

## **II The Dynamic Equivalence Theory Of Eugene A. Nida**



## CHAPTER FIVE

# AN ORIENTATION TO NIDA'S SOCIO-LINGUISTIC THEORY OF TRANSLATION

### A. THE BACKGROUND

Eugene A. Nida has been a prolific writer on linguistic themes for some five decades. The *Festschrift* published by Mouton in 1975 listed twenty three books and a partial list of fifty eight journal articles.<sup>1</sup> Most of the articles were contributions to *The Bible Translator* and *Practical Anthropology*, two journals which he helped found and which he served as editor. Both have proven effective media for his untiring efforts to make available, for Bible translators especially, insights from linguistics and the social sciences. An examination of the titles of Nida's books in chronological order would indicate four distinct phases in his theorizing:

#### 1. The Descriptive Linguistic Phase (1943-1951)

This is best represented by his text *Morphology*<sup>2</sup> a book which has continued to be used long after its theoretical orientation became out of date. Its durability stems from the amazing array of linguistic problems collected in the course of extensive travels. Furthermore, five years before the publication of Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* (1957), usually considered a landmark in linguistic theory, Nida published an article, 'A New Methodology of Biblical Exegesis'<sup>3</sup> which raised questions concerning what was subsequently to be known as deep structure and case grammar.

#### 2. The Cross-Cultural Communication Phase (1952-1960)

This saw the publication of his eminently readable *Customs and Culture*<sup>4</sup> as well as the book which best represents his own outlook and motivation, *Message and Mission*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M.Black and W. Smalley eds, *On Language, Culture and Religion: In Honor of Eugene A. Nida* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975 ) xxi-xxvii

<sup>2</sup> E.A.Nida, *Morphology: The Descriptive Analysis of Words* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949).

<sup>3</sup> E.A. Nida, 'A New Methodology in Biblical Exegesis,' *TBT* 3:3 (1952) 97-111.

<sup>4</sup> E.A. Nida, *Customs and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1954)

<sup>5</sup> E.A. Nida, *Message and Mission* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960).

### 3. The Translation Theory Phase (1961-1973)

This is marked by *Toward a Science of Translating*,<sup>6</sup> a wide-ranging treatment which represented a first attempt to expound at length his theory of Dynamic Equivalence (DE) translation. His earlier handbook *Bible Translating*<sup>7</sup> had been orientated to Aboriginal languages and was basically a collection of practical hints and suggestions. The new book attempting a coherent theory of translation was broadly based and drew on insights from communication theory, psychology, Biblical studies, and especially the developing fields of semantics and transformational grammar. Subsequently it was to be amended and clarified at many points by the textbook *The Theory and Practice of Translation*.<sup>8</sup>

### 4. Nida's Semantic Phase (1974-1983)

This was signalled by the publication of his *Componential Analysis of Meaning*.<sup>9</sup> His work on semantics and discourse analysis continues, including a semantic analysis of the vocabulary of the Greek New Testament.

Over the years, then, it is evident that Nida's central interest in language has shifted from the analysis of formal structures, principally morphology and syntax, to the analysis of semantic structures. The shift was an almost inevitable result of the increasing concern with translational equivalence. No doubt, too, it reflects the fact that he did not stand aloof from the revolutionary developments taking place in Linguistics during this period. He was, in fact, elected President of the Linguistic Society of America in 1968.

In order to produce a critique of the DE theory of translation one must decide which of Nida's many writings might be regarded as being sufficiently definitive. Fortunately in an Author's Postscript to another volume we find the needed guidance: 'Much of what I have written on translation theory is now best summarised in the volume *The Theory and Practice of Translation*.'<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, TAPOT, as it is commonly called, (which was written with Charles R. Taber) will be the basic resource. For even though Nida seems to have refined his theory in subsequent years, it is the principles and procedures expounded in TAPOT that underlie the Good News Bible and its foreign language counterparts.

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<sup>6</sup> E.A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1964).

<sup>7</sup> E.A. Nida, *Bible Translating* (Revised 1961; London: United Bible Societies, 1947).

<sup>8</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969)

<sup>9</sup> E. A. Nida, *Componential Analysis of Meaning* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975)

<sup>10</sup> A S. Dil ed., *Language Structure and Translation: Essays by Eugene A. Nida* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1975) 271.

## 5. Nida's Rhetorical Phase (1984 - )

In the period subsequent to the publication of the GNB and its foreign language counterparts, that provide the focus of this investigation, Nida's thinking has not remained static. Even in retirement his writings have continued to interact with recent developments in linguistics that are a long way from the Bloomfieldian structuralism which provided the original matrix for his translation theory.

An article on 'Rhetoric and Style'<sup>11</sup> 1984 proved a precursor of a new interest in rhetorical processes in discourse structure, and their significance for translation. An important book, *From One Language to Another*<sup>12</sup> (1986) co-authored with Jan De Waard, signalled some modification of the approach of TAPOT as the subtitle 'Functional Equivalence in Bible Translating' implied. Its chapter on Lexical Meaning discussed 'semantic domains' along lines that foreshadowed major works to come: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (1988) and *Lexical Semantics of the Greek New Testament* (1992), both co-authored with J.P. Louw.<sup>13</sup>

Nida has distanced his own approach to translation from the more traditional philological and linguistic approaches.<sup>14</sup> Philological approaches to the problems of translation have focused on differences in style characteristic of diverse literary genres. Philological theories of translation (e.g., Belloc 1931; Brower 1947; Carey 1956; Goethe 1827; Nabakov 1955; Pasternak 1958; Tytler 1790) have been mainly concerned with literary texts and the emphases have been on (a) the source of the thematic and formal features of the text and their later influence upon other literary productions, (b) the stylistic peculiarities of the author, and (c) the thematic structures.

In the philological tradition the principles of translation have been formulated in general terms. Subsequently a series of exceptions applicable to particular types of literary genres were added. Nida acknowledges that this approach has often been helpful in teaching the skill of translation, and that various institutes designed to train translators and interpreters have been able to produce competent inter-lingual technicians.

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<sup>11</sup> E.A. Nida, 'Rhetoric and Style: A Taxonomy of Structures and Functions', *Linguistic Sciences* 6 (1984) 287-305.

<sup>12</sup> Jan De Waard and E.A. Nida, *From One Language to Another: Functional Equivalence in Bible Translating*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986).

<sup>13</sup> J.P. Louw and E.A. Nida, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (2 Vols) (New York: UBS, 1988); E.A. Nida and J.P. Louw, *Lexical Semantics of the Greek New Testament*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

<sup>14</sup> E.A. Nida, 'The Nature of Dynamic Equivalence in Translating', *Babel* Vol.23:3 (1977) 216.

Usually, however, there is no attempt to state why a particular procedure or principle should be followed.

Linguistics has traditionally provided a broader view of language than philology. This has accordingly been reflected in the Linguistic theories of translation.<sup>15</sup> Attention has been given to levels of language (registers), types of correspondence, equivalence of language categories, and rules for transfer and restructuring. But the outstanding deficiency of the linguistic orientation hitherto, according to Nida, is that insufficient attention has been paid to either the author or the receptors. The texts are treated essentially as objects in and of themselves, more or less unrelated to actual communication events.

Because of this tendency to overlook the significance of translation as an act of communication, Nida<sup>16</sup> and later Nida and Taber<sup>17</sup> have sought to focus attention upon the role of the receptors. The substitution of the term 'receptor' for the more traditional term 'target' is not insignificant. The receptors, those who must decode and understand the message, are seen as an integral part of the communication process. The capacities, interests and pre-suppositions of the receptors are primarily responsible for the success or failure of any translation. That means for Nida that the receptors largely determine the formal features any satisfactory translation must possess. The principal focus of this 'sociolinguistic theory of translation' is 'translation as an act of communication'.<sup>18</sup>

## B. THE NEW CONCEPT OF TRANSLATION

The first two chapters of TAPOT expound the new concept of translation in broad terms. Subsequent chapters take up in systematic order the fundamental procedures that are being recommended: grammatical and semantic analysis, transfer, restructuring and testing. The authors acknowledge that their textbook is not exhaustive. In particular there is need for further amplification of structural semantics (including componential analysis), and of discourse analysis.

In the first chapter the old focus and the new focus of translation are contrasted. Traditionally translators have focused on the form of the message, taking delight in

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<sup>15</sup> J.C. Catford *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965). R. Jakobson 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation' in R.A. Brower ed. *On Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966) 232-239.

<sup>16</sup> E.A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1964).

<sup>17</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969).

<sup>18</sup> E.A. Nida, 'The Nature of Dynamic Equivalence in Translating', *Babel* Vol.23:3 (1977) 217.

reproducing the stylistic parallelisms and unusual grammatical structures. A sociolinguistic translation theory on the other hand focused not on the forms of the message but on the response of the receptor:

This response must then be compared with the way in which the original receptors presumably reacted to the message when it was given in its original setting. Even the old questions: "Is this a correct translation?" must be answered in terms of another question, namely: "For whom?" Correctness must be determined by the extent to which the average reader for which a translation is intended will be likely to understand it correctly. Moreover we are not concerned merely with the possibility of his understanding correctly, but with the overwhelming likelihood of it. In other words we are not content merely to translate so that the average receptor is likely to understand the message; rather we aim to make certain that such a person is very unlikely to misunderstand it.<sup>19</sup>

This implies that there will be different translations that can be regarded as 'correct'. For the biblical scholar, for instance, the most literal translation will be correct as he is acquainted with the forms of the source text (ST). But in most large linguistic communities there are a number of socio-educational levels of speech and comprehension so that several different levels of translation (in terms of vocabulary and grammatical structure) are required if all people are to be essentially equal in opportunity to understand the message.

This criterion of comprehensibility demands the elimination of two different types of expression: (1) those which are likely to be misunderstood and (2) those that are so difficult and heavy as to discourage the reader from attempting to comprehend the content of the message. The first category is exemplified by such idioms as 'children of the bride-chamber' (Mark 2:19) and 'to heap coals of fire on his head' (Rom 12:20). Such Semitic idioms baffle the average reader who does not realise that the first means friends of the bridegroom while the second means to make a person ashamed of his behaviour—it is not a kind of torture! The second type is illustrated by citation of a number of biblical passages (viz. 2 Cor 3:10; Matt 3:15c; John 1:14; Rom 1:17 and 3:21-23) and their rendering by the KJV on the one hand and by more idiomatic versions, especially the Good News Bible (GNB) on the other. The latter is clearly superior in terms of comprehensibility.

Elsewhere Nida seems to anticipate (or react to) criticism of the receptor-orientation of his theorizing:

The role of the translator is not the same as that of the exegetical commentator, but no translator can afford to produce a text without considering the manner in which the prospective audience is likely to

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<sup>19</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 1.



interpret it. Translating is essentially an act of communication and if the resulting translation is not understandable or is generally misunderstood, it is obviously not a satisfactory translation, regardless of the manner in which certain formal devices have been imitated or the lexical units carefully matched. As an event of communication the translation cannot be regarded merely as a document. It is a message which is to be received, decoded, and responded to by the receptors whose background experience, system of values and concepts about translational adequacy are almost invariably different from those who received the original communication.<sup>20</sup>

The new concept of translation requires new attitudes with respect to both Receptor Language (RL) and Source Language (SL).<sup>21</sup> With regard to the RL it must be recognized that each language has its own genius which must be respected if communication is to be effective. The good translator will not hesitate to make whatever formal changes are necessary to reproduce the message in the distinctive dress of the RL. Anything that can be said in one language can be said in another unless the form is an essential element of the message. So there is some loss of meaning where the form of the original involves, for instance, a play on words which cannot be reproduced in the RL. The example given is the use of *pneuma* in John 3. This single Greek term is used to refer to both wind and spirit (like its Hebrew equivalent) but the significant play on words in the Greek text cannot be reproduced in translation into English or most other languages. However a marginal note can be added to draw the attention of the reader to the SL phenomenon.

The corollary of the above is that to preserve the content of the message the form must be changed. The extent of the change needed depends upon the linguistic and cultural distance between the languages involved. Thus it is easier to translate from English to German than from English to Hungarian. All three share the same Western technological cultural setting but linguistically Hungarian is a member of the Finno-Ugrian language family not the Germanic branch of the Indo-European family of languages. However, if one has to translate from English to Hindi the form changes are greater than from English to Hungarian. For even though English and Hindi both belong to the same Indo-European family of languages, the cultural contexts, including many differences of world view, are so diverse that the formal structure patterns require more extensive modification in order to preserve the context. Translation from English to Zulu would require even more extensive changes as Zulu belongs to a different linguistic family (Bantu) and represents a totally different culture.

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<sup>20</sup> E.A. Nida, 'The Nature of Dynamic Equivalence in Translating', *Babel* Vol.23:3 (1977) 227.

<sup>21</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 3-11.



A new attitude to the SL is also called for. Behind much Formal Correspondence (FC) translation in the past lay an unwarranted awe towards Hebrew and Greek as sacred languages. The languages of the Bible must be seen as having the same potentialities and being subject to the same limitations as any other natural language.<sup>22</sup> The message of the Bible was expressed in words which have meaning only in terms of the cultural contexts in which those languages were used. The vocabulary of the Bible was rooted in the finite experience of men and women of those times. However, terms were sometimes used in special ways just as one may do in any language when one wants to communicate some new insight. Another important assumption of DE Bible translation is that the biblical writers expected to be understood. They employed 'common language'—the so called Koine Greek.<sup>23</sup> This is very significant for Nida. They were addressing themselves to concrete historical situations and were speaking to living people confronted by pressing issues. Therefore, unless an ambiguity is linguistically 'marked', the translator should not 'ride the fence' in the case of expressions which can be interpreted more than one way. The most likely meaning must be selected. The others can always be placed in a marginal note.<sup>24</sup>

A simple definition of translation begins Chapter 2—'Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the SL message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style'.<sup>25</sup> This task of reproducing the message entails seeking equivalence rather than identity which would include preservation of the forms of utterance. The translator seeks *natural* equivalents. The best translation does not sound like a translation, nor should there be any trace of awkwardness in its grammatical and stylistic forms. However, the historical context of the Scriptures must be retained. One should not render the Bible as if it all happened in the next town ten years ago. Thus the natural equivalent chosen must be the *closest* one. 'Demon possessed' cannot be replaced by 'mentally distressed'. It is not the closest natural equivalent and represents a re-interpretation of the cultural outlook of the biblical writers.

The definition gives priority to meaning, i.e., the content of the message. This often necessitates radical restructuring of the formal structures. However, style is also important. While it is often quite impossible to represent some of the stylistic subtleties of the original (e.g. puns, acrostic poems, rhythmic units), marginal notes can be helpful and are in fact essential in the case of plays on words (e.g. as in the usage of

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<sup>22</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 7.

<sup>23</sup> E.A. Nida, *Good News for Everyone* (Waco TX: Word Books, 1977) 12

<sup>24</sup> E.A. Nida, 'The Nature of Dynamic Equivalence in Translating', *Babel* Vol.23:3,1977) 8.

<sup>25</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 12.

certain biblical names—Abraham, Israel, Sarah, Cain and Abel). It is functional equivalence that must be sought on the level of style as well as on the level of content. Accordingly the RSV (1946) is criticised because it reproduces many formal features of Mark's 'typical Semitic Greek'.<sup>26</sup> Thus in Mark 1 the RSV has 26 sentences beginning with 'And'. This reproduces Mark's *καί* which in turn reflects the influence of the Hebrew conjunction *ו*, but is in conflict with good English usage and does not therefore represent functional equivalence. Similarly one should not reproduce form features such as 'it came to pass' which is just a transitional word marking the beginning of a new episode in the Greek text, again reflecting the Hebrew *וַיְהִי*

As a basis for deciding what should be done in specific translation situations the authors expound four fundamental sets of priorities:

1. Contextual consistency has priority over verbal consistency (or word-for-word concordance).
2. Dynamic equivalence has priority over formal correspondence.
3. The aural forms of the language has priority over the written form.
4. Forms that are used by and acceptable to the audience for which a translation is intended have priority over forms that may traditionally be more prestigious.<sup>27</sup>

Let us look at Nida's four principles more carefully:

### **1. Contextual consistency has priority over verbal consistency<sup>28</sup>**

The semantic areas of corresponding words are not identical. Therefore, in translation, the choice of the right word in the receptor language to translate a word in the source language text, depends more on the context than upon some fixed system of verbal consistency. The point is illustrated by reference to the rendering of the Greek word *σῶμα* in a formal correspondence version such as the Revised Standard Version (RSV) and in idiomatic translations such as the Good News Bible (TEV 'Today's English Version', later designated GNB). The RSV translates literally 'body' on each occurrence of *σῶμα*, whereas the translators of the New English Bible (NEB) and TEV make no attempt to retain verbal concordance because of their concern for contextual consistency. The table from TAPOT:15 is reproduced below:

<sup>26</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 14.

<sup>27</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 14.

<sup>28</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 15-22.

1. Matt 6:25  
 RSV about your body  
 NEB clothes to cover your body  
 TEV clothes for your body
2. Mark 5:29  
 RSV she felt in her body  
 NEB she knew in herself  
 TEV she had the feeling inside herself
3. Luke 17:37  
 RSV where the body is  
 NEB where the corpse is  
 TEV where there is a dead body
4. Rom 12:1  
 RSV present your bodies  
 NEB offer your very selves  
 TEV offer yourselves
5. Col 2:11  
 RSV putting off the body of flesh  
 NEB divested of the lower nature  
 TEV freed from the power of the sinful body

Similar tables are provided for the translation of the Greek term *σάρξ* (flesh) and the verb *δικαίω* (justify) and it is maintained that a consistent literal rendering (of for instance 'body', 'flesh', 'justify') is unnatural if not actually misleading. This time the American Standard Version (ASV) of 1901 (precursor of the RSV) is contrasted with the NEB and TEV:

1. Luke 24:39  
 ASV a spirit hath not flesh and bones  
 NEB no ghost has flesh and bones  
 TEV a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones
2. 2 Cor 7:5  
 ASV our flesh has no relief  
 NEB there was no relief for this poor body of ours  
 TEV we did not have any rest
3. Rom 11:14  
 ASV provoke to jealousy them that are my flesh  
 NEB to stir emulation in the men of my own race  
 TEV make the people of my own race jealous

4. Acts 2:17
  - ASV pour out my Spirit on all flesh
  - NEB pour out upon everyone a portion of my Spirit
  - TEV pour out my Spirit upon all men
5. Rom 8:3
  - ASV what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God...
  - NEB what the law could never do, because our lower nature robbed it of its potency, God has done
  - TEV what the Law could not do, because human nature was weak, God did
6. 2 Cor 10:13
  - ASV for though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh
  - NEB weak men we may be, but it is not as such that we fight our battles
  - TEV it is true we live in the world; but we do not fight from worldly motives
7. 1 Cor 1:26
  - ASV not many wise after the flesh
  - NEB few of you are men of wisdom by human standard
  - TEV few of you were wise..., from the human point of view

Only in Luke 24:39 is the Greek *σάρξ* seen to correspond with a current use of 'flesh' in English according to Nida, since for most persons, 'flesh' has only three meanings: (1) meat, e.g., from the butcher's (slightly obsolescent); (2) the flesh of a person, e.g., 'She has put on a lot of flesh'; (3) sex—an increasingly central meaning.

The third table provides a number of translations for *δικαιόω* (justify):

1. Matt 12:37
  - RSV for by your word you will be justified, and by your word you will be condemned
  - NEB for out of your own mouth you will be acquitted; out of your own mouth you will be condemned
  - TEV for your own words will be used to judge you, either to declare you innocent or to declare you guilty
2. Luke 7:29
  - RSV all the people and tax-collectors justified God
  - NEB all the people, including the tax-gatherers praised God
  - TEV all the people and tax collectors hear him; they were the ones who had obeyed God's righteous demands

3. Luke 16:15
 

RSV	you are those who justify yourselves before men
NEB	you are the people who impress your fellowmen with your righteousness
TEV	you are the ones who make yourselves look right in men's sight
  
4. Rom 3:4
 

RSV	that thou mayest be justified in thy words
NEB	when thou speakest thou shalt be vindicated
TEV	you must be shown to be right when you speak
  
5. Rom 3:24
 

RSV	they are justified by his grace as a gift
NEB	all are justified by God's free grace alone
TEV	by the free gift of God's grace they are all put right with him

Concordant translation of δικαιόω by 'justify' is said to be quite misleading. Not only does it not do justice to the range of meanings in the Greek term, but also fails to recognize the quite different senses in current English usage. In present day English it has four meanings in popular usage. Thus one might say, 'He was justified in doing that' implying that despite appearances to the contrary, he was right. Secondly 'He is always justifying what he is doing' implies that what he is doing is wrong but he feels constrained to make it look right. Thirdly one may speak of 'justifying two different columns of type' thus making them the same length (hardly popular usage one would think). Lastly, another, but very limited usage is found in the expression 'He justified his existence' i.e., he did something worthwhile to vindicate his presence. However, none of these four modern meanings are seen to be appropriate for the translation of the passages chosen above.

That concordance in translation may involve serious distortions of meaning is argued not only from practical examples but also from two linguistic axioms:

1. Each language covers the totality of experience with symbols.
2. Each language has its own system of symbolizing meaning.

Both points are elaborated. Thus language is much more complex than a single 'map' of experience, for this segmenting of experience is several layers deep. Thus one may refer to a certain household pet as a 'terrier', a 'dog', a 'mammal' or an 'animal'. Thus a diagram of the way in which language segments the total experience of its speech community would need various levels, each carefully segmented into larger and larger sections with intricate patterns of inclusion and exclusion. A later chapter on Referential Meaning includes a further section on Hierarchical Relationships Between

Meanings of Words.<sup>29</sup> The whole subject is one that gets more specialist treatment from other semanticists (e.g. Lyons<sup>30</sup>).

With regard to the second axiom Nida maintains that languages not only possess distinctive ways of segmenting their most concrete, specific layer of existence, but they also have very different ways of distinguishing the classes in the upper levels, and that:

languages tend to be more alike on the specific concrete level and increasingly different on the higher levels. This is true because the distinctions made on the lower levels depend primarily on 'perception' (the shape and size of things) while the upper layers of classification depend essentially upon 'conception' (the way people think about objects, events and qualities). In other words each language classifies certain qualities which they share, while features in which they differ are ignored as incidental. But which features are crucial and which are incidental is basically a matter of arbitrary choice within each language and culture.<sup>31</sup>

## 2. The priority of dynamic equivalence over formal correspondence

This second priority stresses that the DE model looks at translation in terms of the receptor and his understanding. Intelligibility, however, is not measured merely in terms of whether the words are understandable and the sentences grammatically constructed, but in terms of the total impact the message has on the receptor. It will be useful to reproduce Nida's two diagrams distinguishing his DE model from the traditional view. Figure 1 represents the way in which translations were judged traditionally:

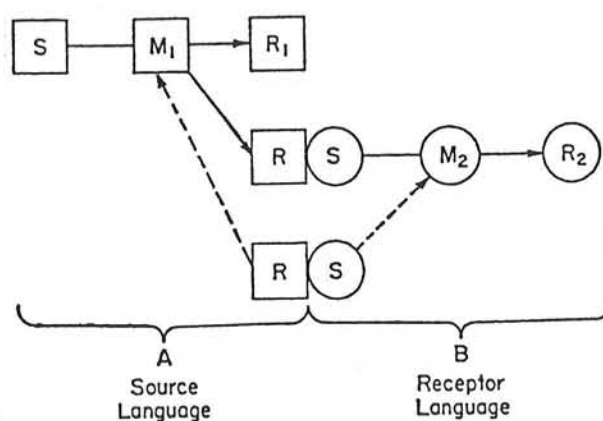


Figure 1

<sup>29</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 68.

<sup>30</sup> J.Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968) 456f.

<sup>31</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 21.



The first box represents the source (S), who communicates the message (M1), which is received by the original receptor (R1). The translator, who is both receptor and source, first receives M1 as if he were an R1, and then produces in a totally different historical cultural context a new message (M2) which he hopes will be understood by the final receptor (R2). The differences between the two languages and the two cultural settings are represented by the different shapes. The squares represent the source language factors and the circles represent the receptor language factors. Both the translator and the scholarly judge of the translation combine both types and factors. In the past critical examination of a translation was usually carried out by someone who simply examined the two messages (M1 and M2) and compared their formal and meaningful structures and on the basis of this decided whether the translation was 'faithful'.<sup>32</sup>

Nida points out that there is a built in problem in the traditional approach—the scholars involved are often so familiar with the source text (M1) that they almost instinctively evaluate the form of M2 in terms of what they already know about M1. This was certainly the case as we have acknowledged with the ERV (1881) and its American counterpart the ASV (1901), both of which were acclaimed as landmarks of biblical scholarship at the time but which were found to be less intelligible than the three centuries old Authorized Version (KJV) they were supposed to update. In Nida's theory any evaluation of a translation must involve a comparison of the 'real or presumed comprehension of M1 by R1 with the comprehension of M2 by the average receptor, R2'<sup>33</sup> as diagrammatically represented in Figure 2.

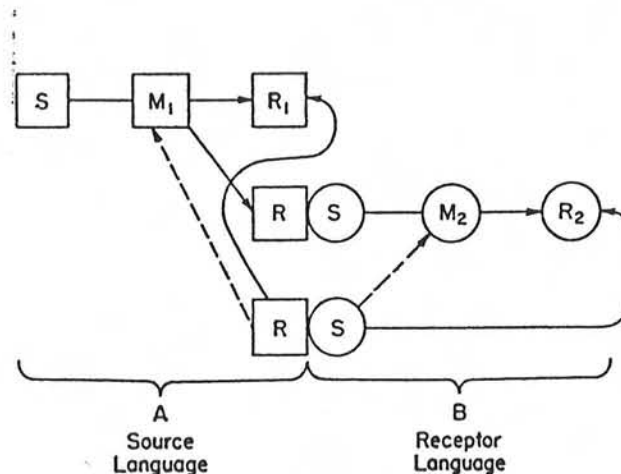


Figure 2

<sup>32</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 22-23.

<sup>33</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 23.



'The first message (M1) was designed not for the bilingual person (the translator-critic) but for the monolingual R1 and it is this comprehension of M2 by R2 which must ultimately serve as the criterion of correctness and adequacy of M2.'

In his more popularly written apologia for the TEV, *Good News for Everyone*, Nida states plainly:

The principle of dynamic equivalence implies that the quality of a translation is in proportion to the reader's unawareness that he is reading a translation at all. This principle means, furthermore, that the translation should stimulate in the new reader essentially the same reaction to the text as the original author wished to produce in his first and immediate readers. The application of this principle of dynamic equivalence leads to far greater faithfulness in translation, since accuracy in translating cannot be reckoned merely in terms of corresponding words but on the basis of what the new readers actually understand.<sup>34</sup>

No doubt anticipating the obvious criticism of this receptor-oriented approach, Nida provides a footnote in TAPOT.<sup>35</sup>

We must assume that there is at least some basic relationship between the intention of the source and the response of the first receptors. Otherwise, of course, the communication has utterly failed. But in general we can assume that the source had in mind the backgrounds of his receptors and prepared his message in such a way as to obtain the highest degree of comprehension.

We shall simply note at this stage Nida's optimism. The question of the response of the original receptors is, to say the least, problematical.

It is at this point that the functions of language are dealt with.<sup>36</sup> Communication is not only *informative*, it must also be *expressive* and *imperative*. This assumption of three functions of language would seem to have been taken over from Karl Bühler's<sup>37</sup> formulation of the functions of language as symbol, symptom and signal. Be that as it may, Nida is emphatic that the translator of the Bible must not only provide intelligible information but the receptor must be made to feel its relevance (the expressive function) so that he can respond to it (the imperative function) in the same way as the original receptors are assumed to have responded.

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<sup>34</sup> E.A. Nida, *Good News for Everyone: How to Use the Good News Bible* (Waco, Texas: Word Books 1977) 13.

<sup>35</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 23.

<sup>36</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 24-26.

<sup>37</sup> K. Bühler, *Sprachtheorie* (Stuttgart: Fischer, 1934)

Nida's remaining two priorities have more the nature of practical recommendations that are consistent with the central emphasis of DE theory on receptor response:

**3. The heard form of the language has priority over the written form.<sup>38</sup>**

It assumes that many more people will hear the Scriptures read aloud than will read them for themselves (as in liturgical use, group instruction, the habit of reading aloud in some non-Western cultures, use on radio and television). Potential problems of hearers must be anticipated. For instance, one cannot rely on capitalization or correct spelling to obviate misunderstanding—Nida's favourite example is 1 Chr 25:1. The RSV read 'prophesy with lyres' but an audience usually hears the more familiar 'liars'. Sometimes, too, the text has unintentional puns or terms which, if pronounced, become vulgar, e.g. 'ass' in American English.

**4. The forms understood and accepted by the receptor have priority over the forms which may possess a longer linguistic tradition or have greater literary prestige.**

Two sets of situations are rightly distinguished:

- a) The language which has a long literary tradition which includes the Scriptures.
- b) The language which has no such tradition and in which the Scriptures are unknown or only recently introduced.

Nida argues that the first situation requires three types of translation: an 'ecclesiastical' translation reflecting traditional usage and largely for liturgical purposes; a modern literary translation for the educated; and a common language translation. Nida's colleague, Dr W.L. Wonderly, has defined 'common language' as 'that part of the total resources of a given language common to the usage of both educated and uneducated'.<sup>39</sup> Nida says it probably constitutes the form of language used by 75% of people more than 75% of the time.<sup>40</sup> This is to be distinguished from 'Basic English', an artificial language.<sup>41</sup> These three types of translation, then, would represent different registers, to use Catford's terminology.

In the second situation, which has no literary tradition and no revered translation of the Bible, then the oral form of speech used in formal discourse becomes normative. But in addition the type of audience must be considered and the following criteria are recommended:

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<sup>38</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 28-31.

<sup>39</sup> W.Wonderly, *Bible Translation for Popular Use*, (Helps for Translators, No.7) (London: United Bible Societies 1968) 3.

<sup>40</sup> E.A. Nida, *Good News for Everyone* (Waco, TX: Word Books 1977) 12

<sup>41</sup> P.Ellingworth, 'Talking about Translations', *TBT* 23 (1972), 219-24.

- i. The translation must be intelligible to non-Christians not only to aid evangelism but also to keep the language of the church from becoming an esoteric dialect.
- ii. In view of rapid social change the use of language by persons 25-30 years of age has priority over the language of the older people and children.
- iii. In certain situations the speech of women should have priority over the speech of men. Men have broader linguistic contacts (e.g. through work in mines or plantations) and their speech indicates the direction in which the language is likely to change. But poor comprehension by the women would also have significant repercussion in the instruction of the children. Some languages have specific forms used by women (e.g. Japanese). These need to be observed when the Scriptures report the words of women.

These are all instructive strategies reflecting Nida's concern for successful communication.

### C. SOME ISSUES

There are a number of issues which arise from Nida's exposition which involve not only a theory of translation but also a philosophy of language itself. We have noted in passing the apparent influence of Karl Bühler's three functions of language on Nida's theory. In Bühler's formulation *Symbol* is information-object-centred, representational, intentional, referential—one could say cognitive meaning. *Symptom* is self-expression—the subjective source-centred element. *Signal* is persuasion—recipient-centred, impressive, an appeal or summons. Bühler's analysis of the functions of language seem to have had considerable influence on many translation theorists, an influence which according to Halliday was mediated through the Prague linguists such as Vachek who developed Bühler's ideas, especially in the study of grammar.

However, it needs to be pointed out that discussions of functions of language are coloured by basic presuppositions and not by empirical evidence alone. Thus Halliday<sup>42</sup> seeks to look at both the system of language and its function at the same time in order to provide a theoretical basis for generalizations about how language is used. He proposed that language has firstly an *ideational* function<sup>43</sup> in which 'content' is expressed—content of one's experience of the world, including the world of one's own consciousness. This does not seem very different from Bühler's *Symbol*

<sup>42</sup> M.A.K. Halliday "Some Notes on "Deep Grammar"" *Journal of Linguistics* 2 (1966), 57-68

<sup>43</sup> cf. J.R. Firth, *Selected Papers 1952-1959* (ed. F.R. Palmer; London: Longmans, 1968) 91.

and Nida's Informative function. Secondly, language has an *interpersonal* function in which social relations are established, expressed and maintained. Thirdly, he sees a *textual* function of language by which links are provided with itself and with features of the situation in which it is used. Halliday's analysis of this particular function of language provides some significant insights for translators, especially in the areas of discourse analysis.<sup>44</sup>

The subjectivity and fluidity in analysis of functions is illustrated in Nida himself, who in a later article<sup>45</sup> speaks of five basic functions of communication:

1. Expressive, in which the focus is upon the source
2. Informative, where there is an attempt to influence the cognitive state of the receptor
3. Imperative, which seeks to elicit a behavioural response
4. Emotive, which aims to cause a pleasurable or painful reaction in the receptor
5. Phatic, which serves primarily to link source and receptor by means of a minimum of transfer of content.

Nevertheless reflection on the functions of the language in a text is important for translation. For instance a literal translation of formalized greetings could be disastrous. Greetings such as 'How are you?' are nothing more than phatic communications. Translated literally in some cultures they could be regarded as being indicative of evil intent. Similarly 'Good morning' might seem inane. I am reminded of an East German colleague who used to get furious at the invasion of his privacy by Javanese neighbours who called out '*Mau kemana?*' ('Where are you going?') He could not accept that this was just a conventional greeting and that no real information about his movements was being sought.

In non-written communication the various functions of language may be clarified by paralinguistic and extra-linguistic features—voice quality (e.g. to indicate irony), stance, gestures, eye contact. However, written communications do not necessarily suffer the deprivation people assume. Features such as orthographic correctness, clarity of format, appropriateness of stationery (e.g. love letters), colour of ink, hand-writing can all be significant.<sup>46</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this thesis and the competence of the writer to delineate a theory of language or to suggest a definitive list of its functions. But those mentioned

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<sup>44</sup> M.A.K. Halliday and R. Hasan, *Cohesion in English* (London: Longmans 1976).

<sup>45</sup> E.A. Nida, 'The Nature of Dynamic Equivalence in Translating', *Babel* Vol.23:3 (1977).

<sup>46</sup> E.A. Nida, 'The Nature of Dynamic Equivalence in Translating', *Babel* Vol.23:3 (1977) 220.

so far have not exhausted the possibilities. Language can also function as a means of intellectual calculation (when we argue our way through a problem), and as imagination.<sup>47</sup> The point is that the functions of language highlighted by a particular theorist reflect his basic presuppositions about language (and ultimately about reality). In Western societies there is considerable emphasis on the descriptive or representational aspect of language—'Language is the communication of information' or 'Language is the means of transferring one's ideas to another.'

Nida himself developed his views in a milieu where the stimulus-response explanation of Bloomfield<sup>48</sup> was dominant. Could this account for his own stress on the instrumental function whereby language is a means of inducing a response in the hearer?

Another key issue that arises from these first two chapters of TAPOT is the relationship between Form and Meaning. 'To preserve the content of the message, the form must be changed'<sup>49</sup> seems a reasonable dictum at first glance. But apart from Nida's unconvincing example in Mark 1:4 which we shall consider later, his subsequent elaboration seems to suggest there are such things as disembodied meanings which can be found without their verbal clothes. Deep philosophical questions are involved which we cannot enter into, but at least one can register unease if the complexity of language does not seem to be adequately represented. We shall return to this issue in Chapter Eight.

Nida's comments on the languages of the biblical text coincide with what has already been acknowledged above (see Chapter Four) but his assumption that the NT writers were so concerned to be understood that they used the simple, natural, vernacular of the market place invites further investigation which will be found in Chapter Twelve.

Similarly, the argument for the priority of contextual consistency over verbal concordance makes sense but needs to be balanced by the recognition of certain other factors: in most major languages such as English, religious terms or religious senses of common terms have become part of the heritage of the language and cannot be dismissed as Anglicized Latin. Furthermore, the NT writers did use technical terminology which had a long history of usage in the OT and in the community of Faith. One could argue that contextual consistency in the sense of faithfulness to the

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<sup>47</sup> C.Yallop, 'Communication Through Language', unpublished paper delivered at Focus Conference, 1980:2.

<sup>48</sup> L. Bloomfield, *Language* (New York: Holt, 1933).

<sup>49</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 5.

context of the biblical corpus as a whole demands concordant translation of such technical terminology (e.g. Temple, Kingdom, Covenant, Exodus vocabulary). Context must not be limited to the sentence. Nor should terms which had such a key role in the universe of discourse of the NT writers, be equated with Nida's examples 'bar' and 'chair' that have so many meanings that they could not be rendered by a single term in another language. This topic will get more specialized treatment in Chapter Thirteen.

Finally, we shall need to examine more closely the whole notion of DE and the determinative role given to the understanding of the receptor. To what extent is the DE model appropriate for Bible translation?



## CHAPTER SIX

### NIDA'S GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

#### A. THE PROCESSES OF GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

There are basically two different systems for translating. The first consists in setting up a series of rules prescribing what should be done with each item or combination of items in the SL so as to select the appropriate form in the RL. Proponents of this first approach sometimes utilize an intermediate, neutral, universal linguistic structure (either another natural language or a completely artificial one), but whether or not such a go-between language is used, the rules are applied to the 'surface structure' of the language, that is, the level of structure which is overtly spoken and heard, or written and read.<sup>1</sup>

Developments in linguistic science (especially TG grammar) have proceeded to develop new techniques in grammatical and semantic analysis which probe beneath the surface structure and make possible another approach to translation which Nida seeks to utilize. Quite independently of work by Harris and Chomsky, Nida<sup>2</sup> had already employed a system of back transformations as an analytical procedure in determining the grammatical relations of complex structures. For Nida the shift in focus from preoccupation with textual differences to language potentialities (reflected in the production and interpretation of 'new expressions' based on the 'rules' of an internalized structure) meant that translation could be formulated in terms of a set of procedures involving the kernel and/or deep structures. Instead of determining equivalence on the level of surface structure one could: (a) employ back transformations to the levels of the kernels and/or deep structure; (b) make the transfer from the source to the receptor language at the requisite level, and (c) by forward transformation reproduce the closest natural equivalent in the RL.<sup>3</sup>

The first procedure in DE translation, therefore, is that of *Analysis*, in which the surface structure (i.e. the message as given in the SL) is analysed in terms of: (a) the grammatical relationship and (b) the meanings of the words and combinations of words. TAPOT devotes three chapters to this stage of the translation process.

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<sup>1</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 33.

<sup>2</sup> E.A. Nida, 'A New Methodology in Biblical Exegesis', *TBT* 3:3 (1952) 97-111.

<sup>3</sup> E. A. Nida, 'Translation', *Current Trends in Linguistics Vol.12* (ed. T Sebeok; The Hague: Mouton, 1974) 948-1049.



Grammatical Analysis is dealt with in Chapter 3, the analysis of Referential Meaning in Chapter 4 and the Connotative Meaning in Chapter 5.

The second stage in DE translation is *Transfer*, in which the analysed material is transferred in the mind of the translator from language A to language B. Chapter 6 of TAPOT expounds this process. The third stage is *Restructuring*. Chapter 7 explains how the transferred material is restructured in order to make the final message fully acceptable in the RL.

We turn now to the processes of *Grammatical Analysis*. TAPOT again is our basic source, but where there is relevant material in other articles (especially more recent ones) these may be cited. The first point made is that grammar has meaning. When one thinks of meaning it is usually in terms of words or idioms, but Nida used the poem 'Jabberwocky' in *Through the Looking Glass* to make his point:

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

Almost immediately we can decide what the grammatical classes of the meaningless words probably are: e.g. *brillig*, *slithy* (adjectives), *toves* (noun), *gyre*, *outgrabe* and *gimble* (verbs). Moreover, we can readily make up some further sentences, such as (1) *the toves were slithy*; (2) *the toves were in the wabe*; (3) *toves can gyre and gimble*; (4) *Gyring and gimbaling take place in the wabe*; (5) *the wabe is a place*; (6) *the borogoves are mimsy*; and (7) *the raths are mome*. Even from the grammar itself we can make some highly probably guesses about the referential meaning of some of these terms; (1) *brillig* either characterizes a general quality of the circumstances in which the *toves gyre and gimble*, or it expresses the general time of the actions; (2) *toves* are objects (perhaps animate) which can engage in some type of action; (3) *wabe* is a place in which actions can take place; (4) *mimsy* is a quality with various degrees; (5) the *borogoves* are objects which can participate in an event such as *outgribing*; and (7) the *raths* are objects which have a quality such as *mome*. Of course, it would be possible to assign to these nonsense terms in the Jabberwocky poem such meanings as would make such deductions untenable, but if we accept the "meaning" of the various forms used in this poem in terms of their highest probabilities of usage, then the deductions which we have made are not unfounded, for the grammatical markers, such as *'twas*, *and*, *the*, *did*, *in*, *all*, *were*, *-s*, all provide the necessary clues.<sup>4</sup>

The claim that grammar carries meaning would be disputed by some linguists. The issue is not important for our purposes. The main point for translation theory is that languages differ in grammar. Nida goes on to introduce two key concepts in his grammatical analysis, that of 'basic semantic categories' and 'basic kernels'.

<sup>4</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 34-35.

He proposes that there are four basic semantic categories, 'object', 'event', 'abstract' and 'relation' and that these are universal. These semantic categories often coincide with the traditional grammatical classes. For instance, objects are most typically expressed by nouns or pronouns, events by verbs, and abstracts by adjectives and adverbs. However, these traditional definitions are held to be inadequate because most languages provide ways of shifting the class membership of terms, e.g. events can be expressed by nouns.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, one of the most important insights of Transformational Grammar (TG), according to Nida, is the fact that in all languages there are about six to twelve basic structures or kernels out of which all the more elaborate formations are constructed by means of transformations. Even more importantly, he claims that languages agree far more on the level of the kernel than on the level of the more elaborate structures.<sup>6</sup> Kernel is defined in the glossary as:

A sentence pattern which is basic to the structure of a language and which is characterized by (a) the simplest possible form, in which OBJECTS are represented by NOUNS, EVENTS by VERBS, and ABSTRACTS by ADJECTIVES, ADVERBS or special verbs (according to the genius of the language) (b) the least ambiguous expression of all RELATIONS and (c) the EXPLICIT inclusion of all INFORMATION. Each language has only 6 -12 types of kernels. Kernels are discovered in a surface structure by BACK TRANSFORMATION: they are converted into a surface structure by TRANSFORMATION.<sup>7</sup>

(The capitalized words cross-refer to other entries in the glossary)

We are told that there are seven kernel expressions in English which can be illustrated by the following sentences:

- (1) John ran (quickly)
- (2) John hit Bill
- (3) John gave Bill a ball
- (4) John is in the house
- (5) John is sick
- (6) John is a boy
- (7) John is my father<sup>8</sup>

The process of back transforming expressions from the surface structure to the underlying kernel or core structures provides the basis for transfer into the RL, on a

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<sup>5</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 37-38.

<sup>6</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 39.

<sup>7</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 204.

<sup>8</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 40.

level at which the relationship between the constituent parts is expressed in the least ambiguous manner. The classification of any linguistic unit as object, event, abstract, or relation depends entirely upon the way in which the unit functions within a particular context. For example 'stone' is an object in 'Bill threw a stone at him' or an event in 'They will stone him' and an abstract in the expression 'He is stone deaf'.

But words sometimes function as more than one semantic category. For example 'dancer' may be described as both object and event—'one who dances' in which the object participates as the actor of the event. The term 'apostle' also has two elements—object (the person) and an event (being sent); but the relationship is of goal to actions, i.e. 'one who is sent'. In many languages it is important to distinguish clearly between such related structural elements. In English, the expression 'she is a good dancer' refers to the quality of her dancing, not her character. Hence the backward transformation of 'good dancer' is 'she dances well'; but in some languages such an adjective attributive to the noun might be attributive to the object component, not the event component, of the semantically complex substantive. Nida's favourite example of this type of analysis applied to a biblical phrase is Mark 1:4.<sup>9</sup>

*"John...preached the baptism of repentance unto the forgiveness of sins."* Such a sentence becomes especially difficult to translate in a language which does not have nouns for such terms as *baptism*, *repentance*, *forgiveness* or *sins*. In fact in a high percentage of languages these words correspond regularly to verbs, not to nouns, for they represent events, not objects. A series of kernels or core sentences for this structure could consist of the following: (1) *John preaches (the message) (to the people)*; (2) *John baptized (the people)*; (3) *the people repented of (their ) sins*; (4) *God forgave (the people) (their) sins*, and (5) *(the people) sinned*. Certain features of this series should be noted. First there are two implied elements which need to be made explicit, e.g. *the people* and *God*. Second, some of these implied elements in these near-kernel structures include embedded kernel e.g. *their sins* may be further back-transformed to *they sin*. Third, an element such as *message* is a substitute for the series of kernels 2 through 5. A translator, however, cannot employ a mere string of kernels or core sentences as a basis for transfer into a receptor language. He must have these kernels related meaningfully to one another. This means that he must back up from a strictly kernel level and analyze the relationship between the kernels. Analysis of the Greek text underlying this sentence in Mark 1:4 reveals the following sets of relationships: (1) the goal of *preached* is the series of kernels 2-5; (2) kernels 2 and 3 are merely co-ordinate events which occur in an historical order in which 3 precedes 2, i.e. *baptism of repentance* is a nominal transform of the verb expression *repent* and *be baptized*; (3) kernel 5 is the goal of the event in kernel 4; and (4) kernel 4 and 5 are the purpose (or result) of the combined events of kernels 2 and 3. A possible combination of kernels which might be adequate for transfer to some receptor

<sup>9</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 51-52. E.A. Nida, *Language Structure and Translation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975) 82-83. E.A. Nida, 'The Nature of Dynamic Equivalence in Translating', *Babel* Vol.23:3 (1977) 99-102

languages could be formulated as: *John preached that the people should repent and be baptized so that God would forgive the evil they had done.* In instances in which a form of direct address is a preferred base for transfer, one might have: *John preached "Repent and be baptized so that God will forgive the evil you have done".*<sup>10</sup>

If one were in any doubt as to the influence of Eugene Nida in world wide Bible translating, one would only have to compare the translation of Mark 1:4 in pre-1970 and post-1970 versions (e.g. in the English, German, Dutch, French, Spanish, Indonesian, Malay).

However two simple objections to this kind of restructuring can be raised. Firstly, New Testament Greek was itself quite capable of expressing itself along lines recommended by Nida had that been the writer's intention and in fact does so elsewhere (see Acts 2:38). Secondly, granted that some languages may demand such a restructuring (and even require the passive to be expressed by an active), neither English nor Bahasa Indonesia does.

Nevertheless, as an analytical procedure Nida's model is potentially useful as we see from this table analysing Greek genitival constructions that are usually retained in the traditional FC translation.<sup>11</sup>

	Phrases with 'of '	Kernels in English
1.	the will of God God wills (K1)	1. John ran quickly
2.	the foundation of the world (God) creates the world	2. John hit Bill
3.	the Holy Spirit of promise (God) promised the Holy Spirit (K2) or (God) promised (the people) the Holy Spirit (K3)	3. John gave Bill a ball

<sup>10</sup> E.A. Nida, *Language Structure and Translation*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975) 82-83.

<sup>11</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 43-44.

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|----|---|----|----------------------|
| 4. | the word of truth<br>the word is true (K5)            | 4. | John is in the house |
| 5. | the riches of his grace<br>he shows grace richly (K1) | 5. | John is sick         |
| 6. | Jesus of Nazareth<br>Jesus comes from Nazareth (K4)   | 6. | John is a boy        |
| 7. | the lake of Galilee<br>the lake is in Galilee (K4)    | 7. | John is my father    |
| 8. | the land of Judea<br>the land is Judea (K7)           |    |                      |
| 9. | one of the soldiers<br>he was a soldier (K6)          |    |                      |

However, this analysis also has debatable elements. For instance one could argue that the phrase 'the will of God' (Eph.1:1) is an example of kernel no.2 rather than no.1 since 'will' is transitive. Again the Greek phrase τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας translated literally 'the Holy Spirit of Promise' (Eph.1:13) has two possible interpretations, viz. (i) 'the promised Holy Spirit' (as assumed by Nida) or (ii) 'the Holy Spirit who promises'. Perhaps the NT writer even intended the double entendre. But both exegetical possibilities can only be preserved in an FC translation. DE theory forces the translator to select one and close the options.

Elsewhere Nida points out that the works of Fillmore, Halliday and Langendoen provide more sophisticated instruments for describing the relations between the event and the participants in the event, than supplied by TAPOT.<sup>12</sup> TAPOT anticipates the query 'Why not go beyond the level of the kernels to the underlying bases, the deep structures?' and adds an explanatory footnote:

There are certain theoretical interests in such an approach; but practically, the bases are neither useful nor advisable, since these bases cannot be readily manipulated. When the message is transferred, it is not, however, on precisely the kernel level, for if this were the case, the connection between the kernel elements would be lost or obscured. Therefore the

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<sup>12</sup> E.A. Nida, *Language Structure and Translation*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975) 83.



transfer is made at a near-kernel level in which the relevant connections between the kernels are explicitly marked.<sup>13</sup>

The term 'near-kernel' used in the above note refers to the string of intuitively connected kernels.

The translation process then, consists of: (1) word categorization according to the four universal categories; (2) back transformation to form the individual kernels; (3) concatenation (to string them together into a near-kernel); (4) transformation (to translate the near-kernel into the RL).

Pages 51 to 55 of TAPOT provide a number of NT passages on which the reader can try out the five operations recommended:

1. Identify the basic role of each word: object, event, abstract or relational
2. Identify any implied structural elements
3. List the basic kernels of the passage
4. Group the kernels into meaningful sets showing the relationship between the kernels
5. Restate the passage in such a form as will lead to the best and easiest transfer.

## B. SOME ISSUES

The central problem in the theory and practice of translation is to specify the nature and conditions of translation equivalence in respect of two pieces of language.<sup>14</sup> Clearly what counts as equivalence will be influenced by the model of linguistic description which is being used in the translation process. Nida's quasi-Chomskyan model probes beneath the surface structure of sentences and therefore rather than achieving a mere structural equivalence seeks a genuine semantic equivalence by relating different surface forms to a common deep structure. But what criteria should we select for determining equivalence? Perhaps his analytic model could specify more clearly the different kinds of equivalence that are possible. For instance, Widdowson has called attention to what he calls 'pragmatic equivalence' which has to do with the illocutionary effect of utterances.<sup>15</sup> Catford stresses interchangeability in the same situation<sup>16</sup>. Newman's semantic mapping has focused on the dimension of interpretative potentialities<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 34-40. cf. E.A. Nida, *Language Structure and Translation*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975) 83-85.

<sup>14</sup> J.C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965) 21

<sup>15</sup> H. Widdowson, *Explorations in Applied Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979)

<sup>16</sup> J.C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965)

<sup>17</sup> A. Newman 'Semantic Mapping of a Text (Exodus 23:8)' *Meta* 23:2 (1978) 158-64.

It is not the purpose of this thesis to focus on Nida's Grammatical Analysis but **any claim to have discovered the four universal semantic categories and the seven primitive English kernels is surely questionable.** Thus Margaret Masterman has argued on logical rather than grammatical grounds that there are here only four types of kernels as the first three sentences are all examples of an N—relational predicate.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand a syntactic approach could show that sentences 4, 5, 6 and 7 are the same and that the differences are semantic, not grammatical. Nida's co-author, Charles Taber, has subsequently suggested that there are eight basic kernels in English not seven.<sup>19</sup> While retaining the four universal semantic categories he changes the terminology. The new terms are 'entities', 'actions/processes', 'quality/quantity', and 'relations'. Certainly the use of 'object' in TAPOT would be misleading for many readers because of its use in traditional grammar.

Nida's methods are useful tools for analysis and reflection on the grammar of the SL, but, as we have seen, the subjective elements in the process have certainly been underestimated. Moreover, the impression given by TAPOT is that the near-kernel expressed in English can be regarded as interlingual. But if one is uneasy of an approach which speaks so confidently of the four universal semantic categories and the seven primitive English kernels, perhaps one needs to recall that TAPOT is a manual for translators. This helps us to understand, if not excuse, the sweeping claims made. In later publications Nida is more cautious and typically pragmatic:

Description of language structure will always be more significant if one bears constantly in mind the limitations of the model being employed...Our choice of models, however, must be dictated essentially by their practical usefulness and their explanatory power. For these ends, transformational techniques (both backward and forward) seem to be more satisfactory than any other existing system provided we combine adequate treatments of case relations and of discourse units and structures. First, the procedures are intuitively comprehensible to most speakers, and various stages are readily manipulable. Second, within the kernel structures the relationships between the component parts are more clearly marked. Third, the kernel structures of different languages are surprisingly similar, so that transfer may be effected with the least skewing of the content.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> M. Masterman, 'Bible Translation by Kernel', *Times Literary Supplement*, (19 March 1970) 300.

<sup>19</sup> C. Taber, 'Translation as Interpretation', *Interpretation* 32:2 (1978) 142.

<sup>20</sup> E.A. Nida, *Language Structure and Translation*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975) 86