

SYSTEMATIC WRONG USAGE WITHIN STANDARD LANGUAGE: A FRENCH CASE

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S u m m a r y

This paper looks at the quickly spreading tendency in most European languages (with specific reference to French), whose symptoms include the proliferation of anglicisms, barbarisms, vulgarisms, systematical wrong usage, as well as rebus spelling and sms language, within the standard language. A certain number of possible causes is suggested (overstatement induced by advertising, the prestige of pseudo-scientific and pseudo-erudite jargon, the adulation of youthfulness in an ageing society, political correctness) as well as some potentially harmful consequences (misunderstanding and self-delusion, the impoverishment of language leading in turn to a decline in reasoning ability, the devaluation of national identity). It is argued that the responsibility for safe-guarding the language falls in the first place upon teachers, public authorities, newspaper and television journalists, linguists (notably on dictionary authors and publishers) and, indeed, upon translators who play an increasingly important role in the forthcoming 'global' society.