
The French Extreme Right and the Gallicization of Forenames

An appeal for the assimilation of immigrants or a covert racialization?

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This study offers a semantic, pragmatic, and argumentative analysis of extracts from the French Extreme Right discourse on the gallicization of forenames. It would indeed appear that the question of the gallicization of forenames only arises in political circles from time to time, particularly on the initiative of leaders of the Rassemblement National, and more widely the Extreme Right camp (by Éric Zemmour), which advocates the integration of immigrants by means of their forename. The issue was already aired in the political public arena by Marine Le Pen during the 2012 presidential election campaign¹. The idea of integration through the forename was then taken up and hotly defended in political debates by Éric Zemmour who, when establishing himself as a new figure of the Extreme Right (even more extreme than the RN), made the gallicization of forenames his key issue.

The present study will examine, using Critical Discourse Analysis tools, the discursive mechanisms that are present in the discourse on assimilation through the forename, allowing this discourse of the Extreme Right to be seen as part of an ideology founded on the inequality of ethnic groups. My analysis aims to show that in political and/or media discourses held by the Extreme Right on the subject of integration and assimilation of immigrants and on citizenship, it is not unusual for the speaker to embark on an argument with the objective of identifying and ranking individuals, community groups, and peoples according to a hierarchy. This categorization is itself the manifestation and result of an attempt to promote cultural, ideological, and social interpretations which form an entire system, enabling speakers to give a very precise and almost archetypical definition to certain notions and to associate a social or cultural group with a very specific and negative image.

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¹ “Marine Le Pen pour l’assimilation par le prénom français,” *france aiseetfiere*, 30/06/2011, 1min19s. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o934nsi22rk>