
Nordic Cool: Northern European Borrowed Features and 'Faux Nordic' in Global Linguistic Landscapes

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In the 21st century, fuelled by political and economic trends, the concepts “New Nordic” and “Nordic Cool” have entered the global scene in design, cuisine, entertainment, and general lifestyle (Skou and Munch, 2016; Østergaard et al., 2014). This study explores how Nordic linguistic features, including loanwords, graphemes and even diacritics, are increasingly capitalised on in international marketing to elevate the image of a product or brand.

Since the idea of *linguistic landscapes* was introduced by Landry and Bourhis in 1997, a vast number of projects have focused on language use in public spaces (see Blommaert, 2013; Blommaert and Maly, 2015; Johnstone, 2013a, 2013b; Pietikainen et al., 2011). The majority of linguistic landscape studies focus on the impact of language policy and linguistic ideology on language practices in specific neighbourhoods or cities. By contrast, this qualitative research project examines the use of Danish, Swedish, Finnish and Norwegian features in brand names and logos from several countries, including the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, and South Korea.

The project demonstrates how positive attitudes related to Nordic countries translate into the use of Nordic language features in foreign language contexts. For instance, the study explores how borrowed linguistic concepts related to Scandinavian lifestyle (e.g. *hygge*, *fika*) and *writing system mimicry* (see Sutherland, 2015) of graphemes such as <å>, <ø>, and <æ> are used to imply positive qualities associated with Nordic culture, for instance ‘coolness’, ‘purity’, and ‘simplicity’ (Hermansen, 2012). Inspired by earlier names for mimicked scripts, such as *faux Russian* (Kurland, 2004), the term *faux Nordic* is used in the study to refer to the use of Nordic language features in another language, as well as to stylized words with traceable Nordic language origin.



Figure 1: Dutch restaurant sign demonstrating *faux Nordic* and writing system mimicry.



Figure 2: Italian outdoor clothing brand combining the Norwegian flag with the *faux Nordic* name ‘Napapijri’ (from Finnish *napapiiri*, meaning ‘Polar circle’).