Linguistic landscaping and the assertion of twenty-first century Māori identity

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The Base, one of New Zealand’s largest retail and commercial centres, is situated approximately 7 km north-west of the central business district of Hamilton, New Zealand’s fourth largest city. It is built on a block of land which was requisitioned by the New Zealand government prior to World War II and used as an Air Force Base during the war. The land was returned to the Waikato-Tainui Māori tribal confederation in 1995 as part of a package of reparations relating to the Crown’s mistreatment of the tribe, including its misappropriation of tribal lands. The research reported here, located theoretically within the domain of critical discourse theory, suggests that the semioticscape of The Base, including, in particular, its linguistic landscape, plays a role in the formation and assertion of contemporary Māori indigenous identity.

Keywords: identity, indigenous languages, linguistic landscape, Māori, minority languages

1. Introduction

The Base, one of New Zealand’s largest retail and commercial centres is located in Hamilton, New Zealand’s fourth largest city. Until recently, it was wholly owned and operated by Tainui Group Holdings (TGH), the commercial arm of the Waikato-Tainui Māori tribal confederation.1 The research reported here, located theoretically within the domain of critical discourse theory, suggests that the semioticscape of The Base, including, in particular, its linguistic landscape, plays a role in the formation and assertion of contemporary Māori indigenous identity.

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1. Since the study reported here was concluded, Kiwi Property Group has joined Tainui Group Holdings as a joint venture partner. It has acquired a 50 per cent interest in the 120-year ground leases over the land. The freehold title remains in the ownership and protection of Waikato-Tainui, as does a portion of the original site which is to be developed as a family health (whanau ora) centre for the Waikato-Tainui people. While Tainui Group Holdings turns its attention to the development of new ventures, Kiwi Property Group, which has undertaken to protect ‘unique cultural elements,’ will manage The Base’s commercial operation...
underpinned by critical discourse theory (CDT), explored aspects of the linguistic landscape (LL) of The Base within a wider semiotic context, seeking to address the following research questions:

How, and to what extent, does the LL of The Base support or contest the existing hegemony as it relates to issues associated with Māori language and identity?
How, if at all, is re-appropriation of space indicated by the LL of The Base, its soundscape and its architecture and building materials?

A brief outline of some aspects of the impact of European colonisation on Māori people and the Māori language is provided below. This is followed by a discussion of the theoretical and methodological framework within which the study is located. The data collected are then outlined and discussed.

2. Aotearoa/ New Zealand: Colonisation, loss and resistance

In the early 1800s, in what is now referred to as New Zealand (or Aotearoa), there were between 100 and 150 000 Māori, each affiliated to one of over 40 tribes (Belich, 1986, p. 300; Crosby, 1999, p. 17). In 1840, with plans for further settlement, representatives of the British Crown sought agreement with Māori in the form of a treaty. Almost all aspects of that treaty have been hotly debated. What cannot be denied, however, is the fact that even the English version guarantees to Māori “full exclusive and undisturbed possession of their Lands and Estates Forests Fisheries and other properties which they may collectively or individually possess so long as it is their wish and desire to retain the same in their possession” (Te Tiriti o Waitangi/ Treaty of Waitangi, 1840).

Between 1840 and 1871, settler numbers went from around 2 000 to over 256 000, while Māori numbers decreased to under 46 000 (Christiansen, 2001, pp. 15–16). In 1840, Māori owned almost all of the land. By 1939, they had lost approximately 99 percent of the land in the South Island and 91 percent of the land in the North Island (Ministry for Culture and Heritage (NZ), 2015). In 1840, almost all communication between Māori and non-Māori took place through the medium of the Māori language (Spolsky, 2003, pp. 555–556). By the 1970s, only approximately 5 percent of Māori children spoke the language (Benton, 1981, 1991; Waitangi Tribunal, 1986, p. 11). Furthermore, as Nock (2010, p. 187) observes, negative attitudes and repressive legislation had gradually resulted in the creation of a ‘Māori under-class,’ over-represented in crime statistics and under-represented on behalf of the joint venture (The Base, n.d.). What this will mean in the medium to long term remains to be seen.
in educational success statistics. There have, particularly since the 1970s, been considerable grassroots efforts to reverse this downward trend, many of which have secured some measure of mainstream support (Mead, 1997, p. 2; Ormsby-teki, Timutimu, Palmer, Ellis, & Johnston, 2011, p. 32; Waitangi Tribunal, 2011, p. 155; Walker, 2004, pp. 194, 345–355 & 358).

In 1975, the Waitangi Tribunal, a permanent commission of enquiry, was set up to make recommendations to government regarding claims brought by Māori relating to Crown actions considered to be in breach of the Treaty of Waitangi. In reporting on a claim filed in 1984, the Tribunal ruled that the Māori language should be considered a ‘possession’ under the terms of the Treaty and should be given official recognition and protection (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986, p. 6). Following that report, the Māori Language Act 1987 was passed. It accorded official status to the Māori language and established a Māori Language Commission to oversee measures relating to its protection. The Act granted the right to speak Māori in certain legal settings using registered translators but had little impact on language rights in other domains.

In spite of a number of further policy and planning initiatives relating to the maintenance and revitalisation of the Māori language, members of the Waitangi Tribunal (2011) have declared that its health “remains fragile at best” (p. 441). They have noted, in particular, that standardisation poses a threat to “unique tribal variations” and that there is a lack of support for inter-generational transmission (p. 440).

Approximately 14% of the current population of just under 4.5 million New Zealanders identify as Māori and, according to 2013 New Zealand census reports, just over one fifth (21.3%) of Māori claim to be able to hold a conversation about everyday things in the Māori language. The total percentage of New Zealanders who claim to be able to do so is 3.1% (Statistics New Zealand). As Macalister (2010, p. 58) has observed, “for most non-Maori New Zealanders knowledge of the Māori language primarily entails familiarity with a range of borrowings from Māori into English”.

While the overall impact of European colonisation has been similar for all Māori tribes, there have also been differences. In the case of members of the Waikato-Tainui tribal confederation, a critical episode in their history was their establishment, in 1858, of the Kingitanga, a movement whose central aim was to resist further loss of tribal land by establishing a Māori monarchy and placing remaining tribal land under its protection. The ensuing conflict between Waikato-Tainui and British colonial forces resulted in an estimated 3,000 casualties (mainly Māori). Following that conflict, legislation was passed (New Zealand Settlements Act 1863) which resulted in government confiscation of approximately 1.2 million acres of Waikato-Tainui land.
The land on which The Base stands was requisitioned by the New Zealand government prior to World War II and used as an Air Force Base during the war. It was returned to Waikato-Tainui in 1995 as part of a Treaty claims settlement made up of a combination of cash (NZ$170 million) and land (Waikato Raupatu Claims Settlement Act 1995). This was accompanied by a formal apology from the British Crown. In 2009, a further Deed of Settlement provided Waikato-Tainui with the right to co-manage the Waikato River on which the city of Hamilton is built (Deed of Settlement in relation to the Waikato River, 2009). The river traditionally provided local Māori with food, a source of cleansing and healing, and an important trading and communications route. It is regarded as an ancestor (tupuna) and the home of supernatural creatures (taniwha) which serve as guardians/protectors (kaitiaki) and represent the great tribal chiefs (Waikato Regional Council, n.d.).

Early responses to the initial settlement, one of the first between Māori tribes and the Crown, were often both patronizing and paternalistic (Crombie, Paki, Rolleston and Te Kanawa, 2002). The following is an extract from an editorial entitled ‘Opennes vital to Tainui’s recovery’ that appeared in a New Zealand newspaper six years after the settlement (New Zealand Herald, 11 January 2001).

If Māori tribes are loath to discuss what they have done with Treaty of Waitangi settlements, it is somewhat understandable. They are witnessing the price being paid for failure by Tainui, the settlement trail-blazer. The tribe’s financial performance could hardly be more abject; its wealth has not grown by one dollar since its $170 million settlement in 1995. As its beneficiaries grapple with the dismal outcome of misguided and extravagant investments, Tainui’s public humiliation is complete.

Quite apart from the fact that financial stasis can hardly be regarded as ‘abject’, an important issue here is the implicit assumption that Māori do not have the right to self-determination, even in relation to settlements that represent an acknowledgment of past colonial wrongdoing.

Just one year after the editorial to which reference is made above appeared, Waikato-Tainui tribal leaders announced that they intended to build a retail development on the site of the old Air Force Base. Just twelve years later, Waikato-Tainui tribal assets amounted to more than $1.16 billion (Weekend Herald, 6 February, 2016).
3. The study

3.1 Rationale and immediate context

A recent study of signs in a street in the South Island of New Zealand found that there were “no signs in te reo Māori [the Māori language] and no bilingual signs” (Macalister, 2010, p. 69). My initial interest in undertaking the study reported here was to determine the extent to which signs in Māori were in evidence in the North Island, where, according to the 2013 census (Statistics New Zealand, n.d), 86% of New Zealand Māori live. My initial focus was on three shopping centres in Hamilton: Centre Place (situated in the central business district (CBD); The Base (situated north-west of the CBD); and Westfield-Chartwell (situated north east of the CBD). According to the city’s 2015 community profile (Hamilton City Council, 2015), the areas around these three centres have the ethnic distributions indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Selected Hamilton areas: Ethnicity distribution (from Hamilton city’s 2015 Community Profile)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Hamilton total (percent)</th>
<th>Hamilton West Area 1: Location of The Base (percent)</th>
<th>Hamilton East Area 2: Location of Westfield-Chartwell (percent)</th>
<th>Hamilton West Area 5: Location of Centre Place (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>60.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern/ Latin American/ African</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An initial survey of two of these shopping centres (Centre Place and Westfield-Chartwell) did not yield a single sign in the Māori language. I therefore decided to focus largely on the third (The Base), and to expand the focus of the study in a way that might help to explain some of the differences between its LL and that of the other two shopping centres.

The complex that currently constitutes The Base is built in a horseshoe shape, with shops around the perimeter of the horseshoe and a covered shopping mall, Te Awa, containing shops, a restaurant, a food hall and a cinema complex at one end. At the centre of the horseshoe shape, there is an open car park and a children’s playground. There are further parking spaces near the entrance to Te Awa and in
an underground car park. At the time of writing, there are 183 retail stores, 36 food outlets, a cinema complex and 3 thousand free car parking spaces. At the entrance to the site are three timber poles (pou). A further pole, 14 metres high and made of timber and stainless steel, stands at one of the entrances to Te Awa (The Base, n.d.). Music, including songs written in the Māori language, can sometimes be heard playing softly in the background in the open areas of The Base.

3.2 Theoretical and methodological framework

Marten, Van Mensel, and Gorter (2012) note that “issues of power and resistance are at the heart of the [LL] research agenda” (p. 1), expressing the hope that LL research will ultimately contribute to “empowerment of minority groups and survival of their languages” (p. 2). From this perspective, much LL research can be aligned with critical discourse theory (CDT), which has the potential to “unmask, contest and transform the existing structures of society” and is therefore “of direct relevance to those involved in political struggles, such as the revitalisation of minority languages” (Lewis, 2014, p. 61).

Critical discourse theory centres on the belief that “[m]eanings and identities … are radically contingent, [with] antagonistic forces attempting to fix, disrupt and reconfigure them in order to achieve hegemony” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 38). The struggle for hegemony becomes particularly evident where some destabilising crisis highlights the contingent nature of the status quo (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, pp. 111–113; Torfing, 2005, p. 8), providing a context in which ‘master signifiers’ representing widely accepted ideas (e.g. ‘democracy’) become imbued with new meanings (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 44–45).

Within the context of CDT, identity can never be fixed. This is particularly evident in an increasingly globalised world in which identity formation may involve a struggle to accommodate both the local and the global. In the case of countries such as Aotearoa/New Zealand, the impact of globalisation can be particularly complex and problematic. While young Māori and Pasifika people “struggle with issues of linguistic and cultural loss”, they often, nevertheless, have global aspirations (Johnson, 2008, p. 70). In common with their peers in many other communities, they are often “heavily influenced by global media … and American popular culture” (Melnick & Jackson, 2002, p. 429), associating English, particularly American English, with a “cosmopolitan life-style” and with being “educated, well-to-do, and fashionable” (Curtin, 2009, p. 229).

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2. This type of event can be compared with the concept of ‘turbulence’ as outlined by Cresswell and Martin (2012, p. 516) and applied by Stroud (2016) with reference to the semiotics of citizenship within the context of LL-based research.
Within the context of LL research, it has been noted that within a single sign, different languages may convey different messages or there may be what Reh (2004) refers to as ‘duplication’. Various factors may contribute to the salience of the languages represented, including positioning and sharpness of focus (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1988). Thus, for example, where top-to-bottom, left-to-right Roman alphabet script is involved, “[the] preferred code is on top, on the left or in the center and the marginalized code is at the bottom, on the right, or in the margins” (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 120). In interpreting the significance of linguistic positioning and prominence, we need, however, to take account of the source of the signs (Malinowski, 2009, p. 109). All of this is relevant to the present study. Also relevant is the extension of the scope of LL beyond written signs. Thus, for example, Shohamy and Gorter (2009) argue that LL may incorporate “multimodal theories to include also sounds, images, and graffiti” (p. 2).

While the original definition of LL can readily be expanded to accommodate some areas of additional focus, such as writing on clothes worn by those who temporarily inhabit a LL, others suggest a movement beyond LL into what might be referred to as ‘semioscape’ (SoC). While much of the focus of the present study is on the concept of LL as originally proposed by Landry and Bourhis (1997), attention is also paid to soundscape (SC), including the voices of the people who move around within the space (Pappenhagen, Scarvaglieri & Redder, 2016) and other aspects of the SoC in which the LL is located, such as architectural features and building materials.

A mixed methods approach, one that included both a quantitative and a qualitative dimension, was adopted. There were four parts to the study. The first involved a survey of written signs visible from the road, located in common areas of Te Awa, and/or at the entrances to individual commercial enterprises, a sign being defined here as “any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame” (Backhaus, 2007, p. 66). The primary focus was on who was responsible for the signs, what language/s appeared on them, and, where more than one language was involved, what the relationship between or among them was. The second part of the study involved a survey of the client base of Te Awa compared with that of two other Hamilton shopping malls (Centre Place and Westfield-Chartwell). Each of the food halls in these shopping malls was visited on twelve separate occasions over a period of three weeks. The visits, in which two observers (operating independently) were involved, took place between 11a.m. and 2.00p.m. and between 5.00p.m. and 6.00p.m. on Monday through Saturday. On each occasion, the two observers, the author and a research assistant, attempted to determine the overall number of clients present at each location and to assign each of them to one of six ‘ethnic descent distribution groups’: European; Māori; Pacific; Asian; Middle Eastern/ Latin American/ African; and Other (including unidentified). These categories, while
far from ideal, were selected because they could be matched against the categories in the 2015 Hamilton City Profile (see Table 1 above). The method of ethnic identification (reliance on physical appearance) was also far from ideal. It was, however, the only one available that was not potentially intrusive and disruptive. The observers took note of whether Māori presence and/or influence was indicated/reinforced by Māori writing on the clothing or other possessions of the clients, by the presence of traditional Māori tattoos (Ta Moko) and/or by the use of the Māori language. In order to avoid the ethical issues that would have been associated with any attempt at eavesdropping, only those utterances in the Māori language which could be heard clearly by those to whom they were not directly addressed (often because they were shouted) were included.

The last two parts of the study involved standardised open-ended (semi-structured) interviews (Patton, 1980, p. 206). Although some of the questions were determined in advance, question order could be varied and additional prompts and follow-up questions could be introduced. The first of the two interview components involved an interview with Dr Tom Roa, member and former Chair of Waikato-Tainui’s Executive Committee (Te Whaka Kitenga), in order to determine how he perceived aspects of The Base, both in his official capacity and as an individual Waikato-Tainui tribal member. The second involved interviews with Māori and non-Māori clients of The Base. These interviews explored the relationship between their knowledge of, and beliefs about aspects of the commercial complex and their actual practices in relation to it.3 The 50 Māori participants (25 affiliated to the Waikato-Tainui tribal federation; 25 affiliated to other tribal groups) were interviewed by a Māori research assistant who was fluent in the Māori language. The sample was one of convenience, involving a snowball technique: the first interviewee was selected by the researcher and asked to suggest others who might agree to being interviewed, and so on. For comparative purposes, a further 15 people, all non-Māori, were interviewed, the selection technique mirroring that used in the case of the Māori interviewees. Of the 15, 8 were of European descent, 3 of Asian descent, 1 of Pacific Islands descent, and 3 of mixed Asian and European descent. None of the non-Māori interviewees claimed to have any knowledge of the Māori language other than a few widely used words and phrases. All of them were interviewed by the main researcher (who was born in New Zealand and is of European descent). It is acknowledged that the fact that different interviewers were involved with different groups could potentially have a negative impact on comparability.

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3. By analogy with teacher cognition studies (see, for example, Borg 2006, p. 1), the other interviews could be said to involve ‘client cognition’.
4. The data

4.1 Architecture, building materials and naming

During his interview, Dr Roa was asked about The Base’s architecture, building materials and naming. He observed that the Māori name of the covered shopping mall, Te Awa, which translates as The River in English (see Figure 1), is a reminder of the enormous significance of the Waikato River to Waikato-Tainui people. The English name of the commercial complex (The Base), is, on the other hand, a reminder of the use of the land as a Royal New Zealand Air Force Base. He also noted that one of three carved wooden pou (poles) at the entrance to the site represents traditional guardianship of the tribe; another represents tribal modernisation; and the third, like the name of the entire commercial complex, is a reminder of use of the land by the Air Force (see Figure 2). The 14m high pole, which combines traditional and modern materials (timber and stainless steel), is circled by red, white and black ‘threads’ which represent the coming together of peoples (see Figure 3). So far as the construction of Te Awa is concerned, he observed that the roof represents the taniwha (guardians/protectors) of the Waikato River, and the floor, with different coloured patches of tiling, represents the rich gravelly soil of the river terraces that give Hamilton its Māori name, Kirikiroa (long stretch of gravel) (see Figure 4).

Figure 1. An entrance to Te Awa, The Base, Hamilton, New Zealand.

4. For further detail regarding the way in which the architecture of Te Awa represents a reclamation of Māori space, see IGNITE Architects Ltd and Tainui Group Holdings Ltd., n.d.
**Figure 2.** Three carved wooden poles at the entrance to The Base, Hamilton, New Zealand.

**Figure 3.** Timber and stainless pole at entrance to Te Awa, The Base, Hamilton, New Zealand.
4.2 Signage

In the case of the Westfield-Chartwell and Centre Place shopping malls, the Māori language did not appear on any of the written signs visible from the road or located in common areas and/or at the entrances to individual commercial enterprises. In the case of The Base, with the sole exception of a sign in Spanish at the entrance to a food hall outlet (see Figure 5), all of the signs for which owners/managers of individual commercial outlets were responsible were in English (see example in Figure 5).
The English that appeared on these signs did not include any instances of Māori loan words or any other features specific to New Zealand. It would not have been out of place in a British shopping centre.

In the case of signage for which the owners/managers of The Base as a whole are responsible, the situation was very different. There were two signs welcoming people in many different languages, one in the food hall area; the other at an entrance to the underground car park. There were also road traffic signs in English which cannot be legally altered (NZ Transport Agency, 2008). Of the remaining 199 signs associated with the open area of The Base, the underground car park and Te Awa, 22 were in Māori only, 112 were bilingual (English and Māori), and 65 were in English only.

All 22 of the signs in Māori only included nothing other than the name of the covered shopping mall (Te Awa). In all except 8 of the bilingual signs, the English was above or to the left of the Māori and more prominent typographically (see Figure 7). In two cases, both information desk signs, the English was to the left of the Māori but both were equally prominent typographically (see Figure 8). In the remaining 6 bilingual signs, the Māori was above or to the left of the English and equally prominent typographically. Four of these signs were signs on rubbish receptacles located in the food hall area; one was a recycling sign in a staff only area.

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5. No attempt was made to do a physical count of signs written in English only in view of the area covered (29 hectares) and the large number of commercial outlets (220).

6. These included three street name signs in which the Māori loanword Maahanga (twins) appeared: Maahanga Drive.
which was visible only because a door that would normally be closed had been left open. One was a sign commemorating the opening of Te Awa. All of the bilingual signs were characterized by duplication, the Māori script projecting essentially the same message as the English script. There is no immediately obvious reason why the Māori should be above the English on signs on rubbish receptacles or on a recycling sign and to the right of the English in information desk signs. However, there is a possible reason why the Māori is to the left of the English in the case of the sign commemorating the opening of Te Awa. That sign is attached to a wall to the left of a set of doors that open into Te Awa. Anyone looking at the sign to their left as they enter the doorway would be likely to focus on the writing nearest to the doors (the writing in English) and so the relationship between the English and the Māori remains essentially the same as it is in the case of the majority of the signs (where the English is to the left of the Māori).

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, long vowels were sometimes represented, though not consistently, by a double letter in written Māori. Now, however, in standardised Māori and in most dialects, a macron (length mark above a letter) is commonly used in writing to signal vowel length. A distinctive feature of Waikato-Tainui writing is, however, the retention of the double vowel. Fifty signs that included Māori words with long vowel sounds were detected. In three cases, a macron was used to signal vowel length; in all of the others, vowel length was signalled by a double letter (see Figure 6 above). Where there are lexical differences between standardised Māori and Waikato-Tainui dialect, the dialect form was used, as in the case of whareiti (rather than wharepaku) for toilet (see Figure 7).

The 65 signs in English for which the owners/managers of The Base were responsible can be divided into 2 main categories: instructional (46) and informational (19).

The instructional signs (of which 25 related to traffic control), included warning, advice and prohibition (e.g. Tow away area; Watch for pedestrians; No climbing). Most appeared in the underground car park or in open areas (including
parking areas reserved for staff of Tainui Group Holdings which are located in a semi-private location into which few clients of The Base are likely to stray). The only two that appeared in Te Awa were associated with the escalators and included 56 words in a relatively small space, which might have made bilingual signage problematic (see Figure 9).

Figure 8. One of the information desk signs at The Base, Hamilton, New Zealand.

Figure 9. English-only instructional sign in Te Awa, Hamilton, New Zealand.
Of the 19 informational signs in English (e.g. Shuttle stop), only 14 were located in Te Awa itself. Of these, 12 were exit signs. In most cases, signs for which the owners/managers of The Base are responsible (both instructional and informational signs) were found to be monolingual (in English) where the messages they conveyed were ones that had some bearing on safety (e.g. exit signs) and/or might need to be processed quickly (e.g. shuttle stop signs). However, 2 of the 14 English-only informational signs in Te Awa did not fit into this category. These signs were temporary in nature, referring in one case to opening hours, which change from time to time, and in the other to a seasonal clothing collection (see Figure 10). It may be that these temporary signs were in English only because there was insufficient time to consult adequately about dialectally appropriate lexis. There may, however, be another reason, one that relates to the intentional projection of a particular image and seeks to capitalise on the link between the English language and successful cosmopolitanism. In the case of the seasonal clothing collection sign, the noun ‘fall’, associated with American English, was used rather than the noun ‘autumn’, which is commonly used in New Zealand English. In both cases, the image accompanying the words was of a face that can readily be associated with a typical contemporary ideal of sophistication – slim, youthful, cosmopolitan, well-groomed. This is one of a small number of faces that have come to be associated with temporary signage in English at The Base.

When asked specifically about the official owner/manager signage, Dr. Roa observed that a critical aspect of the success of The Base was its ability to attract clients/customers from a wide range of backgrounds. Decisions about signage, being commercially related, were therefore left to the Māori manager. He also observed that some inconsistencies in signage (e.g. the occasional use of a macron to
signal the presence of a long vowel sound) most probably related to the absence of a fully developed signage policy, particularly in the early stages of development of The Base.7

4.3 Clientele

Following observations at three food halls in Hamilton, the overall number of clients present and the number assigned to different ethnic groups by the two observers were averaged.8 The total (averaged) number of food hall clients observed during the 36 visits was 6,504 (3,024 at Te Awa; 1,944 at Westfield Chartwell; 1,536 at Centre Place). More detailed numbers and percentages are provided in Table 2, where ‘other’ includes those who could not be classified by the observers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average number and percentage per visit</th>
<th>The Base</th>
<th>Westfield-Chartwell</th>
<th>Centre Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average total number</td>
<td>252 (100%)</td>
<td>162 (100%)</td>
<td>128 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>7.5 (28%)</td>
<td>91 (56%)</td>
<td>59 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>141 (56%)</td>
<td>52 (32%)</td>
<td>46 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>13 (5%)</td>
<td>6.5 (4%)</td>
<td>4.5 (3.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>15 (6%)</td>
<td>6.5 (4%)</td>
<td>10 (7.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern/ Latin American/ African</td>
<td>7.5 (3%)</td>
<td>3 (2%)</td>
<td>3 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5 (2%)</td>
<td>3 (2%)</td>
<td>3 (2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 relates only to the food halls of shopping malls and may not provide an accurate reflection of the situation that obtains in the shopping malls themselves. Nevertheless, it is interesting to compare the percentages in that table with the overall percentage of Māori in Hamilton (21.3% according to the 2015 city profile (Hamilton City Council, 2015)), and the percentage of Māori in the areas surrounding each of the three shopping malls (see Table 1 above).

The average percentage of people judged to be of Māori ethnicity in all three food halls exceeded the percentage of Māori in Hamilton overall. However, whereas

7. Two signs which appeared elsewhere only in English (including an exit sign) appeared bilingually on one occasion only in the underground car park.

8. The largest difference in overall number on any occasion was 18 (256; 238) and the largest difference in any one category was 7 (28 Asian; 21 Asian).
it did so by only 10.7% in the case of Westfield-Chartwell and 14.7% in the case of Centre Place, in the case of The Base there was a difference of 34.7%. The average percentage of Māori in all three food halls was also higher than the percentage of Māori in the surrounding areas: 17.9% higher in the case of Westfield-Chartwell; 18.4% higher in the case of Centre Place; 38.6% higher in the case of The Base. What these figures suggest is that The Base is considerably more popular overall with Māori than are the other two shopping centres.

On none of the occasions when the Westfield Chartwell and Centre Place food halls were visited did either of the observers hear the Māori language being spoken. However, a total of seventy-two different pairs or groups of customers at the food hall at Te Awa were heard to use the Māori language. In addition, although some of the customers at all three food halls were observed to have tattoos, only 27 instances of traditional Māori tattoos (Ta Moko) were observed – all at Te Awa food hall. Finally, with one exception (one client at Centre Place), only at Te Awa food hall were customers observed to be wearing clothing that had words in Māori printed on it – a total of thirty-six customers over the period of observation (see example in Figure 11).

![Figure 11. A T-shirt worn by a customer at Te Awa food hall, The Base, Hamilton. New Zealand](image)

Of the seventy-two utterances in Māori that were heard, almost all (56) came into the category of greetings or instructions/warnings (e.g. Kia ora (Hello); Haere mai (Come here)), the latter generally directed towards children by adults. The high incidence of greetings and instructional uses of the Māori language may simply be a reflection of the decision to attend only to those utterances which could be clearly heard. On the other hand, it may be that the high incidence of these speech acts, which are often included in beginner level language courses, is indicative of
the fact that the context provided by The Base is such as to give lower level learners the confidence required to use the language.

There were some major differences between the interview responses of the Māori and non-Māori interviewees (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Interview responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Non-Māori</th>
<th>Waikato-Tainui Māori</th>
<th>Non-Waikato-Tainui Māori</th>
<th>All Māori</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you visit The Base?</td>
<td>Yes (15/100%)</td>
<td>Yes (25/100%)</td>
<td>Yes (25/100%)</td>
<td>Yes (50/100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you visit The Base at least once a week?</td>
<td>Yes (5/33%)</td>
<td>Yes (18/72%)</td>
<td>Yes (13/52%)</td>
<td>Yes (31/62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you visit other shopping malls around Hamilton?</td>
<td>Yes (15/100%)</td>
<td>Yes (8/32%)</td>
<td>Yes (18/72%)</td>
<td>Yes (26/52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the fact that the Base is a Waikato-Tainui enterprise have any particular significance for you?</td>
<td>Yes (2/20%)</td>
<td>Yes (18/72%)</td>
<td>Yes (7/28%)</td>
<td>Yes (25/50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you noticed that some of the signage at the Base is in Māori?</td>
<td>Yes (6/40%)</td>
<td>Yes (25/100%)</td>
<td>Yes (25/100%)</td>
<td>Yes (50/100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you tell from the signage that The Base is a Waikato-Tainui enterprise?</td>
<td>Yes (2/13%)</td>
<td>Yes (14/56%)</td>
<td>Yes (14/56%)</td>
<td>Yes (28/56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you speak some Māori (from basic to fluent)?</td>
<td>Yes (0/0%)</td>
<td>Yes (20/80%)</td>
<td>Yes (14/56%)</td>
<td>Yes (34; 68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you speak Māori, are you more, less or equally likely to use it at The Base than in other locations?</td>
<td>Not relevant (10/50%)</td>
<td>More likely (6/43%)</td>
<td>More likely (16/47%)</td>
<td>More likely (25/50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in the table above, the Māori interviewees were considerably more likely than were the non-Māori interviewees to visit The Base at least once a week and, particularly in the case of Waikato-Tainui Māori, considerably less likely to visit other shopping malls around Hamilton. Māori interviewees, particularly Waikato-Tainui Māori interviewees, were also considerably more likely than non-Māori interviewees to report that The Base had particular significance for them. While all of the Māori interviewees reported having noticed that some of the signage at The Base was in the Māori language, this was true of only 40% of the non-Māori interviewees. Also, while only 13% of the non-Māori interviewees indicated that they could tell from the signage that The Base was a Waikato-Tainui
enterprise, 56% of the Māori interviewees indicated that they could do so. Finally, of the 34 Māori interviewees who indicated that they could speak the Māori language to some extent, 50% indicated that they would be more likely to do so at The Base than they would in other locations. What all of this suggests is that The Base is a place with which many Māori, particularly Waikato Tainui Māori, can identify, one in which they feel a sense of cultural belonging, and one in which they feel comfortable about expressing this sense through their choice of language.

Most of the Māori interviewees chose to add comments at the end of their interviews. Of those comments that related to things other than the logistics of shopping, almost all (33) were positive, referring to the sense of pride and/or connectedness that they experienced in relation to The Base (e.g. You see all the whānau (extended family) there; Kapai Tainui (Well done Tainui); Proud to be Tainui). The few negative comments (5) related to the perception that there were too few Māori shops and Māori sales people. Three non-Māori, all of European descent, chose to add comments. All three referred to the commercial success of The Base. One, however, believed that that success had been achieved at ‘taxpayers’ expense’. Another believed that Māori might, in time, have “too much influence on the country’s economic future”. An extract from the comment made by the third is printed below:

I feel very positive about the fact that this is a Tainui enterprise. It’s really good to see Māori doing so well. It’s about time. I really like the fact that Māori families seem to treat the place a bit like a home from home. That’s got to be good for New Zealand.

Dr Roa was asked during his interview how he felt about The Base and how he believed other Waikato-Tainui tribal members felt about it. He was also asked whether he had any observations to make about the use of the Māori language by clients of The Base. He said that he felt proud and possessive of The Base and that he believed that other Waikato-Tainui people felt the same. He also said that he had observed that some of those who could speak the Māori language were more inclined to do so in and around The Base. He added that when people were having a conversation in Māori at The Base, others would often comment or ‘chime in’. This was, he said, a place where Waikato-Tainui, and, indeed, all Māori could ‘walk tall’, a place where there is a strong sense of Waikato-Tainui ownership.

5. Discussion: Revisiting the research questions

At the core of the research project reported here is CDT and at the core of CDT is radical contingency, with destabilizing crises providing the conditions under
which meanings and identities can be contested, disrupted and reconfigured. Hence the research questions:

*How, and to what extent, does the LL of The Base support or contest the existing hegemony as it relates to issues associated with Māori language and identity?*  
*How, if at all, is re-appropriation of space indicated by the LL of the Base, its soundscape and its architecture and building materials?*

The 1995 Deed of Settlement between Waikato-Tainui and the Crown had a destabilising effect on New Zealand society. It, together with subsequent Treaty-based settlements, represented a threat to the *status quo*. Widely held but often ill-informed assumptions about the country’s past and about its indigenous people were brought into the open. The situation was ripe for a challenge to the existing hegemony. Various aspects of The Base, including its LL, would appear to represent such a challenge.

Much of the history of Māori tribes since European colonisation has been shaped by loss – loss of land, loss of language and loss of power and prestige (mana). The Base is a successful commercial enterprise. It would appear, however, as the research reported here indicates, to be much more than that. Above all, it would appear to be a symbol of resistance and reclamation. Much of the land lost by Waikato-Tainui was seized in response to the establishment of a Māori monarchy; both The Base and Te Awa were opened by Māori monarchs. The English name of the commercial complex and the design of one of the carved wooden poles at its entrance serve as reminders of past appropriation of Māori land; the Māori name of the covered shopping mall serves as a symbol of re-appropriation of space – both physical and linguistic. It is, like the floor and ceiling of Te Awa, a reminder of the significance of the Waikato River and of that continuity of flow that unites Waikato-Tainui people, past, present and future. Also symbolic of continuity are the two carved wooden poles at the entrance to the Base that make reference to tribal tradition on the one hand and tribal modernisation on the other. The fourth pole, combining, in its materials, the traditional and the modern, points symbolically to a new future, the tri-coloured twisted threads surrounding it representing a new unity of peoples. It is within this context that the significance of the signage at The Base, and, in particular, at Te Awa, can best be understood.

Many of the signs for which the owners/managers of The Base as a whole are responsible were found to be bilingual (English and Māori), including almost all of those at Te Awa. This represents a significant departure from the New Zealand norm. In most cases, the English was above or to the left of the Māori and more typographically prominent, and both languages were found to convey essentially the same message. Combined with the fact that many of the signs include features that are specific to Waikato-Tainui (lexical selection and use of a double vowel to
indicate vowel length), this suggests that the Māori is intended to serve a symbolic function rather than an informational one. Like the Māori songs that can sometimes be heard playing softly in the open areas of The Base, it contributes to the re-appropriation of linguistic space.

Each of the two temporary signs in English that were found in Te Awa include a picture that seems to conform to a contemporary ideal of cosmopolitan sophistication. One of these signs includes a noun (fall) that is associated with American rather than New Zealand English. This suggests a possible attempt by the owners/managers of The Base to acknowledge the increasingly global aspirations of New Zealand youth, along with their enthusiasm for American popular culture. It also suggests a willingness to capitalise on the increasing association between the English language and education, wealth and fashion. As indicated in the timber and steel pole, acceptance of the new does not necessarily entail rejection of tradition. In common with other New Zealanders, Māori need not accept dated and stereotypical representations of their identity.

Over half of the clients in Te Awa food hall during observations were judged to be Māori compared with around one third in each of the other food halls visited. This, combined with the interview data, suggests that The Base is a place with which Māori, and, in particular, Waikato-Tainui, can identify. This is a place where many of those who speak the Māori language are more likely to do so than in other locations, their voices reinforcing the impact of the presence of the Māori language in naming, in signage and in the words of the Māori songs that can sometimes be heard. All of this adds to the sense of re-appropriation of physical and linguistic space that permeates The Base, as does the occasional presence of traditional Māori tattoos and Māori words on clothing (which are, in themselves, symbols of reclamation wherever they are displayed).

Many aspects of the semioticscape of The Base, including aspects of its overall design, its architecture, and its linguistic landscape and soundscape, represent an assertion of Waikato-Tainui presence. This, combined with the Base’s economic success, evident in its immaculate presentation and in the high level of activity in its many commercial outlets, represents a challenge to stereotypical negative representations of Māori. The radical contingency of the existing hegemony is exposed and contested and the master signifiers (Māori and Waikato-Tainui) are imbued with new meanings.

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Abstrakt


Schlüsselwörter: Identität, indigene Sprachen, linguistische Landschaft, Māori, Minderheitensprachen

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