SECTION II

THE DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE THEORY OF EUGENE A. NIDA

CHAPTER 5

AN ORIENTATION TO NIDA'S
SOCIOLINGUISTIC THEORY OF TRANSLATION

A. The Background

Eugene A. Nida has been a prolific writer on linguistic themes

for some three decades. The Festschrift published by Mouton in 1975

listed 23 books and a partial list of 58 journal articles (Black &

Smalley 1975:XXI-XXVII). 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 proved 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:

1. The Descriptive Linguistics phase (1943;51) is best

represented by his text Morphology (1946), 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to be used long after its theoretical orientation became out of date.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" which raised questions

concerning what was subsequently to be known as deep structure and case

grammar.

2. The Cross-Cultural Communication phase (1952-1960) saw the

publication of his eminently readable Customs and Culture (1954) as

well as the book which best represents his own outlook and motivation,

Message and Mission (1960).

3.   The Translation Theory phase (1961-1973) is marked by

Towards a Science of Translation (1964). This was 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 (1947) had been oriented 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 text book The Theory and Practice of

Translation (1969).

4.   Nida's Semantic phase (1974-) was signalled by the

publication of his Componential Analysis of Meaning (1974). 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, princi-

pally 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 has not stood 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 summarized in the volume

The Theory and Practice of Translation" (in Anwar S. Dil (ed) 1975:221).
Accordingly, TAPOT as it is commonly called (which was written with
Charles R. Taber) will be the basic resource for our examination of
Nida's translation theory.

Nida has distanced his own approach to translation from the
more traditional philological and linguistic approaches (Nida 1977:216).
Philological approaches to the problems of translation have focused on
differences in style characteristic of diverse literary genres. Philo-
logical 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. 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 (Catford 1965, Jakobson 1959, Neubert 1973).
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 (1964) and later Nida and Taber (1969) 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, interest and presuppositions of the receptors are primarily responsible for the success or failure of any translation, and for Nida, they largely determine the formal features any satisfactory translation must possess. The principal focus of this 'socio-linguistic theory of translation' is 'translation as an act of communication' (Nida 1977: 217).

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 text book 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 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 question:
> "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. (TAPOT:1).

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 comprehen-

sion 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" (Romans 12:20). Such Semitic idioms baffle the average reader

who does not realize that the first means friends of the bridegroom

while the second means to make a person ashamed of his behaviour and

is not a kind of torture The second type is illustrated by citation

of a number of Biblical passages (viz. 2 Corinthians 3:10, Matthew
3:15c, John 1:14, Romans 1:17 and 3:21-23) and their renderings by the
King James' Version (KJV) on the one hand and by more idiomatic
versions, especially Today's English Version (TEV) 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 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 re-
> sponded 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 (Nida 1977:227).

The new concept of translation requires new attitudes with
respect to both Receptor and Source Languages. (TAPOT:3-11).
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 distinc-
tive 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, ch. 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 techno-
logical cultural setting but linguistically Hungarian is a member of
the Finno-Ugrian not the Germanic branch of the Indo-European family
of languages. However, if one has to translate from English to
Hindi the formal 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.

A new attitude to the Source Language 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 as being subject to the same limitations as any other natural
languages (TAPOT:7). 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 (cf. Lyons 1977:248). The vocabulary of the
Bible was rooted in the finite experience of men and women of those
times. However, those current 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. Hence they employed "common language" - the so called koine Greek (Nida 1977:12). 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 in more than one way. The most likely meaning must be selected. The others can always be placed in a marginal note (ibid:8).

A simple definition of translation begins chapter 2 - "Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style" (TAPOT:12).

This task of reproducing the message entails seeking equivalence rather than identity which would include preservation of the forms of utterance. The translator seeks <u>natural</u> 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 <u>closest</u> 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 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 Revised Standard Version (1946) is criticized because it reproduces many formal features of Semitized Koine Greek. Thus in chapter 1 of Mark's Gospel the RSV has 26 sentences beginning with "And". This reproduces Mark's <u>kai</u> which in turn reflects the influence of Hebrew conjunction <u>waw</u>, but is in conflict with good English usage and does not therefore represent functional equivalence. Similarly one should not reproduce formal 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 (<u>wayehi</u>).

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 <u>a</u>ural form 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 (TAPOT:14).

(1) <u>Contextual consistency has priority over verbal consistency</u>
(TAPOT:15-22)

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 soma in a formal correspondence version such as the Revised
Standard Version and in idiomatic translations such as the New English
Bible and Today's English Version The RSV translates literally "body"
on each occurrence of soma whereas the translators of the NEB and TEV
make no attempt to retain verbal concordance because of their concern
for contextual consistency. The table from TAPOT (p.15) is
reproduced below:

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 this sinful body.

Similar tables are provided for the translation of the Greek
term sarks ("flesh") and the verb dikaioō ("justify") and it is main-
tained that a consistent literal rendering (i.e."body", "flesh",
"justify") is unnatural if not actually misleading. This time the

American Standard Version 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. 10:3

    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 out 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 sarks seen to correspond with a

current use of flesh in English, since for most persons, according to

Nida, "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 of which
dikaioō ("justify") is found:

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 heard 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 dikaioō by "justify" is said to be
quite misleading. Not only does it not do justice to the range of
meaning 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. "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. One may also speak of "justifying two different
columns of type" thus making them the same length. Lastly, another,
but very limited, usage of this term according to Nida and Taber is
found in the expression "He justified his existence" i.e. he did
something worthwhile to vindicate his presence. Actually, one would
have thought this last much more common than the third which surely
does not qualify for "popular usage". However, none of these four
modern meanings are seen to be appropriate to the translation of the
passages chosen.

That verbal concordance 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
(TAPOT:68). The whole subject is one that gets more specialist
treatment from other semanticists (e.g. Lyons 1968:456f).

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 (TAPOT:21).

Some linguistic theorists would no doubt wish to question aspects of this analysis.

(2) The priority of dynamic equivalence (DE) over formal correspondence (FC)

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 I represents the way in which translations were judged traditionally.

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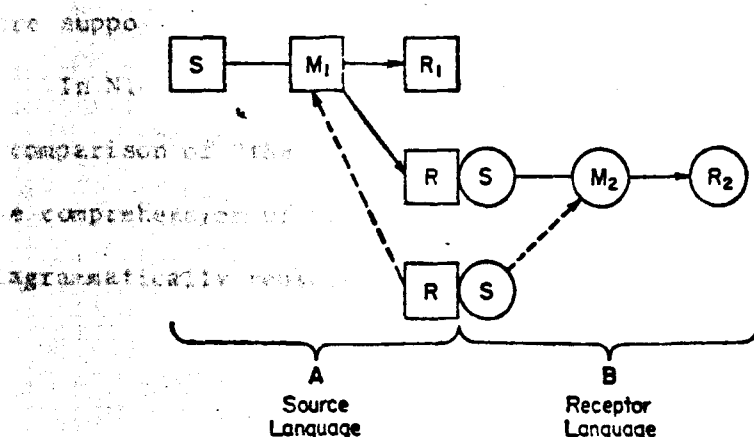

A
Source
Language

B
Receptor
Language

Figure 1

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 con-
text 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. 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 mean-
ingful structures and on the basis of this decided
whether the translation was 'faithful' (TAPOT:22-23).

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 forms of M2 in terms of what they already know about M1. This

was certainly the case, as we have acknowledged, with the English

Revised Version (1881) and its American counterpart the American

Standard Version (1902), 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 King James' Version 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" (TAPOT:23) as
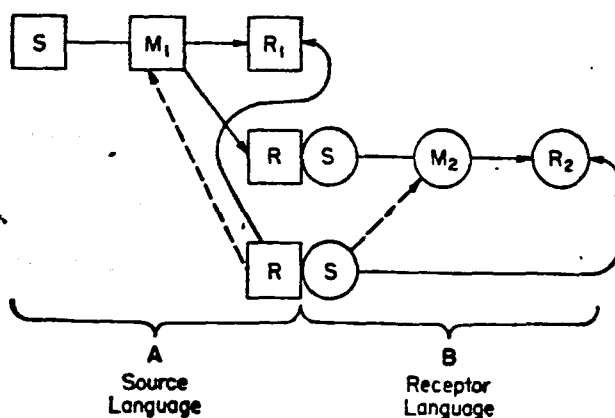diagrammatically represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

"The first message (M1) was designed not for the bilingual
person (the translator critic) but for the monolingual R1 and it is
his 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 (1977), 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 faith-
fulness 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 (op.cit.13).

No doubt anticipating the obvious criticisms of this receptor

oriented approach, TAPOT provides a footnote:

2. We must assume that there is at least some basic relation-
ship between the intention of the source and the response
of the first receptors. Otherwise, of course, the communi-
cation 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. (p.23).

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 (TAPOT: 24-26). 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

Buhler's (1934) formulation of the function 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.

(3) Two further practical priorities of DE translation

Nida's remaining two priorities have more the nature of practical

recommendations that are consistent with the central emphasis of DE

theory on the response of the receptor.

The third priority is that "The Heard Form of the Language has

Priority over the Written Form" (TAPOT: 28-31). It assumes that many

more people will hear scriptures read aloud than will read them for themselves (as in e.g. liturgical use, group instruction, the habit of reading aloud found 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 Chronicles 25:1. The RSV reads "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:

1. The language has a long literary tradition which includes
    the Scriptures.

2. 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" (Wonderly, 1968:3). Nida says it probably constitutes the form of language used by 75% of people more than 75% of the time (Nida 1977:12). This is not an artificial language like "Basic English" (Ellingworth 1972:221). These three types of translation, then, would represent different "registers" to use Catford's terminology. "Register markers are chiefly lexical

(most obviously "technical terms" but including other items) and grammatical, particularly grammatical-statistic features such as the high frequency of the pronouns I, you, he and she in English scientific register" (Catford 1965:90).

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:

1.   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;

2.   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 or children;

3.   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 language is likely to change. But poor comprehension by the women would also have significant repercussions 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 Buhler's three functions of language on Nida's theory. In
Buhler's formulation Symbol is information-object-centred, represent-
ational, intensional, 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. Buhler'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 (1966) who developed Buhler's ideas, especially in
the study of grammar (in Lyons 1972:142).

However, it needs to be pointed out that discussions of functions
of language seem to be much coloured by basic presuppositions and
not by empirical evidence alone. Thus Halliday 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 proposes that lang age has firstly an ideational function
(cf. Firth 1968:91) 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 Buhler's 'Symbol' 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, expecially
in the area of discourse analysis (Halliday and Hasan 1978).

Nida, himself, in a more recent article (1977) 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.

Clearly, 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 a 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 extralinguistic 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. for love letters) colour of ink, and hand-writing, can all be significant (Nida 1977:220).

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. Those mentioned 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 (Yallop 1980:2). 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 (Language 1933) was dominant.

Could this account for Nida's 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" (p.5) seems a

reasonable dictum at first glance. But apart from Nida's unconvincing

example (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 adquately represented. We shall return to this issue

in chapter 8.

Nida's comments on the languages of the biblical text coincide

with what has already been acknowledged above (see ch. 4) 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 12.

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 (i.e. faithfulness to the 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 such 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 13.

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

CHAPTER 6

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 (TAPOT:33).

Developments in linguistic science (especially generative-transformational grammar) have provided new techniques in grammatical and semantic analysis whichprobe beneath this surface structure and make possible another approach to translation which Nida seeks to utilize. Quite independently of work by Harris and Chomsky, Nida (1952) 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 equiva-
lent in the receptor language (Nida 1974:1948-1049).

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 analyzed 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.
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, which the
analyzed 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 and chapter 7 explains how the trans-
ferred 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
uses 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) <u>toves can gyre and gimble</u>; (4) <u>Gyring and gimbling take</u> <u>place in the wabe</u>; (5) <u>The wabe is a place</u>; (6) <u>The borogoves</u> <u>are mimsy</u>; and (7) <u>The raths are mome</u>. Even from the grammar itself we can make some highly probable guesses about the referential meaning of some of these terms: (1) <u>brillig</u> either characterizes a general quality of the circumstances in which the <u>toves gyre and gimble</u>, or it expresses the general time of the action; (2) <u>toves</u> are objects (perhaps animate) which can engage in some type of action; (3) <u>wabe</u> is a place in which actions can take place; (4) <u>mimsy</u> is a quality with various degrees; (5) the <u>borogoves</u> are objects which can participate in an event such as <u>outgribing</u>; and (7) the <u>raths</u> are objects which may have a quality such as <u>mome</u>. Of course, it would be impossible 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 <u>'twas</u>, <u>and</u>, <u>the</u>, <u>did</u>, <u>in</u>, <u>all</u>, <u>were</u>, <u>-s</u>, <u>all</u> provide the necessary clues (TAPOT:34-35).

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".

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 (TAPOT:37-38).

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 'transfor-

mations'. 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 (TAPOT:39). 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 TRANSFORM-ATION (TAPOT:204). (The capitalized words cross refer to other entires in the glossary).
> entries

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) Jahn gave Bill a ball
(4) John is in the house
(5) John is sick
(6) John is a boy
(7) John is my father   (TAPOT:40).

The process of back transforming expressions from the surface structure to the underlying kernel or core structures, provides the basis for transfer into the receptor language, on a level at which the relationship between the constituent parts is expressed in the least ambiguous manner. In this process the four universal semantic categories are utilized. The classification of any linguistic unit as object, event, abstract, or relational 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 -

i.e. "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 action, i.e. "one who is sent". In many languages it is important to distinguish clearly between such related structural elements within a single obligatory. In English, the expression "She is a good dancer" refers to the quality of her dancing, not to her character. Hence the backward transformation of "good dancer" is "she/he 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 (e.g. TAPOT:51-52); Nida 1975a:82-83; Nida 1977:99-102):

> 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) kernels 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 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." (Nida 1975a:82-83).

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

English, German, Dutch, French, Spanish, Indonesian, Malay).

However, two simple objections to this kind of restructuring

can be raised. Firstly, New Testament Greek was quite capable

itself 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 analyzing Greek

genitival constructions that are retained in the traditional FC trans-

lation (TAPOT:43-44):

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.

4. "the word of truth"   4. John is in the
   the word is true (K5)   house.

5. "the riches of his grace"   5. John is sick
   he shows grace richly (K1)

6. "Jesus of Nazareth".   6. John is a boy
   Jesus comes from Nazareth. (K4)

7. "the lake of Galilee"   7. John is my father.
   the lake is in Galilee (K4)

8. "the land of Judea"
   the land is Judea (K7).

9. "One of the soldiers"
   he was/is 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 tōi pneumati tēs epanggelias 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 (1965, 1966, 1968), Halliday (1968) and Langendoen (1968) provide more sophisticated instruments for describing the relations between the event and the participants in the event, than supplied by TAPOT (Nida 1975a:83).

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 transfer is made at a near-kernel level in which the relevant connections between the kernels are explicitly marked (TAPOT: 39-40, cf. Nida 1975a:83-85). .

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 receptor language).

On pages 52-55 the reader is provided with a number of New Testament passages on which he can try out the 5 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 Arising

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 (Catford 1965:21). 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 (Widdowson 1972:134-5). Catford
stresses interchangeability in the same situation. Newman's
semantic mapping has focused on the dimension of interpretative
potentialities.

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 an invitation to controversy. 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 (TLS
19-3-70:300). 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 recently suggested that there are eight basic kernels in English
(Taber 1978:142), not seven. 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 ST, 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 is the
message. To all intents and purposes kernels expressed in English can
be regarded as interlingual, it seems. But if one is uneasy at 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. Elsewhere Nida is more cautious and typically pragmatic:

> Descriptions 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 the various stages are readily manipulable. Second, within the kernel structures the relationship 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. (Nida 1975a:86).