ON CRITERIA OF TRANSLATION

Many great translators proposed their requirements for criteria of translation. With the criteria, we have the basis to evaluate a translation. Whenever the criteria of translation is discussed in China, the principle of translation proposed by Yan Fu would be mentioned, namely: faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance. However, in the application of the principle, people have found some limitations and therefore, proposed a series of new criteria instead.

Among those new criteria, the most accepted is that proposed by Mr. Zhang Peiji, one of the greatest translator in China, namely, namely, faithfulness and smoothness.

In terms of faithfulness, it means to be faithful not only to the original content, the original meanings & viewpoints, but also to the original form and style. The smoothness means the translation must be smooth, readable and the use of idiomatic expression in the target language.

If only focusing on the faithfulness to the content without consideration of smoothness, the translation will usually be hard to understand; on the other hand, if we only emphasize the expressions while neglect the accuracy, the translation will be unable to convey the information in the original text.

In above two cases, the translations cannot be defined as excellent work. Therefore, in conditions that both principles cannot be given consideration to, the translator shall satisfy the requirement of
faithfulness, i.e. ensuring the **accuracy of translation**.

It is not easy to reach the translation criteria of “faithfulness and smoothness”, but it shall be the direction which we make efforts towards. Practices have proven that we can only require the translation to be equivalent to rather than identical to the original text. According to E.Nida, there is no absolutely identical translation; what the translators pursue shall be the “equivalence” rather than the “identity”; the ideal translation is to find the most appropriate equivalents in the target language.

The absolute faithfulness is only a dream which is extremely hard to realize. What is possible in translation is that a translator try its best to accurately use the translated text to reproduce the idea, style and verve in the original text and ensure the feelings and responses of people who read the translated text to be basically consistent with that of people who read the original text.

To sum up, a translator shall keep certain principles in mind so as in translation, he can have clear targets and avoid detours. However, the translator shall never force himself to completely follow all the principles.

**Read Also:** [Employment Prospects and Directions of Translation Major in 2014](#)