

Nida, Eugene A. (2003). *Fascinated by Languages*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp vi, 157. € 65/ \$ 65.

Eugene A. Nida is "fascinated by languages", says the title of this book and this statement is evidenced by the lengthy bibliography at the end (145-51): he is the author of 29 books, co-author of another 13 books and author/co-author of 111 articles; all on linguistics, translation, culture and translating the Bible. And this is a "selective" bibliography only! Someone who produced so many books and articles that have found their way around the world and that are of a very high scholarly standard is not only "fascinated by languages", but an authority in the disciplines dealt with as well. Nida combines both and because of his enthusiasm he is capable of arousing and keeping one's interest. In the 143 pages of the body text of the book, Nida tells his own life story with many personal and yet instructive anecdotes and uses this as the framework for what he wants to tell: that Bible translating is fascinatingly interesting and combines culture, anthropological linguistics, translation and linguistics.

The book consists in fact of 4 parts¹T. In part (1), "Fascinated by languages" (pp. 1-8), Nida gives a survey of his scientific and professional activities. Part (2), "In more than ninety countries" (pp. 9-65), gives an account of his experiences in the countries that he visited including many anecdotes relating to problems of translating the Bible across cultures. In fact, this part is about cultural anthropology and anthropological linguistics. In the third part, "Bible translation, texts and interpretations" (pp. 67-132), Nida gently switches over to Bible translating per se; in this part he reviews such matters as e.g. what Bible translating is about, that it is a type of translating in its own right that requires a special way of translating and special training, and why there is a great demand for Bible translating. Elsewhere (e.g. Nida, 2001) he gives an account of the future of Bible translating² He concludes this part with a discussion of a number of notorious translation problems that the Bible translator faces, ranging from idioms to metaphorical language³. In the last part, "A personal touch" (pp. 135-43), Nida returns to himself and gives the reader an idea of who he actually is: not someone who only travels or writes or lectures, but a man who tries to combine as many different aspects of life and thinking and doing as he can, as he himself puts it: "But that is only a part of me. At heart I am a gardener and in Greenwich, Connecticut we had three acres of woods that I turned into an acre of flowers, including 400 rose bushes, and an acre and a half of fruit and vegetables, including asparagus, tomatoes, sixty blueberry bushes, fifty yards of raspberry vines, and lots of corn each year" (p. 135). Nida is "an eclectic and a pragmatist" (p. 140). This description fits him and his work well. Until now he has seen various theories of language coming by and he took their best parts to build his ideas on, e.g. Tagmemics, Stratificational Grammar, Functionalism and Cognitive Linguistics. Nida is a realist: "Until we have a fully acceptable theory of language based on the working of the human

brain (something we will probably never adequately understand), we cannot expect to have one dominant and comprehensive theory of language and translation. There are too many different kinds of languages, too many different types of texts, and too many different audiences with diverse needs" (p. 142). Nida's conclusion: "In translating I am also an eclectic and a pragmatist" (p. 142).

Eugene Nida is a fascinating man. So is his book. It is an absolute must for anyone who wants to learn more about Bible translating. For the connoisseurs, the book is a revelation as it sheds some light on the person of Eugene A. Nida. The book is well-written and its style is pleasant; it reads like an exciting novel. It combines Nida with Bible translating; Nida himself combines Bible translating with languages and cultures.

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¹ The table of contents lists 3 parts only though, and apparently does not count the first 8 pages ("Fascinated by languages") as a true part, equal to the other parts.

² Nida, Eugene A. (2001), "Future trends in Bible translating", in: Thelen, M. and B. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (eds.), *Translation and Meaning, Part 5. Proceedings of the Maastricht Session of the 3rd International Maastrich-Łódź Duo Colloquium on "Translation and Meaning", Held in Maastricht, The Netherlands, 26-29 April 2000*. pp. 393-98. Maastricht: Hogeschool Zuyd, Maastricht School of Translation and Interpreting. See also: <<http://www.hszuyd.msti.translation-and-meaning.nedweb.com>>.

³ For a detailed study of such problems and a theoretical framework to tackle them, see Larson, M. (1984/1998), *Meaning-based Translation. A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence*. Lanham/New York/Oxford: University Press of America, Inc.