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THE DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE TRANSLATION THEORY OF EUGENE A. NIDA
AND BIBLE TRANSLATION - A CRITIQUE

by

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A Thesis submitted to the School of English and Linguistics,
Macquarie University, Sydney, in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Honours)

March 1981

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iv
CERTIFICATE	v
ABBREVIATIONS	vi
TRANSLITERATION	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xi
SECTION 1: ^R T ANSLATION AND MODERN LINGUISTICS	1
Chapter 1: An Historical Overview of Translation and Translation Theory	2
A. The Pre-Linguistic Period	2
B. Translation and Developments in Modern Linguistics	4
Chapter 2: Linguistic Relativity and Translation	8
Chapter 3: Problems in Translation	15
A. Problems from Cultural Differences	16
B. Problems from Lexical Differences	19
C. Problems from Grammatical Differences	24
Chapter 4: Sacred Texts and Translation Theory	29
A. Sacred Texts and Translation	29
B. Linguistic Theory	33
C. Linguistic Theory and Bible Translation	40
SECTION II: THE DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE THEORY OF EUGENE A. NIDA	41
Chapter 5: An Orientation to Nida's Sociolinguistic Theory of Translation	42
A. The Background	42
B. The New Concept of Translation	45
C. Some Issues	60
Chapter 6: Grammatical Analysis	65
A. The Processes of Grammatical Analysis	65
B. Some Issues Arising	72
Chapter 7: Semantic Analysis	75
A. The Processes of Semantic Analysis	75
B. Some Issues	83
Chapter 8: Transfer and Restructuring	89
A. Significant Factors in Transfer	89
B. Significant Factors in Restructuring	92
C. Form and Meaning	99

SECTION III:	DE THEORY INCARNATE - THE TEV TRANSLATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT	103
Chapter 9:	A Brief History of English Bible Translation	104
Chapter 10:	The TEV - Its Background, Purpose and Nature	118
Chapter 11:	The TEV Evaluated	138
SECTION IV:	SPECIFIC PROBLEMS IN THE TEV AND KINDRED DE TRANSLATIONS	169
Chapter 12:	The Problems of Language in DE Translations	170
	A. Language Varieties and the Demand for Intelligibility and Naturalness	170
	B. The Appeal to NT KOINE as a Model for Contemporary Bible Translation	173
	C. The Role of the Greek Septuagint Translation	179
	D. Conclusion	187
Chapter 13:	The Fate of Technical Terminology in DE Translations	193
	A. Biblical Word Studies and Modern Semantics	193
	B. Concordance in Translation	200
	C. A Case Study - The Translation of <u>Hilaskesthai</u> (Propitiation) Words in the New Testament	203
	D. Conclusion	223
CONCLUSION		227
WORKS CITED		245
APPENDIX		255

ABSTRACT

Translation theory has benefited from advances in many disciplines but it remains essentially the province of Comparative Linguistics and in particular Semantics. Recent developments have externalized processes used intuitively by translators for centuries. The literature is dominated by Eugene A. Nida whose work is informed by a wealth of experience in Bible translation.

This thesis is a critique of the Dynamic Equivalence theory of translation propounded by Nida and exemplified in the Good News Bible (TEV). Section I surveys the history of translation, its theory and problems, and describes relevant developments in modern linguistics. Section II examines Nida's sociolinguistic model and his methods of grammatical and semantic analysis, transfer and restructuring. Section III studies the TEV New Testament with special attention to the language used and to such problems as cultural adaptation, ambiguity, and the fate of technical terminology. Section IV focuses on the language of the original to see to what extent "Common English" can adequately translate it.

Nida has provided excellent discussion on almost every translation problem, as well as useful tools for semantic analysis. However, his DE model is found to be defective for Bible translation. Firstly, its "vehicular" theory of meaning does not do justice to the formal features of language. Secondly, while evaluation of a translation must take account of its purpose and intended audience, "equivalence" defined in terms of the receptors' reactions is impossible to measure, and blurs the distinction between "translation" and "communication". Finally, the determinative role given to receptor response makes it virtually impossible to preserve the sense of historical and cultural distance which Nida himself says is essential in Bible translation.

Certificate

I certify that the content of this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

Anthony H. Nichols.

Anthony H. Nichols

NBD	<u>New Bible Dictionary, The</u> , (2nd ed. 1972), New York, Oxford University Press.
II. II.1	
NIV	<u>Holy Bible, The, New International Version</u> , (1979), Grand Rapids, Zondervan.
NT	The New Testament
NTS	<u>New Testament Studies</u>
OT	The Old Testament
RE	Receptor Language
RSV	Revised Standard Version (1952), London, Collins.
RTR	Reformed Theological Review
SL	Source Language
ST	Source Text
TAPOT	<u>The Theory and Practice of Translation</u> (1969) Nida, E.A. and Taber, C.R., Helps for Translators, vol. VIII, Leiden, Brill.
TBT	<u>The Bible Translator</u> , vol. 1-32, (1950-80), London, UBS.
TDNT	<u>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</u> , vol. I-IV (1932-67), edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated and edited by G.W. Bromily (1964-67), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans; vol. V-IX (1954-76), edited by Gerhard Friedrich, translated and edited by G.W. Bromily (1967-74), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans.
TEV	<u>Good News for Modern Man: The New Testament in Today's English Version</u> , 4th ed., (1976), New York, American Bible Society.
UBS	The United Bible Societies.

II. Biblical Books

Books of the Old Testament

Gen.	Genesis	Ct.	The Song of Solomon
Ex.	Exodus	Is.	Isaiah
Lv.	Leviticus	Je.	Jeremiah
Nu.	Numbers	La.	Lamentations
Dt.	Deuteronomy	Ezk.	Ezekiel
Jos.	Joshua	Dn.	Daniel
Jdg.	Judges	Ho.	Hosea
Ru.	Ruth	Joel	Joel
1,2 Sam.	1,2 Samuel	Am.	Amos
1,2 Ki.	1,2 Kings	Ob.	Obadiah
1,2 Ch.	1,2 Chronicles	Jon.	Jonah
Ezr.	Ezra	Mi.	Micah
Ne.	Nehemiah	Na.	Nahum
Est.	Esther	Hab.	Habakkuk
J .	Job	Zp.	Zephaniah
Ps.	Psalms	Hg.	Haggai
Pr.	Proverbs	Zc.	Zechariah
Ec.	Ecclesiastes	Mal.	Malachi

Books of the New Testament

Mt.	Matthew	1,2 Thes.	1,2 Thessalonians
Mk.	Mark	1,2 Tim.	1,2 Timothy
Lk.	Luke	Tit.	Titus
Jn.	John	Phm.	Philemon
Acts	The Acts of the Apostles	Heb.	Hebrews
Rom.	Romans	Jas.	James
1,2 Cor.	1,2 Corinthians	1,2 Pet.	1,2 Peter
Gal.	Galatians	1,2,3 Jn.	1,2,3 John
Eph.	Ephesians	Jude	Jude
Phil.	Philippians	Rev.	The Revelation
Col.	Colossians		

TRANSLITERATION

Hebrew

א = 'a	ד = d	י = y	ס = s	ר = r
ב = b	ה = h	כ = k	ע = 'e	ש = s
ג = g	ו = w	ל = l	פ = p	שׁ = š
ז = z	ז = z	מ = m	צ = ṣ	ת = t
ח = ḥ	ט = t	נ = n	ק = q	תּ = t

Long Vowels

(א)ֿ = ā	ֶ = ā
ֵ = ē	ֶ = ē
ִ = i	
ֹ = ō	ֹ = ō
ֻ = ū	

Short Vowels

ִ = a
ֶ = e
ִ = i
ֶ = o
ֶ = u

Very Short Vowels

ִ = 'a
ֶ = 'e
ִ = 'i (if vocal)
ֶ = 'o

Greek

α = a	ι = i	ρ = r	ρ̣ = rh
β = b	κ = k	σ, ς = s	ῥ = h
γ = g	λ = l	τ = t	γξ = nx
δ = d	μ = m	υ = y	γγ = ng
ε = e	ν = n	φ = ph	αυ = au
ζ = z	ξ = x	χ = ch	ευ = eu
η = ē	ο = o	ψ = ps	ου = ou
θ = th	π = p	ω = ō	υι = yi

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

Page

1. Traditional judging of translations

56

2. Nida's Theory of Evaluation

57

3. Restructuring

94

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