

# In the Name of Nida: Institutionalizing Evangelical Thought through Translation Studies<sup>1</sup>



Christina Korak

[christina.korak@uni-graz.at](mailto:christina.korak@uni-graz.at)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7126-6784>

University of Graz, Austria

Rafael Y. Schögler

[rafael.schoegler@uni-graz.at](mailto:rafael.schoegler@uni-graz.at)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8794-1393>

University of Graz, Austria; Université de Sherbrooke, Canada

## Abstract

This paper critically revisits the symbolic recognition of Eugene Nida in translation studies in the light of his involvement in missionary organisations and missionary translator training. We examine how the reception of Eugene Nida within translation studies has contributed to legitimizing evangelical missionary activities throughout history and nowadays. Our analysis first illustrates various modes of Nida's representation in translation studies and draws links to the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Subsequently, we outline how Nida's active engagement in missionary organizations played a critical role in establishing their academic legitimacy. Finally, we embed these insights in a broader discussion of the relationship between translation studies and missionary translation. Our findings show the need for thorough scholarly debate aimed at reassessing the positioning of key figures within the disciplinary canon and reconstructing the effects of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century missionary translation on the rights of Indigenous peoples, their cosmovisions and their territories.

**Keywords:** Eugene Nida, disciplinary history, missionary translation, Indigenous translation, human rights

En nombre de Nida: la institucionalización del pensamiento evangélico a través de los estudios de traducción

## Resumen

En este artículo se hace una revisión crítica del reconocimiento simbólico de Eugene Nida en los estudios de traducción a la luz de su participación en organizaciones misioneras y en la formación de traductores misioneros. Se analiza cómo la recepción de Nida dentro de los estudios de traducción

<sup>1</sup> This research was supported by funding from the Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung (Austrian Science Fund —FWF), under grant number TAI-599.

*Nota: Estamos plenamente convencidos de la necesidad de publicar en español como un punto de partida para fomentar más justicia lingüística en nuestra disciplina. Escribimos el presente artículo en inglés buscando un debate más amplio en la comunidad científica de la traductología, en gran parte todavía dominada por investigadorxs de habla inglesa.*



ha contribuido a legitimizar las actividades misioneras evangélicas a lo largo de la historia y en la actualidad. Nuestro análisis ilustra en primer lugar los diversos modos de representación de Nida en los estudios de traducción y establece vínculos con el Instituto Lingüístico de Verano. A continuación, se describe cómo la participación activa de Nida en organizaciones misioneras desempeñó un papel fundamental en el establecimiento de su legitimidad académica. Por último, se incorporan estas conclusiones en un debate más amplio sobre la relación entre los estudios de traducción y la traducción misionera. Los hallazgos señalan la necesidad de un debate académico exhaustivo destinado a reevaluar el posicionamiento de figuras clave dentro del canon de la disciplina y a reconstruir los efectos de la traducción misionera de los siglos xx y xxi sobre los derechos de los pueblos indígenas, sus cosmovisiones y sus territorios.

**Palabras clave:** Eugene Nida, historia de la disciplina, traducción misionera, traducción indígena, derechos humanos

Au nom de Nida : Institutionnalisation de la pensée évangélique  
par le biais des études de traduction

Résumé

Cet article revisite de manière critique la reconnaissance symbolique d'Eugene Nida dans les études de traduction à la lumière de son implication dans des organisations missionnaires et la formation de traducteurs missionnaires. Nous examinons comment la réception d'Eugene Nida dans les études de traduction a contribué à légitimer les activités missionnaires évangéliques à travers l'histoire et à présent. Notre analyse illustre d'abord les différents modes de représentation de Nida dans les études de traduction et établit des liens avec l'Institut Estival de Linguistique. Nous décrivons ensuite comment l'engagement actif de Nida dans des organisations missionnaires a joué un rôle essentiel dans l'établissement de leur légitimité académique. Enfin, nous inscrivons ces conclusions dans une discussion plus ample sur la relation entre les études de traduction et la traduction missionnaire. Nos conclusions montrent la nécessité d'un débat scientifique approfondi visant à réévaluer la place des figures clés dans le canon disciplinaire et à reconstruire les effets de la traduction missionnaire des xxe et xxie siècles sur les droits des peuples autochtones, leurs cosmovisions et leurs territoires.

**Mots-clés :** Eugene Nida, histoire disciplinaire, traduction missionnaire, traduction autochtone, droits de l'homme

Em nome de Nida: Institucionalizando o pensamento evangélico  
por meio dos estudos de tradução

Resumo

Este artigo revisita criticamente o reconhecimento simbólico de Eugene Nida nos estudos de tradução à luz de seu envolvimento em organizações missionárias e na formação de tradutores missionários. Examinamos como a recepção de Eugene Nida nos estudos de tradução contribuiu para legitimar as atividades missionárias evangélicas ao longo da história e hoje em dia. Nossa análise ilustra primeiro vários modos de representação de Nida nos estudos de tradução e estabelece ligações com o Instituto Lingüístico de Verão. Posteriormente, descrevemos como o envolvimento ativo de Nida em organizações missionárias desempenhou um papel crítico no estabelecimento da legitimidade acadêmica desse movimento. Por fim, incorporamos essas descobertas em uma discussão mais ampla

sobre a relação entre os estudos de tradução e a tradução missionária. Nossas conclusões mostram a necessidade de um debate acadêmico aprofundado com o objetivo de reavaliar o posicionamento de figuras-chave dentro do cânone disciplinar e reconstruir os efeitos da tradução missionária dos séculos XX e XXI sobre os direitos dos povos indígenas, suas cosmovisões e seus territórios.

**Palavras-chave:** Eugene Nida, história disciplinar, tradução missionária, tradução indígena, direitos humanos

## Introduction

Over the last 30 years, scholars in translation studies (TS) have made tremendous contributions to the theoretical conceptualization and empirical analysis of translating and interpreting as political acts informed by and informing powerplays between individual agents, institutions or supranational constellations. These efforts are closely linked to the conceptualisation of translating and interpreting as tools to create, express and foster social commitment. However, if we take this conceptual view one step further to the self-conception, responsibility and credibility of our discipline as such, it becomes pertinent to turn our gaze inwards. This contribution thus sets out to address historically grown power structures *within* our own discipline that we are contributing to uphold; may it be by our silence, ignorance or indifference.

Specifically, we examine the symbolic recognition of Eugene Nida (1914–2011) in TS in the light of his involvement in missionary organisations, missionary translator training and missionary translation—actions that significantly impacted Indigenous peoples' self-determination and their collective rights. We argue that decontextualised receptions of Eugene Nida within TS have, both directly and indirectly, contributed to legitimizing evangelical missionary activities historically and in contemporary contexts, which becomes particularly evident in relation to organisations such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), the United Bible Societies (UBS) and the American Bible Society (ABS). While upholding a scientific arm, organisations such as SIL work with other institutions to access populations and change their knowledge systems, their relations to their territories and their cosmovisions—that is, ways of perceiving world(s) and acting in them (Consejo Regional del Cauca, 2004, 83). In some instances, these actions also facilitate economic and political exploitation. After illustrating different modes

of framing Nida in introductory works, reference works and selected in-depth analyses, we turn towards writings and material published by Nida and his colleagues serving the aforementioned missionary organisations, as well as analyses of these organisations and agents published in adjacent fields, such as anthropology or linguistics.

What this contribution does not do is to evaluate the weight or novelty of Nida's approaches to translation for Indigenous peoples from a theological point of view or in debates in fundamentalist missionary circles (Calvin, 2004, p. 100; Simnowitz, 2023), nor does it provide an extensive analysis of his theoretical positions. Instead, we discuss connections between Nida, the institutions he worked for in leading positions, and related agents with political and economic interests. We argue that these connections need to be taken seriously whenever revisiting Nida, seeing that his legacy of missionary translation practices in Indigenous communities as well as institutions offering translation training inspired by his field work or carrying Nida's name have far from disappeared.

In their practices, these organisations rely heavily on translation and turn to increasingly sophisticated techniques such as virtual communication channels, platformisation and the use of technological tools even in remote areas. Moreover, the influence of the persona Nida on the discipline persists in introductory anthologies, student textbooks and summer schools bearing his name. These autopoietic mechanisms of academic recognition, in turn, continue to be exploited by proselytist missionary organisations as one element relevant in framing their work as humanitarian, while undermining Indigenous self-determination (Little, 2024).<sup>2</sup> Questioning our disciplinary

<sup>2</sup> The right to self-determination of peoples has been part of international agreements for a long time, and in 2016 the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Organization

self-understanding, we suggest a reassessment of figures such as Eugene Nida within TS, who chooses to contradict himself by presenting himself as a fervent missionary at one point and as merely a scholar in other contexts.

### 1. A Call to Reposition Translation Studies' Elders

TS's sensitivity to the concept of power is deeply rooted in theoretical and empirical developments since the cultural turn starting in the 1980s when translating and interpreting were identified as decidedly political acts and thus as inherently partial and strategic activities. Describing unequal power relations and highlighting the abuse of power at an interpersonal, organisational or societal level has led to some of the most fruitful insights on the effects of translational actions. This critical stance has provided TS with a firm basis to uncover the re-/de- or co-construction of gender in and through translation (Chamberlain, 1988; von Flotow, 1997).

By the same token, it has brought to the fore historical power-laden uses of translation, studying, for instance the grey zones of interpreting in concentration camps (Tryuk, 2016; Wolf, 2020) or how censorship altered the agency of translators in places such as the German Democratic Republic or East Germany (Thomson-Wohlgemuth, 2007), or Franco Spain (Uribarri Zenekorta, 2013). This has led to understanding translation as a relational practice, connecting global knowledge-circulation with local interpretations of meaning (Bielsa, 2023; Bielsa & Hughes, 2009), but also as a practice dominated by neo-Taylorian or neoliberal economic forces (Baumgarten & Bourgadel, 2024). Focusing on the reciprocal impact of translation on social change and

vice versa has paved the way for notions of translation as a political act (Doerr, 2018) or as a potentially collective practice of prefiguration (Baker, 2016). In colonial and neo-colonial contexts, translation is, most prominently, conceptualized both as practice of subversion and as defiance of knowledge systems and hegemonies of power (Álvarez et al., 1996; Bandia, 2008; Tymoczko et al., 2002). As such, it is widely acknowledged that translation bears the possibility to transgress the logics of historically grown power imbalances and may break with rigid and wrongly assumed dualisms of oppressed versus oppressing, for the sake of a more nuanced and transculturalized perspective (Ortiz, 2002).

The critical sensitivity to concepts of power has, moreover, extended to recent intra-disciplinary efforts to de-centralize the historicization of translation theories. This ranges from approaches based on Chakrabarty (2008) suggesting a “provincializing” of the Western mythistory of TS by considering theories of translation developed in the Soviet Union (Baer, 2020), to debates about (developing) a specific Chineseness of TS in mainland China (Cheung, 2011) or, as Price (2023) suggests, to revisiting South American thinkers such as José María Arguedas as alternatives to the hyper-focus on Walter Benjamin, Roman Jakobson or Martin Luther.

In essence, this dense repertoire of analyses and studies on practices, policies and effects of translation, complemented by exhaustive translation theory-building, has extensively dealt with the “whats”, “whys”, “hows” and—partly due to a recent focus on the history of translators (Kelletat, 2021; Woodsworth & Delisle, 2013)—even the “whos” of translation. It has, however, missed providing a fundamental critique of the ideological underpinnings that inform translation concepts and theories of TS's most prominent historical figures and the translation practices they propagated or inspired. Such revalorizations seem

---

of American States 2016) has explicitly defined in article xxvi that “Indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation or initial contact have the right to remain in that condition and to live freely and in accordance with their cultures”.

particularly pertinent when scholarly efforts align with colonial and neo-colonial endeavours relying heavily on translation.

This paper focuses on re-evaluating Eugene Nida, a figure denominated “the father of modern translating,” “the grandfather,” “the Archimedes” and the “patriarch” of TS in the disciplinary canon (citations based on a list Nida compiled and published himself; Nida, 2003, p. 138). We scrutinise the politics, institutional ties and evangelical goals that motivated Nida and the SIL. To depict the involvement of the SIL in political and proselytist activities, we rely on critical discussions from adjacent disciplines such as anthropology and linguistics as well as the decisive action of scholars that already contributed to the termination of contracts with SIL in Mexico and its formal expulsion from Panama or Ecuador in the 1980s (see, e.g., Colegio de Etnólogos y Antropólogos Sociales A.C, 1979; Fondo Documental Flacso Ecuador, 1981).

## 2. Positioning Nida in Translation Studies

Nida’s notion of translating —aiming at dynamic or functional equivalence— has been uncovered as a means to “efface cultural difference between the different audiences” (Israel 2021, p. 451). Israel discusses Nida’s approach through the lens of its “ethics” and points out that for Nida his approach was ethically correct, as in his eyes, it rendered Christian scriptures “meaningful and relevant to new audiences” (Israel, 2021, p. 450). Others, such as Lawrence Venuti, saw Nida’s “domesticating” approach as ethically flawed (Israel, 2021, p. 450). Also, from the religious angle, more source-text oriented missionaries criticised him for departing from a sacred original. Clearly, Nida’s normative stance on “how” to translate is not uncontested, neither in TS, nor in missionary circles —albeit for different reasons. In either case, however, neither Nida as a person, the institutions he is tied to, nor his contradictory self-positionings are problematized.

To illustrate how Nida is positioned in TS, we differentiate reference works and general introductions simply mentioning Nida as (important) element within the history of the discipline, and works addressing Nida, bible translation, occasionally the SIL and more rarely the ABS in more detail. The latter engage with Nida’s theories, the topic of bible translation and/or mission. Our sample comprises eleven introductory and reference works written in English that focus broadly on translation theory, the history of TS, as well as on the intersection of translation and religion and four contributions offering more nuanced discussions on Nida. While we cannot offer a comprehensive analysis of all introductory works in TS, we are confident that our selection represents the spectrum of Nida-positionings one can currently find in TS.

### 2.1. Nida in Reference and Introductory Works

Our analysis finds three overarching strategies of referencing Nida: (i) presenting Nida as decisive for the development of the discipline, either without detailed comments on his missionary background or descriptively, placing Nida within the field of religious/bible translation; (ii) addressing Nida’s missionary background, contextualizing and problematizing the practice of missionary translation in general terms, without highlighting the effects of missionary translation practices; (iii) developing a critique based on questioning the ideological background of Nida’s translation theories or referring to the detrimental effects of connected practices for the lives and long-term implications of Indigenous peoples and their cultural and territorial rights.

Within category (i), Nida is portrayed as providing influential accounts of translation, credited for the “beginning of academic translation studies” (Delabastita, 2018, p. 368) or applauded for his “pioneering work” (Ches-terman, 2017, p. 313) whilst being aware of

the backbone of Nida's theories to be the "evangelical concern to propagate the Bible in new languages" (Chesterman, 2017, p. 297). Blumczynski's (2019, pp. 45f) description of Eugene Nida in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* only finds Nida's theoretical take on equivalence "controversial", without naming Nida as a controversial figure; moreover, he gives ample credit to the Nida Institute as well as to the Nida School of Translation Studies. Furthermore, the author cites Gentzler referring to Nida's *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964) as "the 'Bible' not just for Bible translation but for translation theory in general" (1993, p. 44). In other key introductory works, such as the *Routledge Handbook of Translation and Linguistics* no contextualisation of Nida is provided apart from categorizing his work within "research on Bible translation" (Baumgarten & Schröter, 2018, p. 137).

As for category (ii), our analysis provides several accounts of more nuanced positioning. For instance, Munday, Ramos and Blakesley (2022) also credit Gentzler for setting forth a substantial critique of Nida's "proselytizing standpoint" (p. 58) and for assessing his theory as "less derived from scientific principles and more an outgrowth of the nature of his religious inclinations" (2022, p. 54). The authors make their readers aware of Nida training fellow bible translators and the continuance of this education through the Nida Institute (Munday et al., 2022, p. 52, 70). Their own reception, however, does not build on these aspects when focussing on prototypical forms of translation strategies without questioning underlying socio-political motivations. Rather euphemistically, they summarise Nida's work as "aimed above all at training translators who do not have expertise in linguistics but who have to deal with very different cultures" (Munday et al., 2022, p. 69). Similarly, Prunč (2002, pp. 106, 108, 125) acknowledges that Nida's theories are ideologically motivated, clearly references his work within the objectives of evangelisation and situates missionary

translation as one element of Europe's colonial history. Nonetheless, while dedicating 25 pages to explaining dynamic equivalence, Prunč does not engage with the effects of applying this approach to translation in the context of missionary translation and its real-life consequences for Indigenous peoples.

Meanwhile, in the *Routledge Handbook of Translation and Culture*, Nida is described as a "linguist involved in translation consultancy for the United Bible Societies" (Blumczynski & Hephzibah, 2018, p. 211). The ethical implications of dynamic equivalence as a "strongly domesticating strategy" (p. 211) are stressed but in the end regarded quite ambiguously as "not strictly colonial (with the coloniser making unilateral pronouncements on what is cognitively and culturally appropriate for the colonised)" (p. 211). However, the authors acknowledge that such utilization of translation "grows out of and to some extent perpetuates power imbalance, and is not always completely upfront about its ultimately persuasive, missionary aims" (p. 211).

In *Exploring Translation Theories*, Anthony Pym (2010) discusses the concept of natural equivalence and refers to the introduction of new thought patterns in a seemingly natural way as "quite possibly imperialistic" (p. 21). Nonetheless, the "imperialistic" seems to refer first and foremost to the content of bible translations and not to SIL's missionary endeavour: Pym finds fault with Nida "pretend[ing] that the Christian god was already in the countless non-Christian cultures into whose languages the Bible is translated" (p. 21), which suggests a possibly critical stance. However, the assessment remains restricted to the content and not the effects of translating in that way: "When the 'lamb of God' becomes a 'seal of God' for Inuit readers, the New Testament quite simply ceases to refer to first-century Palestine" (Pym, 2010, p. 21).

In these representations, Nida's positioning is already more ambiguous than in the first

category. Authors qualify missionary translation and Nida's thought more clearly within colonial and imperialist practices, albeit without (re-)positioning him within the disciplinary discourse in the way we can find in category (iii).

To illustrate the most critical engagement with Nida in introductory works under category (iii), we have to go quite far back in time. For instance, in 1993, Gentzler starts off with a critique of the "religious beliefs and missionary goals" (1993, p. 45) to be found in Nida's "scientific framework" (p. 45). He then highlights its thin theoretical premise and argues that incorporating Chomsky's approach was decisive for positioning Nida successfully among a non-religious audience (Gentzler, 1993, p. 46). Gentzler (1993, pp. 52f) further demonstrates a shift in Nida's writing style and narrative between *Message and Mission* (1960) and *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964), highlighting how Nida adjusted his tone to cater to a non-religious target audience by deliberately removing theological viewpoints, while still maintaining a discernible "Protestant subtext" (1964, p. 59): "The implicit assumption present but elided from his science is strikingly similar to the Protestant credence regarding communication in general, and translation, thus, for Nida, becomes the rearticulation of the power of the word (over people)" (1964, p. 54).

Overall, Gentzler's text holds "Nida's religious beliefs to be very instrumental in the formulation of his scientific approach" (1964, p. 57), leading to a conflation of "the translator's role with that of the missionary" (p. 57) and the "manipulation of a text to serve the interests of a religious belief" (1964, p. 60). Gentzler's positioning of Nida places the latter clearly as a "protestant thinker" well aware of adapting his prose to impress different readers. Another illustration of a critical stance can be found in early versions of Venuti's *Translator's Invisibility* (1995), where he problematizes Nida's model of dynamic equivalence as "egregious euphemism for the domesticating translation method and the cultural

political agendas it conceals" (p. 118). It is to be noted that this explicit qualification of Nida's approach is no longer included in a recent version of the book (Venuti, 2017).

Introductory works position Nida quite differently: some remain descriptive, others qualify and give justifications for these qualifications and still others try to deconstruct the importance given to Nida's approach. More specialized publications follow similar argumentative patterns as well.

## 2.2. Nida and the *stl* in In-Depth Contributions

To illustrate different levels of more in-depth positionings, we have selected three texts that we discuss in order of their intensity of critique: Pym (2008), Israel (2022), and Simon (1987).

Pym's general approval of Nida's persona and intellectual work is not surprising in an anthology conceived as an homage. Nonetheless, Pym (2008) explicitly places Nida in the context of missionary translation practices, while resorting to an argument that can be summarized as: "What else is there to be expected from missionaries than to evangelize?". In this reconstruction, he echoes *stl*'s carefully drafted outward presentation as a humanitarian organisation (without explicitly naming *stl*) and reinforces missionary discourses by stating that bible translators would argue that their "projects save communities, standardize languages, spread literacy, bring isolated social structures into wider communication networks, and promote policies that favor cultural diversity" (Pym, 2008, p. 327). His mirroring of missionary discourse even suggests that "the insights of Eugene Nida might [...] help spread democracy" (Pym, 2008, p. 331).

In the *Routledge Handbook on Translation and Religion* (2022, p. 3), Israel argues that Nida only "survives" (Israel, 2022) in *ts* due to the applicability of his theories to non-religious contexts. Without pointing out Nida's prominent

involvement in the ABS/UBS as well as the SIL, she explains that Nida's theories were considered controversial within evangelical realms. She also acknowledges, as we argued earlier, that Nida continues to be heavily cited and part and parcel of introductory works and study programs, although, "often [...] stripped off this contentious Christian mission history and context" (Israel, 2022). The former, as the accompanying footnote rather cryptically states, "is important to keep in mind as a particular theological position is usually assumed and maintained by the translator and their community, which is believed to be successfully repeated through 'dynamic equivalence'" (Israel, 2022, p. 15).

The only contribution we could find that put SIL and Nida in connection to each other, is a French text by Sherry Simon from 1987. Simon introduces Nida as a protestant pastor, associated with the SIL, Wycliffe, ABS and UBS (Simon, 1987). She highlights his long-term engagement of more than 30 years, at that point in time, in missionary translation work. Simon shows that Nida views translation through a reformist lens, treating the Bible as an autonomous text that must be clear to readers and speak to them as if god addressed them directly (Simon, 1987, p. 430). By comparing Nida's translation theory with Henri Meschonnic's critique of the former, she notes that both derived their understanding of translation from their experience as bible translators and observes that Meschonnic denies Nida's approach scientific validity.

She also highlights that Nida's theory is not new, rather its originality lies in « l'insertion sociale de son activité : la vaste échelle de sa mise en pratique, et la manière dont cette activité est rationalisée » (Simon, 1987, p. 43) [the social integration of its activity: the vast scale of its implementation, and the way in which this activity is rationalized]. Simon finally agrees with Meschonnic when she states: « [Ce que] Nida présente comme une activité neutre, non idéologique, scientifique, est en fait une activité lourde de conséquences sur le plan social et historique »

(Simon, 1987, p. 429, her emphasis) [What Nida presents as a neutral, non-ideological, scientific activity is in fact an activity with far-reaching consequences in social and historical terms] (our translation).

In this framing, Simon goes further than most in their Nida reception, stating that the activities of the SIL have had a direct effect on social and political developments in the countries where the organisation is active and drawing a link between SIL and the rise of evangelical Protestantism in Latin America (Simon, 1987). However, she does not reconstruct the effects bible translation had on Indigenous languages and peoples.

Overall, three observations can be made from these different positionings of Nida within TS. First, in many instances Nida is not critically contextualized, in the sense that no awareness for the colonializing impact of missionary translation is mentioned. While a more in-depth criticism is not to be expected in this type of publications, a more nuanced positioning of Nida would be easily possible, as can be illustrated by the concise framing Venuti chose in his earlier publications (see above). Secondly, there is a perceived trend to be less critical of the persona Nida in more recent times than in the past, which could be explained by a decreasing importance of concepts tied to Nida for translation theory and/or less awareness for the socio-historical context of its creation. Finally, it is striking to observe that already in 1987, Simon provided a basis to understand how Nida and associated missionary organisations are linked to TS, that has, however, not found its way into the mainstream reception of this figure.

### 3. Nida, the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the American Bible Society

We will now ask ourselves at what different stages of Eugene Nida's life missionary translation was important and will illustrate his involvement with the SIL or the ABS as well as the academization of missionary translation.

It lies outside the scope of this article to provide more details on the origins of the SIL, its rapid expansion all over Latin America and its outreach into Asia or Africa—topics which have been widely addressed, more recently by Krysińska-Kaluźna (2016), Jammes (2022) or the missionary organization itself (Wycliffe Global Alliance, 2024). Likewise, we do not include an exhaustive report on every step in Nida's career path (see Simnowitz, 2015, pp. 99–114 for a detailed account).

### 3.1. Born with a Mission

Born in Oklahoma City in 1914 and growing up in an ultraconservative church, Eugene Albert Nida had an early calling: “Ever since I had become a member of the Methodist Church of Oklahoma City at the age of four, I had planned to be a missionary” (Nida, 1988, p. 62). In 1936, he graduated summa cum laude from UCLA in Greek with a specialization in foreign languages and sciences (Nida, 1988). In 1934, US-American missionaries William Cameron Townsend and Leonhard Livingston Legters had started summer camps in Sulphur Springs in Arkansas to train new missionaries in linguistics and bible translation to work in Indigenous communities. Their proclaimed aim was to establish missions in the “neglected jungle tribes of South America” (Pike, 1959, p. 75) for which the camps, where students were educated in linguistic principles but also in survival tactics in the field, provided ideal recruiting grounds.

Between 1934 and 1941, a total of 142 students passed through camp Wycliffe (Aldridge, 2012, p. 72, p. 94). The members of the organisation, however, had constructed a different image of themselves when entering Mexico in 1933: Townsend presented himself as ethnologist and educator and his colleague Legters as lecturer, explorer and humanitarian rather than missionaries. They framed the objectives of the venture into the country to consist of developing grammars and dictionaries for each Indigenous

language for the sake of science and translating the new testament into each of these languages to be published in bilingual editions. Thus, they would assist the state of Mexico in integrating Indigenous peoples into national culture whereby the Bible's morale would promote social uplift (Correspondence from missionary William Cameron Townsend to Soto 1933, cf. Svelmoe, 2008, pp. 241–242).

After hearing about Townsend at a UCLA bible club, Nida joined the third session of camp Wycliffe in 1936. Nida and Pike were among Townsend's first students. Very quickly they—Pike in 1935, Nida in 1936—turned into the camp's first teachers, and in 1938, they took on roles as leaders of the teaching program. From 1937 onwards, lecturers spent winters in Indigenous communities and summers teaching at the camp. In 1939, Nida completed a master's programme at the University of Southern California in patristics while staying involved with camp Wycliffe. To cast the double-sided venture into an institutionalized form, in 1942, a dual organization structure was established, which is still in place. With Nida as one of the founding directors and designated president, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL, today, SIL International) was established as representing the scientific branch of the undertaking. The twin organisation Wycliffe Bible Translators Inc. (WBT) would serve as the SIL's missionary arm to secure financing and recruitment at home in the USA (Barriga, 1992, p. 48; Nida, 2003, p. 96; Pike, 1959, pp. 75–76; Sander, 2007, p. 17; Stine, 2012, p. 38; Svelmoe, 2008, p. 296):

For designating the practical linguistic service, which was acceptable to governments, the names of our summer training school seemed good [...]. For designating Bible translation work, the name of the man who first translated the whole Bible into English seemed to be ideal [...] (Pittman, 1991a, p. 9)

In this presentation of their own aims, it already becomes clear that SIL was never set up

to work towards the scientific ideal of disinterested research (on the ethos of science, see Merton, 1973, p. 270), but was created as an organisation to legitimize the practice of bible translation for a general public, as well as the academic and political realm.

### 3.2. Paving the Way for International Outreach

For SIL and UBS/ABS, operating internationally was of utmost importance. Starting in Mexico, Townsend used his relations to influential political figures to convince the government of Lázaro Cárdenas, inclined towards a progressive socialist programme, “that his nascent organization had a real scientific and cultural part to play in Mexico’s on-going revolution” (Aldridge, 2012, p. 63). Connections to the director of the Mexican Institute of Linguistic Research and the National Autonomous University were forged and in 1936 a linguistic conference in Mexico City organized (Aldridge, 2012; Townsend, 1991a, p. 4). Promises to important political actors repeatedly included creating “good” citizens as much as gathering and making available data on linguistic communities. The latter was of particular importance for SIL, as gathering data on and standardizing languages exerts an (indirect) epistemic control over these communities on the long-term. In that sense, SIL both served and honoured governments “by eradicating vice and fanaticism of various types which are of concern to government agencies interested in good citizenship” (Pike, 1959, p. 80; see Elson, 1991, p. 101 on governments as “god’s instruments”) and maintained good relations with academic players of the host country.

With SIL being a faith mission, missionaries do not receive salaries, and financing largely stems from personal donations by churches or friends (Krysińska-Kaluźna, 2016, p. 72). In the USA, SIL provided courses not only to its members but also assisted affiliated missions such as Assemblies of God, Disciples of

Christ, Methodists or Mennonites in training missionary-translators and worked together with more established evangelical missions who then took over on the ground, *e. g.*, the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico in Chiapas (Aldridge, 2012, p. 90; Nida, 1991a, p. 4; Pike, 1959, p. 81; Stine, 2004, p. 87). Training in linguistics was hands-on and implemented right from the beginning: eleven-week courses started with the basics of linguistics. Then, Indigenous peoples were brought to SIL installations where the new missionary-translators had to learn as much of their language as possible and engage in trial analyses of phonetic and grammatical aspects. There were advanced courses after some years of field work and special seminars where linguists with a larger scholarly trajectory gave feedback on articles to be published in journals (Pike, 1959, pp. 77–79).

Realising the importance of linguistics for missionary translation, Nida completed his doctoral studies at the University of Michigan as “SIL’s second PhD [after Pike]” (Aldridge & Simons, 2018) in 1942. In 1943, he was ordained by the Southern California Association of the Northern Baptist Convention and married Althea Lucille Sprague. Nida served with the SIL from 1937 to 1953 with the main areas of his work consisting of teaching at the camp and engaging in Public Relations. Throughout his professional life with the SIL, the ABS and the UBS, Nida was entrusted with developing training programmes, created ties with scholars, translators’ associations and scientific organizations, coordinated field work and provided consultancy on bible translation projects (Nida, 1988, p. 62; Nida, 1991a, pp. 2–5; Nida, 1991b, p. 230).

From 1942 to 1953, Nida served on the SIL’s board of directors. From 1937 on, and at first in parallel to his engagement with the SIL, Nida started to work for the ABS as Consultant for Translation Work (1943), Assistant in Versions (1944) and then Secretary for

Versions—a job title that was later changed into Secretary of Translations (1949). He analysed why bible translations were not read or understood by Indigenous communities, provided advice to missionary-translators on his field trips assisting in translations into over 200 languages in nearly 100 countries, in triennial translation workshops and large translation gatherings. He also contributed to another cornerstone in institutionalizing bible translation in academia by co-founding the journal *The Bible Translator* in the 1950s. In this journal, he published practical advice and theoretical input and wrote several translator's handbooks for missionary-translators.

In the journal *Practical Anthropology* (1953–1972, later *Missiology*), which he had founded with ABS colleagues, he elaborated on the links between anthropology and missions. In the 1970s, the UBS appointed Nida, who had earlier been research coordinator, to the position of translation services coordinator responsible for the quality of the organization's global translation team. All in all, Nida worked for the Bible Societies from 1937, when Townsend connected him to the organization, until his retirement in 1984. In 1997, Nida married Elena Fernández-Miranda, who held the position of director for the Spanish division of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Translation.<sup>3</sup>

### **3.3. Tying the Knot: Institutionalizing Relations with Academia and State Institutions**

Securing an academic standing was a key organizational aim to both the SIL and the Bible Societies to justify translating the Bible into Indigenous languages. In this respect, the practical guidelines of Townsend are enlightening:

<sup>3</sup> There are a great number of sources that provide biographical information. For further details see: Aldridge (2012, pp. 80, 90); Calvin (2004, pp. 93, 95); Nida (2003, p. 2); Stine (2004, pp. 30–32, 92–96, 102); Stine (2012, p. 38).

We follow what is called the linguistic approach. That means that we go to a man through his soul gate, through his own language. We want to learn the languages, and we might as well go about it in a scientific way. If we are going to be linguists, we should be good linguists! God has blessed us with men who can teach our people to be scientific about our work. When we do this, governments are glad to have our help. Universities welcome us, help us, and respect our work. [...] Therefore, you bible translators, when academic people are giving lectures, attend them as a matter of courtesy. When you see in a newspaper that there is a scientific meeting, attend it. Invite local scholars into your homes, listen to their talk, attend their lectures, join their scientific societies, be present at their open sessions, publish articles, publicize their scientific contributions. It is vitally important for us to stick to the scientific linguistic approach. (Townsend, [1961] 1991, pp. 18–19)

Playing along the rules of the academic field appears to be a mere matter of “courtesy”, to use their words, and when highlighting the “vital importance” of research, it is not related to advancing knowledge-making, but to create a broad legitimization for their organisations and actions. The wide scope of the operation is reflected in 28 university affiliations granted to the SIL by the 1990s (Aldridge, 2012, pp. 106–107). It was Eugene Nida who, together with Pike, was at the forefront of cultivating a scholarly profile for SIL through Summer Schools, selecting promising students to pursue PhD degrees as well as emphasising regular output by students in linguistics:

Ken Pike and Eugene Nida's efforts to secure SIL's academic credentials effectively blunted attempts to call into question SIL's capacity for making a real scientific contribution to the nations in which it served. (Aldridge, 2012, p. 172; see also Hart, 1973, p. 151)

For instance, Nida forged associations with the University of Michigan, the University of Texas, Edward Sapir of the University of Chicago,

Leonhard Bloomfield or Charles Fries and even succeeded in moving the camp to the University of Oklahoma<sup>4</sup> (Aldridge, 2012, pp. 75–76, 83, 87, 91, 93, 100–101; Pike, 1959, pp. 76–77; Svelmoe, 2008, p. 275; Townsend, 1991a, p. 5).

Pike (1959, pp. 81–82) and Stine (2004, pp. 23–25) discuss some differences between the Bible Societies and the SIL, which can be roughly summarized with the former focusing on the translation of the entire bible in regions where churches have already been established, while the latter places emphasis on the new testament and includes work with Indigenous peoples without prior establishment of churches, which places translation as starting point for missionary activities (see Drumond, 2004, p. 47). The Bible Societies have financially supported SIL's work and published materials. Also, the Bible Societies could more easily build larger coalitions. For instance, from the 1960s onwards, the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox constituencies and churches in China have been cooperating with them. This is also largely due to the networking efforts of Nida, who formed part of a UBS delegation to meet with the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in the Vatican and reached an agreement to collaborate in global bible translations (Langendoen, 2013, p. 163; Stine, 2004, pp. 102–103, 119–136).

4 Little's (2024) recent research draws on archival material from the University of Oklahoma and SIL archives in Dallas, where the SIL's headquarters are located nowadays, as well as interviews with SIL members and university staff. Her findings show that reports by scholars of the Faculty of Anthropology on the questionable financing of a Christian organisation by a public institution brought up possible ethical and legal concerns about the separation between secular and sectarian institutions and eventually led to the suspension of the cooperation in 1987. See also Franco (2024) for a thorough scrutiny of the ties between the discipline of anthropology and the SIL in Colombia.

Townsend's excellent connections to government circles and the SIL's credentials as a scientific and an educational organisation had led to the invitation by the minister of public education to initiate work in Peru in 1944 (Aldridge, 2012, pp. 141–142, 145). Fredrick Aldridge describes the close cooperation with secular institutions, governments, the Peruvian army and the downplay of SIL's missionary background, portraying it to Latin American governments "first and foremost as a linguistic institution" (Aldridge, 2012, p. 129) when in fact WBT/SIL was "simply one mission with a twofold character" (Aldridge, 2012, pp. 69, 128). This dual identity was criticised internally and Nida also gave it as a reason for leaving his official position with SIL and concentrating on his employment as Secretary of Translations at ABS (Aldridge, 2012, p. 273).

The agreement struck between the Peruvian government and Townsend in fact did not even mention the SIL's primary objective of bible translation nor the WBT.<sup>5</sup> Instead, it emphasised research in linguistics and anthropology and the goal of incorporating Indigenous peoples into mainstream culture.

SIL's other collaborations can be inferred, e.g., from their own magazine "Translation" where they point out that "Texaco-Gulf's discovery of rich oil basins has touched off a stampede of other oil companies into Ecuador's Amazon jungle" (Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1969, p. 11). With reference to Ecuador's Waorani people, who prior to the intervention of the SIL lived in voluntary isolation as semi-nomadic hunters and gatherers, the missionaries go on to accentuate the necessity to "accelerate efforts to contact the remaining savage groups"

5 See Aldridge, 2012, p. 144 referring to an agreement between the Ministry of Education of Peru and Townsend in June 1945. Similar wordings can be found in later versions of contracts in Peru, e.g. Ministerio de Educación/ILV 1971; as well as in contracts between Ecuador's Ministry of Education and the SIL (Gobierno de Ecuador, 1952).

(Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1969, p. 11). In her latest book, Waorani leader Nemonte Nenquimo describes in great detail the evangelisation efforts of SIL missionary Rachel Saint amongst her people as well as several meetings with oil functionaries to draw up agreements to enable oil exploitation in Waorani territory (Nenquimo & Anderson, 2024).

Also in Peru cooperating with SIL was of particular interest for the Peruvian army, as it provided an excellent base for geopolitical control over inaccessible areas of the Amazon and moreover created the opportunity to exploit natural resources (Aldridge, 2012, p. 160). The ambitious Jungle Aviation and Radio Service (JAARS) provided flights into the Amazon region under a “service-to-all” policy (Townsend, 1991b, p. 23), including representatives of Catholic missionaries or oil companies and flew in support to Truman’s Point Four Program, which consisted in anti-communist technical assistance in developing countries (Stoll 1982, p. 90).

Soon, Townsend had succeeded in making governments “expedite our work” and to “feel that they are our partners” (Townsend, 1991c, p. 88). All in all, these efforts provided the SIL’s translation activities not only with an academic profile but also served as a gateway for the mission to integrate Indigenous peoples into the nation state, which often treated Indigenous peoples as second-class citizens and—as is the case in the Amazon—was and still is widely absent from their territories. Ultimately, SIL aimed at transforming their cosmovisions:

I think it is extremely important to do a scientific job, not just for the sake of science, but to do a proper translation job. We praise God for the men and women whom God has raised up to become outstanding linguists, doing a scientific job, not just for Bible translation, but also to help people out of their cultural isolation by reaching them in their own tongues. Then these linguistic groups

are incorporated into the nation. (Townsend, [1977] 1991, p. 27)

Nida and others involved in the early days of SIL were of primary importance to create structures and organisational processes that would sustain its missionary objectives.

#### **4. Beyond and Behind Dynamic Equivalence: Nida’s Beliefs in Translation**

In TS, Eugene Nida is primarily known in connection with a concept he denominated “dynamic equivalence.” This perspective on translation, oriented towards the sociocultural context of languages, served as a citational anchor for several theoretical developments in the discipline. It lies outside the scope of this article to provide an extensive list of Nida’s influential and numerous publications (for an overview see Stine, 2004, pp. 35–54). Rather, in this section we show how the double-sidedness of SIL and ABS that we have illustrated on an institutional level goes along with a similar double-edged positionality and personality. We thus trace contradictory positionings between the objectives Nida defines for translation and the purpose he attributed to this practice throughout the various contexts he engaged with over his life and career.

##### **4.1. Positioning as a Christian Scholar**

Nida is praised, among others, for his influence on linguistics, anthropology and TS. He was appointed president of the Linguistic Society of America (1968) and awarded with honorary degrees, *e. g.*, by the Herriot Watt University Edinburgh (1974) (Stine, 2004, p. 146). Most prominently, in 2001, the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship was inaugurated as “the research, scholarship and service arm of American Bible Society” (American Bible Society, 2024, n. p.). The institute organises the Nida School of Translation Studies and the yearly Translation Studies Research Symposium and lists the United Bible Societies, SIL

International, the Seed Company and Biblica among its clients (American Bible Society, 2024). Nida biographer Philip Stine (2004, p. 58) underscores the importance of relating Nida to his practical mission work: “Although Nida worked primarily at scholarly level and impacted several academic disciplines, neither he nor his work can be understood apart from this faith-led motivation” Stine, 2004, p. 7).

A turning point in missionary approaches to bible translations brought about by Nida was the establishment of the principles of translation with “biblical, linguistic and anthropological orientation” (Nida, 1991a, p. 3) at a Bible Societies conference in 1947. These efforts were followed by a council meeting in 1957, where Nida convinced the United Bible Societies to attach explanatory notes to the scriptures (Stine, 2004, pp. 65–66). Apart from propagating the dynamic equivalence-approach, one of Nida’s innovations consisted in directly engaging members of Indigenous communities as primary translators for bible translations instead of leaving this task to the missionaries. Translation consultants assisted Indigenous translators with their knowledge of biblical language and linguistics (Stine, 2004, p. 53).

In essence, Nida helped to develop a translation regime that touches upon translation strategies, the agents involved and in particular the roles of the translators, which at the same time encourages a (meta-)reflection on how to use translation within an organisational context. It is therefore not astonishing that the translation work of these missionary organisations seems ahead of their time and might even resemble practices of translation now referred to as community-based translation. What cannot be stressed enough, though, is that these reflections and adaptations to translation practice had one primary goal: gaining Indigenous communities’ trust to facilitate evangelisation.

Nida’s translation theory figured prominently on the reading list of the SIL’s summer courses

and has been spearheading the organisation’s approach towards translation (Larson, 1991). Within religious circles, he is clearly referenced as a “Christian scholar” (Aldridge, 2012, p. 124) and as such perceived to discuss translation “from a specifically Christian point of view” (Aldridge, 2012, n. p.). However, Nida usually refrains from presenting himself as such in works oriented towards a scholarly audience. For instance, in *Fascinated by Languages*, Nida openly rejects being called a bible translator and denies having been part of any translating committees:

I am simply a linguist specializing in language and cultural anthropology, and because of this I was invited by the American Bible Society to find out why so many of their publications of the Scriptures were so seldom read and so frequently misunderstood. I accepted the challenge of trying to find out why people have so much trouble in understanding biblical texts, but in the process I have written and lectured more in secular settings than in specifically religious contexts. I am simply a student of sociolinguistics and semiotics who has been studying verbal communication in more than ninety countries and who continues to be fascinated by languages. (Nida, 2003, p. 135)

This self-positioning stands in stark contrast to his statement of 1988 (see above), where he presents his life-objective to be a missionary, a goal he claims to have had from the age of four years onwards. It also stands in contrast to his professional engagement in faith-based and missionary organisations, his activities as missionary translator trainer as well as his biographer’s observations. To conclude, Nida presented himself in a contradictory manner, depending on the target audience, while evidence indicates that his scholarly activities served and were motivated by evangelical and missionary ideals.

#### 4.2. Entering the Shrine of Their Soul

At the core of Nida’s work was the conviction that the Bible served as “a fundamental tool for

making disciples, for developing an understanding of God and God's will for all humankind, and for establishing a basis for theological and ethical development" (Stine, 2004, p. 7).

The primary objective of translation for Nida, the SIL and the Bible Societies was (and still is) to work in communities where "translation meet[s] a definite religious need" (Nida, 1950, p. 64)—a "need" identified by missionaries—and to secure the continuity of evangelization through "someone who is actively promoting the use of the Word" (Nida, 1950) relying on the "vital role of communication in the propagation of the Christian faith" (Nida, 1960, p. 32). The SIL focusses on smaller, including previously uncontacted, Indigenous peoples and has placed a "simultaneous emphasis upon pioneering new tribal areas and upon translation" (Pike, 1959, p. 71). In the words of Nida's colleague Pike (1959), "[t]he Scriptures clearly indicate that God is not satisfied with just getting the big groups—especially when from the big groups there may be rejection." (p. 73).

As shown by the agreements SIL struck with Peru and Ecuador, (for sources, see footnote 5) the opportunity to get in contact was sought through academic work, without explicitly naming the missionary activities they would enact. Representatives of SIL have often had to respond to allegations of masquerading as linguists (see *e. g.*, Svelmoe, 2009), and for that purpose, SIL's ever-growing academic record, intrinsically connected to Nida's early work, provided an argumentative basis. Internally, their missionary motivation was clear:

You seldom find missionaries as interested in preparing linguistic articles, analyzing languages, and forming dictionaries as we are. But you seldom find linguists who are as interested in the souls of men, as burdened for their salvation as we are. (Townsend, [1961] 1991, p. 18)

Epps and Ladley argue that debates only revolving around SIL's bipartite strategy of

pursuing evangelisation in the field and a strong academic foothold in linguistics tend to "conceal [...] an incompatibility with the principle of self-determination, the idea that communities have a right to freely choose their own futures" (2009, p. 640).<sup>6</sup> We agree with Epps and Ladley that it needs to be spelled out more explicitly at this point, that entering "new tribal areas" for the "first time" includes establishing contact to Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation, practices clearly impacting cultural self-determination.

While this would ask to be discussed separately in terms of conceptualizing forced-contact and human right violations, it is important here to recognise translation into Indigenous languages as key for subsequent evangelizations, a gateway for making god's word accessible in Indigenous peoples' "heart language", or as Nida states himself in full awareness of the impacts of these practices: "A people's language is their most distinctive possession; it is the shrine of their soul. In order to enter and appreciate this shrine, we must be familiar with its intricate and meaningful forms" (Nida, 1957, p. 11).

Nida, with reference to Pike, incorporates the Sapir-Whorf-hypothesis into his translation theory and missionary translator training. Put simply, if terms and grammar of a language impact greatly on the way speakers see their world and act in it, an immersive translation strategy that takes into account Indigenous peoples' worldviews as

6 Self-determination is, as the authors also stress, a highly contested concept with evangelists also insisting on their work supporting the peoples' ability to make a conscious choice. In our view, any decision always involves power stratifications inside communities and is determined by manifold external influences. Self-determination must therefore guarantee a free and informed choice to be made which simultaneously needs to be also *bona fide*. For this reason, evangelist persuasion tactics—marked by their subtle approach, where Indigenous peoples are often unaware of the missionaries' church affiliation or even that they are missionaries—should be critically examined (see also Stoll, 1981, 1985, or Drumond, 2004, p. 49).

opposed to only focussing on singular cultural traits (Nida, 1960, pp. 50–51) will result in being able to re-direct Indigenous cosmovisions and instate Christian concepts, thought patterns and practices in these societies.

For missionaries, it was of utmost importance to introduce “god” as an acting subject through the means of bible translation, which sometimes profoundly altered language structures that previously had not needed actors or subjects (Sander, 2007, pp. 69, 71). These interventions drew on the use of language “for the promotion of purposes” (Nida, 1960, p. 77) and thus built on its “psychological but also cultural and behavioural functions” (Nida, 1960, p. 77). Reverend Nida is rather outspoken about possible techniques that missionary-translators may apply in fieldwork (see, e. g., Nida, 1960, pp. 110–123). According to him (Nida, 1960), the best way to learn an Indigenous language and to “endear oneself to people” (p. 79) is to learn about their favourite tales, as this will be perceived as an indicator of the missionary-translator’s “respect for Indigenous ways of life” (p. 79). By the same token, Nida advises to showing great interest in what others believe in, even if this simply serves as an entry point: “This [taking interest in others], of course, does not necessitate compromising one’s own ideas; it is simply the basis for effective communication” (1986, pp. 71–72).

Following Nida, Indigenous peoples conceive of the world as dominated by spirits, which made introducing a new religion based on the love of a supernatural entity feasible (Nida, 1960, pp. 10, 18–19; 1986, p. 19). In fact, in many Amazonian cosmovisions there exist creator figures; albeit acting among other important actors in the territory such as cultural heroes or powerful animals, mostly in a non-hierarchical sense. This is why putting the notion of one (Christian) god in their place along with over-emphasising parallels between Christian and Indigenous stories and

figures has yielded success (see Schieffelin, 2014, pp. 229–231, 233–234, for concrete examples of this and Sander, 2007, pp. 84–95, and Nida & Smalley, 1959, p. 15 for translations based on dynamic equivalence).

Other subtle tactics described by Nida are for the missionary to hold a feast and inform the community about the reasons for holding it: “[I]f the good news of the bible means anything to people, it should enter into their lives in such a way that its proclamation becomes a natural matter rather than a foreigners’ noisy propaganda” (Nida, 1986, p. 14). These subversive strategies thus imply the search for “cultural parallels which will make possible an apprehension of the Biblical truth within the context of contemporary life” (Nida, 1960, p. 60).

Communicating effectively for Nida is tied to mastering the “heart language”, which is in turn crucial for the message to result in profound sociocultural transformations. Entering this “soul gate” (Townsend, [1961] 1991, p. 18) through a non-Indigenous language would, according to Pike (1959, p. 70) convert a “sharp axe” into a “dull one” which is why SIL also refrains from using interpreters. In *Learning a Foreign Language*, Nida (1957) holds interpreting to leave “missionary work [...] in many cases unalterably crippled” (p. 3) as interpreters cannot effectively communicate “the fire burning in his [the preacher’s] soul which actually kindles conviction in others” (p. 3). The “radical alteration of one’s entire value system” (Nida, 1960, p. 79) leaves the referential functions and conceptions of peoples’ language intact whilst pursuing the ultimate objective of accepting a new way of life:

The missionary, however, has a greater task [compared to the business man], for he must convince men to accept the grace of God in Christ Jesus, which conflicts with much that indigenous tradition holds dear and which demands complete allegiance. It is no trinket which the missionary comes to sell, but

a way of life. In order to explain the meaning of it, he must be able to converse about the most important and intimate features of a people's beliefs. The missionary finds that most people do not even mention many important aspects of their lives when using a trade language, even when they know such a language well. (Nida, 1957, p. 11)

To ensure acceptance of this new life order based “on a new pattern of common love for the Master, common service, and common worship” (Nida & Smalley, 1959, p. 63), translation should be carried out as quickly as possible before loan words from the vernacular language enter recently contacted Indigenous peoples' mindset and with it lose their power (Pike, 1959, p. 71). The primary objective of translation is to evangelize, which inevitably leads to classifying Indigenous knowledge and belief systems as less relevant, less trustworthy or simply untrue, or, to use Nida and Smalley's words, that these ontologies stem from a “basic mistrust of an irresponsible spirit world” (1959, p. 63). Consequently, Indigenous living environments are deemed unsafe as well. This is an indicator of the gravely altered relations to the territory which the authors of this contribution have observed in Indigenous communities that in the recent past underwent SIL's evangelisation efforts:

We are convinced that a scientific investigator who is a believer should not keep quiet when the Indian asks him if the sun, or a boa constrictor, or anything else in nature is God. If we were not permitted to tell him how we believe things really are, we would not be willing to undergo the difficulties and dangers of the primitive environment in which the majority of the Indians live. (Townsend, 1991e, pp. 29–30)

Perceived from the present, the narrative of trying to understand others, and developing an almost ethnographic lens, implies a humanistic ideal to understanding “difference”. Put in context, its function was different,

namely a tool to access knowledge necessary for evangelisation.

### 4.3. Repositioning Nida

Many of his (missionary) contemporaries describe Nida as extraordinarily giving and sensitive towards other cultures and refer to him as “humanitarian” on more than one occasion. Many of his own works are in fact replenished with calls for more tolerance towards beliefs or behaviours which might appear unfamiliar to evangelical missionary work. However, as illustrated by the above-mentioned quote on the missionaries' aims and worldviews conflicting “with much that Indigenous tradition holds dear” (p. 11), this “understanding” stands in the light of trying to achieve the greater cause of Christianization even if this includes eradicating Indigenous ways of thinking and acting in world when necessary. It is therefore questionable how the “influencing in a minimal way their [Indigenous peoples'] lifestyle, their folklore, and their basic cultural orientation” (Quesada, 1991, p. 32) “without the imposition of humiliating attitudes and values from the outside world” (Quesada, 1991) portrayed by SIL advocates, holds up in practice against the “complete allegiance” demanded by Nida.

It is therefore no wonder that the SIL's practices in Indigenous communities have been frequently criticised as ethnocide, even more so as they not only cause grave sociocultural alterations but were also frequently tied to economic interests such as oil extractivism in Indigenous territories (see *e. g.*, Montaluisa, 2012, pp. 269–270; Narváez, 2008, p. 296; Ziegler-Otero, 2004, pp. 5, 98). For instance, Ecuador's Waorani peoples from the 1950s onwards were contacted by SIL missionaries flying over their houses, encroaching on the different groups' whereabouts, dropping gifts in baskets with transmission devices in order to talk to them in their language Waoterero (see for example Instituto Lingüístico de Verano, 1969).

They continued these contact efforts even after the Guikitairi family group had killed five missionaries who had attempted to establish contact in an intervention called “Operation Auca” (see for example Flores Jácome, 2016, p. 13). Groups were then gradually sedentarised in a reserve which constituted roughly 3% of their ancestral territory. This resulted in a drastic decline of hunting prey in the surroundings and caused numerous deaths due to a fatal polio outbreak. SIL missionaries prohibited cultural practices such as feasts, traditional marriages and killing of enemies. They declared nudity a sin and instead propagated the use of Western clothing, the splitting of households into smaller family units, Christian value systems, regular praying and monogamy (Rival, 1996, pp. 20–21, 24, 29; Rivas & Rommel, 2001, p. 34).

On a similar line, Nida’s advice for missionaries to influence in a “minimal way”, ultimately suggests that it is Western manners that ought to replace the Indigenous ones. His writings are filled with statements that appear open-minded at first but often veer off into limiting, patronizing, or judgmental territory, frequently couched in humorous anecdotes. By the same token, Nida frequently highlights the virtues of “Western culture” and seemingly questions a universalist positioning—common not only in religious doctrine, but also in a scientific and scientific approach at the time—only to go on to explicitly point out so-called errancies in animistic religions:

Reasoning is not solely the property of Western culture. It is true that our accumulated experience makes it possible for us in some instances to arrive at more verifiable results, but we must not be harsh with those who use the best judgment they have and who may *nevertheless reach quite wrong conclusions*. (Nida, 1986, p. 8; our emphasis)

Similarly, while Nida calls for tolerance towards ritual practices, he discredits Indigenous peoples’ beliefs up to the point of denying

the existence of an Indigenous cosmovision. Mostly, he remains opaque on what grounds he creates these statements, as he refrains from explaining his methodology, or citing his sources or, for that matter, cares to explain how he reached his conclusions:

[F]or the most part these [the Plain] Indians developed no world view or cosmology, had comparatively little interest in the life after death, and in general did not believe in future rewards or punishments for deeds done while in this world. (Nida, 1986, p. 135)

Even more concerning is the evident awareness of Nida and other SIL officials of the potentially fatal risk of contacting Indigenous societies who previously had little to no prolonged contact with non-Indigenous society and its institutions. Nida acknowledges “dying off”<sup>7</sup> before successful conversion as one of several challenges that Christian missions might face in their quest for the rapid spread of the word of god:

Some missionaries have found that it is one thing to go to a remote isolated tribe to evangelize the people, but quite another thing to see to it that the *people do not die off* before they are evangelized. (Nida, 1986, p. 20, our emphasis)

Nida was clearly a nuanced personality having a clear understanding of the functioning of different societal spheres. He was aware and reflected about the political and proselytist nature of missionary translation in some of his writings, while in his scholarly work he preferred to position himself as more apolitical and a more disinterested scholar. A non-partisan positioning was also important for SIL, which pursued “a very close relationship with

7 As no further context is provided, this could also refer to the frequent argumentation by missionaries that killings between family groups would lead to extinction and the accompanying exaggeration of violent clashes which is often used as a justification for forced contacts.

the government” (Elson, 1991, p. 104; Pittman, 1991b, pp. 81–82). Extremely skilled diplomatic tactics, including relations to the military and Catholics (Former Branch Director, 1991, p. 84), are but one example for of this:

Throughout the era of anti-Communism, the Korean War, and the McCarthy era in the United States of the 1950s, as well as during the Vietnam War and independence movements of the 1960s in the United States, not to mention during economic booms and recessions, missionaries continued to pour out of North America and Europe to translate the Bible. Nida worked with them all. (Stine, 2004, p. 145)

For SIL the portrayal of being a humanitarian and scholarly organisation was—and continues to be—a lifeline for missionary work in areas that have been difficult to access and stay for long periods of time without the respective government’s consent.

## 5. Lessons to Be Learned?

In our reconstruction of the links between the ideologies, activities and positions of the SIL, the UBS/ABS and Reverend Eugene Nida, we first tried to demonstrate that Nida and his translational thought cannot be separated from his life-long mission to evangelize. This first conclusion is not unique to our work as even apologetic interventions, such as Pym (2008), reach similar ends. Second, we have reconstructed the dual nature not only of Nida’s thinking but also of the organisational setup between the Bible Societies and the Summer Institute of Linguistics that target either academia or evangelical believers. We conclude that TS would do good in including this contradictory self-positionings more fervently in the Nida reception, not least, as the “scholar” Nida and “missionary” Nida are inseparable.

This contribution tries to illustrate that Nida’s academic efforts and scholarly interest were superseded by his institutional engagement and interest in missionary translation training

and advocacy work. Considering Nida’s large academic output, it might be overstating to say that he took Townsend literally in simply being “courteous” to academia, by engaging in its associations, publication rituals and oral forms of exchange. His well-reflected stance on the importance of a scientific branch of WBT/SIL—used to justify access to Indigenous peoples, including those in voluntary isolation in the name of science, but ultimately in service of evangelism—can, however, not be overlooked.

More recently, Rice (2022), a linguist specialising in his ancestors’ language Ojibwemowin, demonstrates how linguistics has been the companion of (coercive) religious conversion since the 19th century. He illustrates the high degree of acceptance of the intermingling of religion with science in the discipline by pointing out the lack of questioning the evangelical background of SIL as an institution regularly involved in issuing ISO standards concerning language codes (ISO 639), which proves “problematic for Indigenous languages that are identified and classified by exonyms imposed by colonial authorities” (Rice, 2022, p. 6). The author invites Western linguists “to reflect upon their own practices and upon the history and structure of linguistics in order to begin the unsettling yet necessary work to address problematic aspects of our discipline and its history” (Rice, 2022, p. 9).

In TS, Nida continues to be celebrated in publications, summer schools and other activities. In the future, we hope to see a critical evaluation of missionary translation perspectives similar to what Rice argues for linguistics, that takes into account mechanisms of symbolic recognition, circulation, and indirect legitimization of knowledge systems, institutions, and scholars within the geopolitics of knowledge. It is not Nida who we hold accountable, but TS for its lack of institutional reaction addressing missionary organisations, as well as forms of symbolic recognition given to figures such as Nida that are perpetuated up to this day.

More importantly, what remains missing, is an engagement with the direct and indirect effects of proselytist missionary translation on Indigenous peoples and their ways of understanding world and acting in it. In light of our findings, and against the backdrop of a broader global awakening to the importance of safeguarding Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination—and of Western scholars' responsibility to support the socio-political struggles and everyday lives of the communities they study and from whom they often greatly benefit from for their careers in academia—we believe it is high time for TS to ask itself how decolonial it truly wants to be.

To confront the issues raised throughout this article, future studies may examine how Nida's consecration has bolstered the legitimacy of missionary efforts by organizations like SIL and Ethnos360 (formerly New Tribes Mission). For this purpose, it will be important to address the effects of the ideologies around and behind Nida in relation to the right to self-determination and the principle of non-contact of the approximately 200 Indigenous peoples living in self-determined isolation. These peoples, the majority of them hunters and gatherers in the Amazonian rainforest, are not only recognised as the custodians of the most biodiverse ecosystems of our planet and together with contacted Indigenous peoples as holders of greatly important knowledge on the management of this sensitive region (FAO and FILAC, 2021, p. 27). They also continue to be the primary targets to be contacted by self-proclaimed "pioneer" missions such as those of the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

### Disclosure Statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

### References

- Aldridge, B., & Simons, G. F. (2018, February 2). *Kenneth Pike and the making of Wycliffe Bible Translators and SIL International*. Christianity Today. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2018/02/kenneth-pike-sil-wycliffe/>
- Aldridge, F. A. (2012). *The development of the Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Summer Institute of Linguistics 1934-1982*. [PhD Dissertation]. University of Stirling.
- Álvarez, R. R., & Vidal, C., (Eds.). (1996). *Translation, power, subversion* (Topics in Translation 8). Multilingual Matters.
- American Bible Society (2024). *Nida Institute*. American Bible Society. <https://ministry.americanbible.org/nida-institute>
- Baer, B. J. (2020). On origins: The mythistory of translation studies and the geopolitics of knowledge. *The Translator*, 26(3), 221–240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2020.1843755>
- Baker, M. (2016). The prefigurative politics of translation in place-based movements of protest. *The Translator*, 22(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2016.1148438>
- Bandia, P. F. (2008). *Translation as reparation: Writing and translation in postcolonial Africa*. Routledge.
- Barriga, L. F. (1992). *Las culturas indígenas ecuatorianas y el Instituto Lingüístico de Verano*. Ediciones Amauta.
- Baumgarten, S., & Bourgade, C. (2024). Digitalisation, neo-taylorism and translation in the 2020s. *Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*, 32(3), 508–523. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2023.2285844>
- Baumgarten, S., & Schröter, M. (2018). Discourse analysis, interpreting and translation. In K. Malmkjær (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of translation studies and linguistics* (pp. 135–150). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group (Routledge handbooks in translation and interpreting studies). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315692845-10>
- Bielsa, E. (2023). *Atranslational sociology. Interdisciplinary perspectives on politics and society*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003218890>
- Bielsa, E., & Hughes, C. W. (Eds.). (2009). *Globalization, political violence and translation*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230235410>

- Blumczynski, P., & Hephzibah, I. (2018). Translation and religious encounters. In S. Harding & O. Carbonell Cortes (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of translation and culture*, (pp. 207–222). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315670898-11>
- Blumczynski, P. (2019). Bible, Jewish and Christian. In M. Baker & G. Saldanha (Eds.), *Routledge encyclopedia of translation studies* (3rd ed., pp. 40–46). Routledge.
- Calvin, G. (2004). *The history of the Reina-Valera 1960 Spanish bible*. Morris.
- Chakrabarty, D. (2008). *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial thought and historical difference* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400828654>
- Chamberlain, L. (1988). Gender and the metaphors of translation. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 13(3), 454–472. <https://doi.org/10.1086/494428>
- Chesterman, A. (2017). *Reflections on translation theory: Selected papers 1993–2014*. John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.132>
- Cheung, M. P.Y. (2011). The (un)importance of flagging Chineseness: Making sense of a recurrent theme in contemporary Chinese discourses on translation. *Translation Studies*, 4(1), 41–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2011.528681>
- Colegio de Etnólogos y Antropólogos Sociales A. C. (1979). *Dominación ideológica y ciencia social. El ILV en México: Declaración José C. Mariátegui*. Nueva Lectura.
- Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca. (2004). ¿Qué pasaría si la escuela...? 30 años de construcción de una educación propia. Programa de Educación bilingüe e intercultural; Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca.
- Delabastita, D. (2018.) Literary research. In L. D'hulst & Y. Gambier (Eds.), *A history of modern translation knowledge* (chapter 6.2, pp. 367–376). John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.142>
- Doerr, N. (2018). *Political translation*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108355087>
- Drumond, M. C. (2004). A missão Summer Institute of Linguistics e o indigenismo latino-americano: história de uma aliança (décadas de 1930 a 1970). *Revista de Antropologia*, 47(1), 45–84. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0034-77012004000100002>
- Elson, B. (1991). Permission is not enough. In R. Pittman, J. Gullman, T. Johnson & M. Owen (Eds.), *The Wycliffe Sapphire* (pp. 101–104). Wycliffe Bible Translators (Originally published in 1974).
- Epps, P., & Ladley, H. (2009). Syntax, souls, or speakers? On SIL and community language development. *Language*, 85(3), 640–646. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.0.0155>
- Forest and Agriculture Organization (FAO) & Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC). (2021). *Forest governance by indigenous and tribal peoples: An opportunity for climate action in Latin America and the Caribbean*. FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb2953en>
- Former Branch Director. (1991). Learning The Hard Way. In R. Pittman, J. Gullman, T. Johnson & M. Owen (Eds.), *The Wycliffe Sapphire* (p. 84; (originally published in 1974). Wycliffe Bible Translators.
- Flores Jácome, J. A. (2016). *Educación y desigualdades sociales : análisis de las misiones religiosas protestantes (1960-1970) y del proyecto de las "Unidades Educativas del Milenio" (2006-2014) en la Amazonía ecuatoriana*. CLACSO. <https://biblioteca-repositorio.clacso.edu.ar/handle/CLACSO/11211>
- Flotow, L. von. (1997). *Translation and gender: Translating in the "Era of Feminism"* (series: Translation Theories Explained). St. Jerome.
- Fondo Documental Flacso Ecuador. (1981). Entrevista a Blanca Chancoso Narrativas de Mujeres Indígenas [Unpublished interview]. Flacso Ecuador.
- Franco, L. G. (2024). Lomalinda: enclave de un proyecto moderno-colonial. Notas sobre el Instituto Lingüístico de Verano en Colombia. *Revista cs*, 42(a05). <https://doi.org/10.18046/recs.i42.05>

- Gentzler, E. (1993). *Contemporary translation theories*. Routledge.
- Gobierno de Ecuador, Administración del Sr. Dr. Dn. José María Velasco Ibarra, Presidente Constitucional de la República, *Registro Oficial* N.º 83, 9 (pp. 697–698). December 1952, Quito.
- Hart, L. (1973). La historia de los traductores Wycliffe pacificando las últimas fronteras. *Boletín de Antropología*, 4(15), 147–186. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.boan.336997>
- Instituto Lingüístico de Verano (1969). Entre los Aucas. La obra civilizadora del Instituto Lingüístico de Verano entre los aucas [Report] SIL.
- Israel, H. (2021). Ethics of translating sacred texts. In N. Pokorn & K. Koskinen (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of translation and ethics* (pp. 441–457). Routledge.
- Israel, H. (2022). Introduction. In H. Israel (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of translation and religion* (pp. 1–19). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315443485>
- Jammes, J. (2022). Nation, damned nation and statistics. *Social Sciences and Missions*, 35(1–2), 97–136. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18748945-bja10047>
- Kelletat, A. F. (2021). Das Germersheimer Übersetzerlexikon. In E., Agazzi et al. (Eds.), *Übersetzen. Theorien, Praktiken und Strategien der europäischen Germanistik. Akte der Jahrestagung des italienischen Germanistenverbandes – 13. bis 15. Juni 2019* (pp. 57–67). Peter Lang.
- Krysińska-Kaluźna, M. (2016). La actividad misionera de unas misiones de fe entre los grupos indígenas de la región amazónica y los intereses políticos de los gobiernos latinoamericanos. *Anuario Latinoamericano – Ciencias Políticas y Relaciones Internacionales*, 3(71), 71–87. <https://doi.org/10.17951/al.2016.3.71>
- Langendoen, D. T. (2013). Eugene Albert Nida. *Language*, 89(1), 163–169. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.2013.0008>
- Larson, L. M. (1991). The Summer Institute of Linguistics and translation. *The Bible Translator*, 42(2a), 27–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026009439104202A04>
- Little, C. R. (2024). The history of the Summer Institute of Linguistics at the University of Oklahoma. *Proceedings of the Linguistic Society of America*, 9(1), 5736. <https://doi.org/10.3765/plsa.v9i1.5736>
- Merton, R. K. (1973). The normative structure of science [1942]. In N. W. Storer (Ed.), *The sociology of science: Theoretical and empirical investigations* (pp. 267–278). Chicago University Press.
- Ministerio de Educación/ILV (1971). *Convenio Ministerio de Educación - Instituto Lingüístico de Verano*, 04. February 1971, Lima.
- Montaluisa, C. L. (2012). C. Semiótica Intercultural. Introducción. In Universidad de Cuenca, Unicef & DINEIB (Eds.), *Sabiduría de la Cultura Waodani de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana* (pp. 267–301). Universidad de Cuenca/Facultad de Filosofía, Letras y Ciencias; Departamento de Estudios Interculturales; Subsecretaría de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe; DINEIB; Unicef; Gobierno de Finlandia.
- Munday, J., Ramos Pinto, S. & Blakesley, J. (2022). *Introducing translation studies. Theories and applications*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429352461>
- Narváez, I. (2008). Huaorani: mundos paralelos, mundos superpuestos y submundos. In G. Fontaine & A. Puyana *La guerra del fuego. Políticas petroleras y crisis energética en América Latina* (pp. 256–282). FLACSO Ecuador; Ministerio de Cultura.
- Nenquimo, N. & Anderson, M. (2024). *We will not be saved: A memoir of hope and resistance in the Amazon rainforest*. Wildfire.
- Nida, E. A. (1950). Questions and answers. *The Bible Translator*, 1(2), 63–67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000608445000100204>
- Nida, E. A. (1957). *Learning a foreign language. A handbook prepared especially for missionaries*. Friendship Press.
- Nida, E. A. (1960). *Message and mission. The communication of the Christian faith*. Harper & Row.
- Nida, E. A. (1964). *Toward a science of translating*. Brill. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004495746>

- Nida, E. A. [1954] (1986). *Customs and cultures. Anthropology for Christian missions*. Ninth William Carey Library.
- Nida, E. A. (1988). My pilgrimage in mission. *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, 12(2), 62–65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/239693938801200204>
- Nida, E. A. (1991a). Trends in bible translating within the United Bible Societies. *The Bible Translator*, 42(2a), 2–5. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026009439104202A02>
- Nida, E. A. (1991b). My linguistic odyssey. In E. F. K. Körner (Ed.) *First person singular II: Autobiographies by North American scholars in the language sciences* (pp. 227–239) John Benjamins (Studies in the History of the Language Sciences 61). <https://doi.org/10.1075/sihols.61.13nid>
- Nida, E. A. (2003). *Fascinated by languages*. John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/z.119>
- Nida, E. A., & Smalley, W. A. (1959). *Introducing animism*. Friendship Press.
- Organization of American States (2016). *American declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples*. <https://www.oas.org/en/sare/documents/decamind.pdf>
- Ortiz, F. (2002). *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (Originally published in 1940). Ediciones Cátedra.
- Pike, K. L. (1959). Our own tongue wherein we were born. *Bible Translator*, 10(2), 69–83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000608445901000203>
- Price, J. M. (2023). *Translation and epistemicide. Racialization of languages in the Americas*. The University of Arizona Press. <https://doi.org/10.1353/book.102408>
- Prunč, E. (2002). *Einführung in die Translationswissenschaft. Band 1 Orientierungsrahmen*. Institut für Translationswissenschaft.
- Pym, A. (2010). *Exploring translation theories*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203869291>
- Pym, A. (2008). 'All things to all to all people': On Nida and involvement. In R. Dimitriu & M. Shlesinger (Eds.), *Translators and their readers. In homage to Eugene A. Nida* (pp. 317–332). Les Éditions du Hazard.
- Quesada, M. (1991). Language and man's dignity. In R. Pittman (Ed.), *The Wycliffe Sapphire* (pp. 31–33; originally published in 1978). Wycliffe Bible Translators.
- Rice, M. (2022). Power and positionality: A case study of linguistics' relationship to Indigenous peoples. *Proceedings of the Linguistic Society of America*, 7(1), 5295. <https://doi.org/10.3765/plsa.v7i1.5295>
- Rival, L. (1996). *Hijos del sol, padres del jaguar: los Huaorani de ayer y hoy*. Abya-Yala.
- Rivas, A., & Rommel, L. (2001). *Conservación y petróleo en la Amazonia Ecuatoriana: Un acercamiento al caso huaorani*. EcoCiencia; Abya-Yala.
- Pittman, R.S. (1991a). Why are you two? In R. Pittman, J. Gullman, T. Johnson & M. Owen (Eds.), *The Wycliffe Sapphire* (pp. 6–9; originally published in 1974). Wycliffe Bible Translators.
- Pittman, R.S. (1991b). Priorities and protocol. In R. Pittman, J. Gullman, T. Johnson & M. Owen (Eds.), *The Wycliffe Sapphire* (pp. 80–84; originally published in 1974). Wycliffe Bible Translators.
- Sander, C. (2007). Den Tätern des Wortes auf der Spur. [sil International/Wycliffe Bible Translators und die Kontroverse um Christliche Sprachwissenschaft und Mission; Sprach- und Sozialphilosophische Analysen und Hintergründe](http://www.sil-international.com/Wycliffe-Bible-Translators-und-die-Kontroverse-um-Christliche-Sprachwissenschaft-und-Mission;Sprach-und-Sozialphilosophische-Analysen-und-Hintergruende). [Diploma Thesis, Universität Wien].
- Schieffelin, B. B. (2014). Christianizing language and the displacement of culture in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea. *Current Anthropology*, 55, 226–237. <https://doi.org/10.1086/677896>
- Simnowitz, A. (2015). *Muslim idiom translation: Assessing so-called scripture translation for Muslim audiences with a look into its origins in Eugene A. Nida's theories of dynamic equivalence and cultural anthropology* [Unpublished Master's thesis, Columbia University].
- Simnowitz, A. (2023, September 23). The desecration of Bible translation (part II): The linguistics background of Eugene Nida's dynamic equivalence. *Journal of Biblical Missiology*. <https://biblicalmissiology.org/blog/2023/09/25/the-desecration-of-bible-translation>

- tion-part-ii-the-linguistics-background-of-eugene-nidas-dynamic-equivalence/
- Simon, S. (1987). Délivrer la bible: la théorie d'Eugène Nida. *Métra*, 32(4), 429–437. <https://doi.org/10.7202/004151ar>
- Stine, P. C. (2004). *Let the words be written: The lasting influence of Eugene A. Nida*. Society of Biblical Literature (Society of Biblical Literature Biblical Scholarship in North America 21).
- Stine, P. C. (2012). Eugene A. Nida: Theoretician of translation. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 36(1), 38–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/239693931203600113>
- Stoll, D. (1981). Words can be used in so many ways. In S. Hvalkof & P. Aaby (Eds.), *Is God an American? An anthropological perspective on the missionary work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics*. International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). [https://etnolinguistica.wdfiles.com/local--files/biblio%3Ahvalkof-1981-god/Hvalkof\\_Aaby\\_1981\\_Is\\_God\\_an\\_American\\_OCR.pdf#page=25](https://etnolinguistica.wdfiles.com/local--files/biblio%3Ahvalkof-1981-god/Hvalkof_Aaby_1981_Is_God_an_American_OCR.pdf#page=25)
- Stoll, D. (1982). The Summer Institute of Linguistics and Indigenous movements. *Latin American Perspectives*, 9(2), 84–99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X8200900205>
- Stoll, D. (1985). *¿Pescadores de hombres o fundadores de imperio? El Instituto Lingüístico de Verano en América Latina*. Abya Yala. <https://www.nodulo.org/bib/stoll/ilv.htm>
- Svelmoe, W. L. (2008). *A new vision for missions: William Cameron Townsend, the Wycliffe Bible Translators, and the culture of early Evangelical faith missions, 1896–1945*. University of Alabama Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.30346921>
- Svelmoe, W. L. (2009). 'We do not want to masquerade as linguists': A short history of SIL and the academy. *Language*, 85(3), 629–635. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.0.0153>
- Thomson-Wohlgemuth, G. (2007). On the other side of the wall: Book production, censorship and translation in East Germany. In F. Billiani (Ed.) *Modes of censorship and translation. National contexts and diverse media* (pp. 93–116). St. Jerome.
- Townsend, C. [1961] (1991). Scientific approach. In R. Pittman, J. Gullman, T. Johnson & M. Owen (Eds.), *The Wycliffe Sapphire* (pp. 18–19). Wycliffe Bible Translators.
- Townsend, C. [1977] (1991). Scientific organisation. In R. Pittman, J. Gullman, T. Johnson & M. Owen (Eds.) *The Wycliffe Sapphire* (pp. 27–28, originally published in 1974). Wycliffe Bible Translators.
- Townsend, C. (1991a). Columbus could not have felt more emotion than I. In R. Pittman, J. Gullman, T. Johnson & M. Owen (Eds.) *The Wycliffe Sapphire* (pp. 2–5; originally published in 1974). Wycliffe Bible Translators.
- Townsend, C. (1991b). Specialists serving all. In R. Pittman, J. Gullman, T. Johnson & M. Owen (Eds.), *The Wycliffe Sapphire* (pp. 22–24; originally published in 1974). Wycliffe Bible Translators.
- Townsend, C. (1991c). Honor to whom honor is due. In R. Pittman, J. Gullman, T. Johnson & M. Owen (Eds.), *The Wycliffe Sapphire* (pp. 86–90; originally published in 1974). Wycliffe Bible Translators.
- Townsend, C. (1991d). We're in the people business. In R. Pittman, J. Gullman, T. Johnson & M. Owen (Eds.), *The Wycliffe Sapphire* (pp. 53–58). Wycliffe Bible Translators.
- Townsend, C. (1991e). Is God the sun ... or a boa? In R. Pittman, J. Gullman, T. Johnson & M. Owen (Eds.), *The Wycliffe Sapphire* (pp. 29–30; originally published in 1974). Wycliffe Bible Translators.
- Tryuk, M. (2016). Interpreters in the Concentration Camp of Majdanek (1941–1944). In M. Wolf (Ed.), *Interpreting in Nazi concentration camps* (pp. 115–134). Bloomsbury (Literatures, cultures, translation).
- Tymoczko, M., & Gentzler, E. (2002). *Translation and power*. University of Massachusetts Press.
- Uribarri Zenekorta, I. (2013). Philosophical collections, translation and censorship: The role of collections in the reception of modern philosophy in 19th and 20th century Spain. In T. Seruya, L. D'Hulst, A. A. Rosa & M. L. Moniz (Eds.), *Translation in anthologies and collections*

- (19th and 20th centuries (pp. 247–258). John Benjamins (Benjamins Translation Library 107). <https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.107.20uri>
- Venuti, L. (1995). *The translator's invisibility. A history of translation*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203360064>
- Venuti, L. (2017). *The translator's invisibility. A history of translation* (reissued). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315098746>
- Wolf, M. (2020). Primo Levi's grey zone and the ambiguity of translation in Nazi concentration camps. In F. Italiano (Ed.), *The dark side of translation* (pp. 59–75). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429321528-3>
- Woodsworth, J., & Delisle, J. (Eds.). (2012). *Translators through history*. John Benjamins.
- Wycliffe Global Alliance. (2024). Beginning of a movement. Wycliffe Global Alliance. <https://www.wycliffe.net/what-we-do/articles-for-further-reflection/the-wycliffe-global-alliance-and-bible-translation-movements/beginning-of-a-movement/>
- Ziegler-Otero, L. (2004). *Resistance in an Amazonian Community. Huaorani organizing against the Global Economy*. Berghahn. <https://doi.org/10.3167/9781571814487>

**How to cite this article:** Korak, C. & Schögler, R. Y. (2025). In the name of Nida: Institutionalizing evangelical thought through translation studies. *Mutatis Mutandis. Revista Latinoamericana de Traducción*, 18(2), 344-369. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.mut.v18n2a04>