least the ones with titles such as *Dialogues domestiques*, where one can learn, for instance, how to reprimand severely

⁷ J.C.F. Reich. *Die Sprache* (Berlin, 1789) p. XIII-XVI Inhalt (my translation).

your man or maidservant. (Cf. Rodde 1749, p. 178, Dialogue LXXV: 'La Servante est grondée'.)

The registers quoted so far are in the main structured differently from those of the phrase-books. A greater resemblance is found if a comparison is made with the courtesy-book by the German, von Knigge (see quotation given above from 'On Conversation with People of various Ranks in Civil Life').

- i On physicians
- ii On quacks and charlatans, and the mischief caused by them
- iii On apothecaries
- iv On conversation with lawyers and attorneys
- v On conversation with military men
- vi On conversation with merchants, shop-keepers and dealers.
- vii On conversation with booksellers
- viii On conversation with language masters, music masters and teachers in general.
- ix On conversation with tradesmen and mechanics
- x On conversation with Jews.⁸

Finally I want to comment on an example, in connection with which the courtesy-book brings reflections on the profession and the professional pride of an individual in social life, and a ready-made dialogue shows his professional behaviour when serving two customers in his shop—a bookseller. We find in the text of a courtesy-book by Knigge (1799) in chapter XIII, 'On Conversation with People of various Ranks in Civil Life,' in the section called 'Observations on Booksellers.' Knigge introduces them in the following way:

Conversation with booksellers would afford matter sufficient for a separate chapter, in which we could advance a great deal in the praise of those gentlemen of this profession, who do not conduct their concerns on principles of Jewish gain, and who observe a punctilious nicety in the works they publish, not suffering themselves to be actuated by the prospect of lucre, and usher into the world such works as tend to vitiate the taste and corrupt the morals of the age; of booksellers, like many within the circle of our knowledge at this time in London, who do honour to their profession, and have the propagation of truth and real illumination at heart, who encourage and support literary merit wherever they discover it, and improve their daily intercourse with men of learning to increase their store of useful knowledge, to cultivate their mind and adorn their heart with laudable sentiments. By way of contrast, we might say much more of those booksellers who, notwithstanding their having many years supplied the public with works of wit and learning, are nevertheless as ignorant and stupid as they were when they commenced their apprenticeship; who value and purchase manuscripts and new books from the plausibility of the title,

⁸ Knigge. *Op. cit.* ch. XIII, p. 194.

or the quantity of sheets they contain; and in order to keep up the vitiated taste of our age, employ beardless boys and ignorant girls to write miserable romances and stupid nursery-tales for them; who dress up the most pitiful nonsense, and to render it marketable, furnish an imposing and fashionable title and tasteless prints, and bribe venal reviewers to recommend such shapeless monsters as the offspring of elegant wit and learning.

Finally we could direct authors how to treat booksellers of that sort to avoid becoming their slaves; how they should proceed to render themselves respected by them, and in what shape they ought to mould the products of their wit and studies to be employed by these literary harpies. But these being partly secrets of our profession, which we great literati must keep to ourselves, and therefore are not permitted to disclose them in a book to be read by readers of all classes.

Upon the first blush it would appear that all booksellers whose business is conducted with tolerable success, must gain a fortune by their trade, if we consider the rage which prevails in all ranks for reading, even from the cobbler's stall to the palace of the first Peer of the realm. But if the journals of most booksellers were open to our inspection, we should perhaps be of a different opinion; we should see how much the increased number of circulating libraries hurts them, and what enormous sums are due to many of them by people who either will or cannot pay them, and be astonished how they are able to maintain their credit.⁹

Here is the text of the dialogue we find in *Bertram*:

A—Sir, have you any new Books?

C—Yes sir, what Sort of Books do you desire to have? Will you have Books of History, Mathematics, Philosophy, Divinity, Physick or Law?

A—No, I look only for some Books of Poetry

C—I can furnish you with them in all Sorts of Languages. For I have all the Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian, French and English Poets.

B—You have also a great many of them

C—You say true Sir, what Poets have you a mind to buy?

A—Pope's works in twelves, Dryden's Poems and Voltaire's Writings in the last and best Edition.

C—I have all those Books

A—Let me see them, if you please

[.../...]

—Will you have them gilt on the Back and titled

—Yes surely

—Must they be gilt in the leaves ?

—There is no Occasion for that

—There they be, as you desire them.

B—This Binding is not good

A—This Book is not well sewed

C—There is another for it

A—What do you ask for this Book?

C—It will cost you two Crowns

⁹ Knigge. *Op. cit.* 'On conversation with booksellers.'

- A —That is too much
 C —Tis a set Price
 A —I'll give you nine Shillings for it
 C —It stands me in more than you bid me for it
 A —I can hardly believe it
 C —I assure you it costs me three half Crowns in Quires, and two Shillings for the Binding you would not have me sell my Books to loss
 A —Far from it, I would have you get something
 C —hen you must give me ten Shillings for it
 A —There they will be. I will not stand on so small a Matter
 [.../...]
 A (to B) —What Books do you want ?
 [.../...]
- A —But I have Occasion for Writing Paper, Pens, In sealing wax and wafers
 C —I sell nothing of all that but you will find it at the Stationer's who keeps the next Shop.
 A —Farewell sir
 C —Sir I am your most humble Servant. I thank you for your Custom.¹⁰

In the dialogue one finds exemplified how nicely the gentleman treats the bookseller (a behaviour not in evidence when he talks to a coachman or even a tailor). How competent the bookseller is too, both in presenting his collection and in maintaining that his specific field is books and not pens and paper, and how nicely he avoids having his price beaten down when discussing this delicate topic with the gentleman, who appears to be rather ashamed of having tried to lower the price at all.

Let me conclude: the ready-made dialogues of the textbooks for foreign language teaching are a genre related to the courtesy-book, though the one demonstrates in a dramatic form what the other prescribes in prose by reasoning.

1a) The two genres touch on the same theme: adequate and polite linguistic behaviour.

1b) The two genres take an interest in addressing (i.e. *Anrede*), using the right titles, the right personal pronoun, etc.). In a grammar book you will find the corresponding advice in sections on speech acts and adverbs of modality, or in the letter books and the complementatoria i.e. *Komplimentierbücher*.

2) The two genres address themselves to a common group of users: young people from the upper classes - and of course parvenues too.

3) In other words, the two genres were both used —we may suppose— where education was offered, whether private or institutional.

¹⁰ Bertram. *Op. cit.* Dialogue XIV: 'With a bookseller'.

In conclusion I want to return to my initial statement, that the writers on courtesy-books have overlooked, among the genres related to the courtesy-book, the phrase-book with its ready-made dialogues. If one accepts this, one might wonder why the two genres are not to be found bound together in the same cover and written by the same author? One answer might be that the authors of the linguistic textbooks that included ready-made dialogues were not authorities on morality. On the contrary, they were often foreigners or adaptors of texts written by foreigners, and therefore suspect of lacking in loyalty as subjects, and of not being orthodox as Christians (i.e. Calvinists, Huguenots accepted as refugees). An example may be quoted from the Danish equestrian academy in Sorø, about 1630. The language master, Daniel Matras, was not employed and paid as a professor, and was not allowed to teach anything but language and table-manners. Ethical education was in the hands of theologians. Nevertheless the linguistic routines aimed at in the two disciplines were the same. The dialogues used in language teaching would not, I presume, demonstrate uses of language that the theologians would disapprove of.

In modern times the same unfortunate borderlines seem to be found between fields of study touching on the same theme. The first borderline is found between linguistics and literature. A working group in Wolfenbüttel HAB, which I have some connection with, is studying the history of language teaching. You will find lots of research work and bibliographies on textbooks in this field which are seldom found in the bibliographies of research work conducted by historians of literature. The second borderline is that between diachronic and synchronic studies of linguistic conversation. On the one hand, there are historical studies on language teaching and courtesy, which not infrequently show some knowledge of modern pragmatic studies; on the other hand, there are studies in what is called 'politeness,' without any historical perspective. One finds this, for instance, in textbooks by Leech (1983), Brown (1983) and Brown & Levinson (1978) etc., although in general these works are based on modern research, such as that by Grice and Goffman. If these brilliant scholars know how much our ancestors knew and wrote on those topics, they do not reveal their knowledge.

Now why don't modern research workers studying colloquial routines of the past use as a source the ready-made dialogues found in textbooks of language teaching? Maybe it is because some research workers do not need this kind of source. They disregard dialogues in their mother-tongues, because they do not come from minor countries, as I do, in which the linguistic textbooks concerning the 'making of the gentleman' were linked to the learning and teaching of the dominant foreign languages. The bilingual model dialogues in the phrase-books give a practical example of

some aspects of the behaviour that the courtesy-books prescribe. As we had no Danish Bellegarde or Sommer to present model dialogues in the Danish language in its own right, the Danes, if desired, might use the dialogues printed as vernacular parallels in the bilingual textbooks meant for foreign language teaching. And this is precisely why I have felt that my investigations in this field might be relevant as a complement to a more comprehensive research into courtesy-books.

The dominant foreign language in Denmark, in the period I have studied up till now, was German, and the foreign language *à la mode* was French. The texts used for instruction in modern languages, almost always French, as well as in manners, often passed to Denmark through German adaptations. The selection of prototypical situations and encounters for the ready-made dialogues was thus not made by Danes, but often by German language masters. As the language *à la mode* from the 17th to the early 19th century was French, it seems quite obvious that an initiative to register courtesy-books should come from France, and just as obvious to focus on the fact that books on manners and linguistic politeness to some extent were imported directly or indirectly to minor peripheral countries, and that this status connected them to the teaching and training of foreign languages and the texts used for this purpose, the ready-made dialogues of grammars and phrase-books.

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