

Nida, Eugene A., [1914- ] *Fascinated by Languages* Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2003. [\$96.00; 158pp.]

ALL CAP PASSAGES ARE DIRECT QUOTES

Dinosaurs; contradictory interpretations of Revelation → Mussolini is/is not Anti-Christ.

His father said, "In life it is even more important to be able to doubt than to believe, because too many people love the unbelievable." (P.1)

Interested in science; majored in Classical Greek at UCLA. Studied linguistics, physics, botany, biology, and geology. Grad 1936 → summer institute in linguistics, USC master's degree in patristics → realized Platonists and Stoics interpreted sayings of Jesus as exalted philosophy rather than Good News.

1943 Begins working with the American Bible Society, who wanted a linguist to evaluate some Biblical translations that were not being read or understood due to poor translations.

Requires knowledge of both Greek and Hebrew and grammar and lexical and grammatical structures of the local languages. But there were problems in the translations even of languages where those criteria were met: eg Japanese, Chinese, Hindi, Arabic, and Russian.

Translators used a methodology that was based on the principle that the most literal rendering possible was the best.

p.3 AS SOON AS THE TRANSLATOR UNDERSTOOD THAT IT WAS NOT THE SPECIFIC WORDS BUT THE MEANING OF THE GREEK TEXT THAT WAS IMPORTANT, HE PROCEEDED TO REVISE THE TRANSLATION SO THAT IT WOULD SPEAK MEANINGFULLY IN THE LOCAL YIPOUNOU LANGUAGE.

The book has an interesting narrative of the work of the Bible translators during WWII.

For forty years he traveled all over the world studying linguistic and cultural differences. 7-8 months out of the year.

Illustrative and illuminating anecdotes.

In the '50's, P 13, SOME LINGUISTS ASSUMED THAT A PERSON COULD ANALYZE A LANGUAGE TOTALLY ON THE BASIS OF THE FORMAL FEATURES OF THE TEXTS, FOR EXAMPLE, THE ORDER AND

ARRANGEMENT OF DIFFERENT GRAMMATICAL CLASSES: NOUNS, VERBS, ADJECTIVES, ADVERBS, AND CONJUNCTIONS. ACCORDINGLY, ONE YOUNG LINGUIST HAD SOLD THE BRITISH COLONIAL OFFICE IN THE SUDAN ON THE IDEA THAT HE COULD COMBINE THREE HIGHLY DIVERSE DIALECTS OF DINKA INTO A SINGLE FORM OF THE LANGUAGE AND THUS SAVE CONSIDERABLE MONEY IN PUBLISHING TEXTBOOKS.

p. 20

IN ONE VILLAGE IN THE SUDAN I ASKED WHO WAS THE RICHEST MAN IN THE AREA, AND HIS HOUSE WAS QUICKLY POINTED OUT, BUT IT DID NOT SEEM TO DIFFER FROM ANY OTHER DWELLING. I THEN ASKED HOW ONE COULD TELL WHO WAS THE RICHEST, AND THEY EXPLAINED THAT IT WAS ALWAYS THE MAN WHO HAD GIVEN THE MOST AWAY.

On the other hand, AFRICANS ARE GENERALLY MORE LIKELY TO GRASP THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SYMBOLIC ACCOUNTS THAT ARE PEOPLE IN THE WESTERN WORLD. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN LOCAL PEOPLE LEARNED THAT THE HEBREW NAME ADAM MEANS "GROUND, DIRT" AND THAT THE NAME EVE MEANS "LIFE", THEY QUICKLY REALIZED THAT AT THIS POINT THE BIBLE WAS NOT SPEAKING ABOUT TWO PERSONS BUT ABOUT EVERYONE. SUCH AN ETYMOLOGY IMMEDIATELY FIT THEIR PATTERNS OF MYTHIC INTERPRETATION.

Thailand

p.27 ONE DEVOUT BUDDHIST PRIEST, WHO HAD HEARD THAT JESUS WAS A FAMOUS RELIGIOUS TEACHER, WENT TO THE BIBLE HOUSE IN BANGKOK TO BUY A NEW TESTAMENT BECAUSE HE WANTED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT A PERSON THE CHRISTIANS CALLED "THE SON OF God." A MONTH LATER THE PRIEST RETURNED AND EXCLAIMED, "THIS MAND JESUS MUST HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE GREATEST GURUS THAT HAS EVER LIVED, BECAUSE HE WAS BORN AND DIED, BORN AND DIED, BORN AND DIED, BORN AND DIED, AND IN ONLY FOUR REINCARNATIONS HE ATTAINED NIRVANA."

p.48 IF THE BIBLE IS THE VERY WORD OF GOD, THEN IT MUST CONTAIN THE WORDS OF GOD, AND THEREFORE WHY WOULD ANYONE CHANGE WHAT GOD HAS SAID?

OTHER PEOPLE, HOWEVER, ARE NOT ONLY FRUSTRATED BY WORDS THEY DO NOT KNOW, BUT INSIST THAT IF THE WORDS COME FROM GOD. WHY HIDE THE MEANING IN WORDS THAT DO NOT SPEAK CLEARLY TO PEOPLE TODAY?

p. THE GRAMMATICAL AND TERMINOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF A LANGUAGE CAN CERTAINLY FACILITATE CERTAIN WAYS OF EXPRESSING PARTICULAR IDEAS, BUT THE STRUCTURES OF A LANGUAGE DO NOT PREVENT PEOPLE FROM HAVING QUITE DIFFERENT WAYS OF ORGANIZING INFORMATION. LANGUAGES DO NOT CONTROL THOUGHT, ALTHOUGH CERTAIN LANGUAGES SEEM TO BE ESPECIALLY EFFECTIVE IN CHANNELING CERTAIN TYPES OF INFORMATION.

His work has been very practical purpose of translating Bible. Organizing teams administrative work, training translators.

Expanded anecdotal Curriculum Vitae

Concerned with issues of fidelity to text.

P. 78 Eg IN CHECKING A TRANSLATION OF GENESIS INTO AN IMPORTANT INDIAN LANGUAGE OF NORTH AMERICA, I DISCOVERED THAT THE TRANSLATOR HAD A REAL PROBLEM WITH GENESIS 6:6. "GOD WAS SORRY THAT HE HAD MADE PEOPLE BECAUSE THEIR THOUGHTS WERE ALWAYS EVIL." THE TRANSLATOR WAS PREPARED TO SAY THAT THE THOUGHTS OF PEOPLE WERE ALWAYS EVIL BUT NOT THAT "GOD REPENTED" OR "GOD WAS SORRY."...BUT THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT THE HEBREW DOES SAY, AND A TRANSLATOR'S PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY IS TO REFLECT ACCURATELY THE MEANING OF THE TEXT, EVEN THOUGH THE CONCEPT MAY NOT FIT SOME OF A TRANSLATOR'S OWN IDEAS OR THE IDEAS OF SOME BIBLICAL SCHOLARS.

Lest we think this is just about goat and sheep herders—in the Czech Republic, Nida found that ...NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLARS WERE SO ATTRACTED TO THE REINTERPRETED EXISTENTIAL SYMBOLISM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT THAT THEY WANTED TO RETAIN LITERAL RENDERINGS OF THE TEXT AS A BASIS FOR THEIR OWN BRAND OF DEMYTHOLOGIZING.  
P. 63

P. 79 Though the Greek account in Matthew 2:9 has the star *moving* ahead of the wise men, Kenneth Taylor, translator of the Living Bible renders it as : "THEY STARTED OUT AGAIN. AND LOOK! THE STAR APPEARED TO THEM AGAIN, STANDING OVER BETHLEHEM." When Nida asked Taylor why he had left out the moving of the star, he replied that ...THE WISE MEN WERE NO DOUBT BOTH ASTROLOGERS AND ASTRONOMERS, AND THEY KNEW THAT STARS DO NOT MOVE FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER TO MARK THE LOCATION OF SOMEONE.

P. 81 The Bible as literary genre

MANY SEMINARIES AND BIBLE SCHOOLS PLACE VERY LITTLE EMPHASIS ON THE LITERATURE OF THE BIBLE BECAUSE THEIR PURPOSE IS PRIMARILY TO TEACH THE THEOLOGICAL AND MORAL TRUTHS OF THE SCRIPTURES. AT THE SAME TIME, THE FOCUS OF MOST SCHOOLS TEACHING LOCAL LANGUAGES TO MISSIONARIES IS ACCURACY OF PRONUNCIATION, VOCABULARY, AND GRAMMAR, AND VERY LITTLE IS DONE TO INTRODUCE PEOPLE TO THE ORAL OR WRITTEN LITERATURE OF THE LOCAL CULTURE.

p.82 Zulu poet translates Psalms

p.82 AS ONE BRILLIANT TEACHER OF PHILOSOPHY IN A UNIVERSITY IN ECUADOR SAID ABOUT MISSIONARIES, "THESE FINE PEOPLE HAVE LEARNED OUR LANGUAGE BUT NEVER OUR HEARTS, BECAUSE THEY ARE SO UNAWARE OF OUR LITERATURE.

Discusses some textual problems that we have seen. Objective and subjective constructions; dialogs with RCC translators.

p. 99 history of the Greek Text of New Testament. Kurt Aland had to defect from E. Germany, leaving his copies of MSS behind. He was left as a baby on the doorstep of a Protestant pastor named Aland. A few pages on some of those issues. Short, readable. Some discussion of conflicts among Gospels.

p.109 The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament

took ten years

with Johannes P. Louw of the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

p.109 ...FOR YEARS, I WAS DISSATISFIED WITH EXISTING LEXICONS OF BIBLICAL LANGUAGES BECAUSE THEY DID NOT DEAL WITH THE CRUCIAL PROBLEM, FOR EXAMPLE, THE DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF THE SAME WORD ARE OFTEN MUCH FURTHER APART SEMANTICALLY THAN ARE THE RELATED MEANINGS OF TERMS FROM VERY DIFFERENT DOMAINS. FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT THE DIVERSE REFERENTIAL MEANINGS OF *PNEUMA* NAMELY, "HOLY SPIRIT, SPIRIT, EVIL SPIRIT, GHOST, INNER BEING, WIND, BREATH," SEEM TO BE SEMANTICALLY MORE DISTANT FROM ONE ANOTHER THAN ARE THE MEMBERS OF THE DOMAIN *THOUGHT AND FEELING* , "SPIRIT, MIND, HEART, CONSCIENCE, THOUGHT, FEELING, SOUL."

In other words, just looking at the list of words in the lexicon will not necessarily help you to find the best word. The words needed to be referenced and cross referenced in a different way. P.109 MOST PEOPLE ASSUME THAT WORDS COVER THE RANGE OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE LIKE A NEATLY FITTED MOSAIC, BUT THAT IS FAR FROM THE ACTUAL STATE OF SEMANTIC STRUCTURES. THE MEANINGS OF WORDS INCLUDE, OVERLAP, AND CONTRAST ON SEVERAL LEVELS AND IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS.

They wanted the lexicon to be of practical use for translators. Starting with the Greek New Testament Dictionary, they identified 25,000 meanings for 5000 words.

No computers, slips of paper.

Linguistics, cultural anthropology, and Bible translating. Does not think it possible to analyze a language without reference to meaning.

So their task was to classify words according to semantic domains. Eg. One of the more complex words was “to think”

- ✓ To think, thought (generic)
- ✓ To think about with the implied purpose of responding appropriate
- ✓ To think concerning future contingencies
- ✓ To intend, to purpose, to plan
- ✓ To decide, to conclude
- ✓ To choose, to select, to prefer
- ✓ To distinguish, to evaluate, to judge

Discusses sarx, agorizo, subjective and objective genitives ,LOGOS INFLUENCED by idioms, .

Discusses some linguistic theories in a simple and take it or leave it fashion.

Discusses translation problems such as virgin vs. young woman (touches on some issues in the Hebrew Bible.

p.116

WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR TRANSLATORS AND EXEGETES ARE THE DISTINCTIVE SEMANTIC CONTEXTS: NOT THE AREA OF MEANING OF SEPARATE WORDS, BUT THE COMBINED MEANING OF FOCAL TERMS AND THEIR DEFINING CONTEXTS.

Concludes with some general autobiographical information.

p. 45 Pacific Island languages IN THE CASE OF THE “RICH YOUNG RULER” IT IS NECESSARY TO SPECIFY WHETHER THE RICHES WERE IN LANDS, MONEY, OR CHILDREN. AND IN MOST OF THESE LANGUAGES IT IS NECESSARY TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN INCLUSIVE AND EXCLUSIVE FIRST PERSON PLURAL. AN INCLUSIVE “WE” INCLUDES THE SPEAKER AND THE AUDIENCE, AND AN EXCLUSIVE “WE” INCLUDES THE SPEAKER

AND HIS ASSOCIATES, BUT EXCLUDES THE AUDIENCE. IN A NUMBER OF LANGUAGES TRANSLATORS MADE THE SERIOUS MISTAKE OF USING THE FIRST PERSON INCLUSIVE FORM AT THE BEGINNING OF THE LORD'S PRAYER, BUT "OUR (INCLUSIVE) FATHER MAKES NO SENSE BECAUSE THIS WOULD MEAN THAT THE PEOPLE AND GOD HAD A JOINT SPIRITUAL FATHER TO WHOM THEY WERE PRAYING.

Fidelity to the text.

Cut and paste from BibW Louw-Nida

57.225 ἀβαρη,ζ ές: (a figurative extension of meaning of ἀβαρήs 'to be light in weight,' not occurring in the NT) pertaining to not being financially burdensome to anyone - 'not being financially burdensome'. ἀβαρη̃ έμαυτὸν ύμῖν έτήρησα και τηρήσω 'I kept myself and will keep myself from being a financial burden to you' [2 Cor 11.9](#).

57.230 διακονέω τραπέζαις: (an idiom, literally 'to serve tables') to be responsible for financial aspects of an enterprise - 'to handle finances'. οὐκ άρεστόν έστιν ήμᾶς καταλείψαντας τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ διακονείν τραπέζαις 'it is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to handle finances' [Ac 6.2](#). It is also possible to interpret the phrase διακονέω τραπέζαις not as an idiom but simply as 'to wait on tables, to serve meals' (see 23.26 and 46.13), but even so the context relates to caring for needs.

25. Attitudes and emotions N: Courage and boldness

25.156 θαρρέω or θαρσέω (alternative dialectal forms, with θαρσέω occurring in the NT only in the imperative): to have confidence and firmness of purpose in the face of danger or testing - 'to be courageous, to have courage, to be bold.' θαρροῦντες οὖν πάντοτε 'therefore always being full of courage' [2 Cor 5.6](#) ; ὃς κατὰ πρόσωπον μὲν ταπεινὸς ἐν ύμῖν ἄπων δὲ θαρρῶ εἰς ύμᾶς 'I who am meek when face to face with you, but full of courage when away' [2 Cor 10.1](#); ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ θλίψιν ἔχετε ἄλλὰ θαρσεῖτε 'in the world you will have trouble, but have courage' [Jn 16.33](#). In a number of languages 'courage' is rendered by an idiomatic expression, for example, 'to not move,' 'to be deaf to threats,' and 'to have a heart like iron.'

25.157 λαμβάνω θάρσος: (an idiom, literally 'to take courage') to become confident or courageous in the face of real or possible danger - 'to become confident, to take courage.' οὓς ἰδὼν ὁ Παῦλος εὐχαριστήσας τῷ θεῷ ἔλαβε θάρσος 'when Paul saw them, he thanked God and became confident' [Ac 28.15](#).

25.158 παρρησία ας f: a state of boldness and confidence, sometimes implying intimidating circumstances - 'boldness, courage.' προσερχώμεθα οὖν μετὰ

παρρησίας τῷ θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος 'let us boldly approach the throne of grace' [He 4.16](#); μὴ ἀποβάλητε οὖν τὴν παρρησίαν ὑμῶν ἣτις ἔχει μεγάλην μισθαποδοσίαν 'do not lose your courage which brings a great reward' [He 10.35](#).

25.159 παρρησιάζομαι” to have courage or boldness in the face of danger or opposition - 'to be bold, to have courage.' ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα ἐν τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν λαλῆσαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι 'and even though there was much opposition, our God gave us the courage to tell you the good news of God' [1 Th 2.2](#).

25.165 ἀνδρίζομαι: (a figurative extension of meaning of ἀνδρίζομαι 'to be manly' or 'to become a man,' not occurring in the NT) to exhibit courage in the face of danger - 'to be brave, to be courageous.' στήκετε ἐν τῇ πίστει ἀνδρίζεσθε κραταιοῦσθε 'stand firm in the faith; be brave; be strong' [1 Cor 16.13](#).

25.166 πείθω τὴν καρδίαν: (an idiom, literally 'to convince the heart') to exhibit confidence and assurance in a situation which might otherwise cause dismay or fear - 'to be confident, to be assured.' καὶ ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πείσομεν τὴν καρδίαν ἡμῶν 'and we will be confident in his presence' [1 Jn 3.19](#).

Stine, Philip C. *Let the Words be Written: The Lasting Influence of Eugene Augustine Nida*. Atlanta: The Society of Biblical Literature. 2004. [\$107.00 hardcover; \$24.95 paperback; 199 pp.]

Ph.D. Linguistics University of Michigan His Ph.D. dissertation was "A Synopsis of English Syntax."

p. 45: Stine's summary of priorities in *The Theory and Practice of Translation* - (Brill, 1969, with C.R. Taber)

#### SOME PRIORITIES:

- ✓ CONTEXTUAL CONSISTENCY TAKES PRIORITY OVER VERBAL CONSISTENCY, SO THAT A GREEK WORD SUCH AS “SARX” MAY IN VARIOUS CONTEXTS BE RENDERED AS “FLESH”, “BODY,” “HUMAN NATURE,” “ETHNIC GROUP,” AND “HUMAN BEINGS.”
- ✓ DYNAMIC OR FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE HAS PRIORITY OVER FORMAL EQUIVALENCE. THE MEANING DERIVED FROM THE FUNCTION OF A FORM IS MORE IMPORTANT FOR THE TRANSLATOR THAN THE FORM ITSELF.

- ✓ LANGUAGE AS IT IS HEARD WHEN READ ALOUD TAKES PRIORITY OVER WRITTEN LANGUAGE.
- ✓ THE NEEDS OF THE AUDIENCE TAKE PRIORITY OVER THE ACTUAL FORMS OF THE LANGUAGE, SO THAT IF THE AUDIENCE IS ONE NOT INITIATED INTO RELIGIOUS JARGON, THEN THEOLOGICAL TERMINOLOGY IS AVOIDED AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. MANY WORD FORMS MAY HAVE PRESTIGE IN CHURCH TRADITION, BUT IF A CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE CANNOT UNDERSTAND THEM THEY NEED TO BE AVOIDED IN THE TRANSLATION.

### **Dynamic and formal equivalence--From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia**

**Dynamic equivalence** and **formal equivalence** are two approaches to [translation](#). The former (also known as **functional equivalence**) attempts to convey the [thought](#) expressed in a [source text](#) (at the expense of [literalness](#), original [word order](#), the [source text](#)'s [grammatical voice](#), etc., if necessary), while the latter attempts to render the text word-for-word (at the expense of natural expression in the [target language](#), if necessary). The two approaches represent emphases, respectively, on [readability](#) and on [literal fidelity](#) to the source text. There is, however, in reality no sharp boundary between dynamic and formal equivalence. Broadly, the two represent a spectrum of translation approaches.

The terms "dynamic equivalence" and "formal equivalence" were originally coined to describe ways of translating the [Bible](#), but the two approaches are applicable to any translation.

- The Bible Translator - (Journal founded and edited by Dr. Nida (retired), 1949- )
- Toward a Science of Translating - (Brill, 1964)
- The Theory and Practice of Translation - (Brill, 1969, with C.R. Taber)
- From One Language to Another - (Nelson, 1986, with Jan de Waard)
- The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains - (UBS, 1988, with Louw)