ON THREE THOUGHTS OF TRANSLATION

Translation is a process to translate the meaning of source language into target language in a native tongue or in the way complied with the target language usage. To satisfy the need of target readers, there are many requirements like exact understanding to source language; fluent expression in target language; elegance to meet the readers’ needs. Thus, the question is how to achieve these three standards.

It’s well known that Yan Fu’s main translation theory is Faithfulness, Expressiveness and Elegance. It’s obvious that faithfulness to the original language is the basic requirement of translation. Learning both native and foreign languages well, especially foreign language is important to do this.

Besides translating must be up to the standard of native language usage and easily understood by target readers. But we can do more than that because simply express the ideas of source text makes a translator a workman with no creativity and even replaced by machine one day.

After fulfilling the first standard, the pursuit of higher aim is expressiveness. That’s to say, different compositions or writings should be treated differently. That is because language varied in different types of characters or style, including literature, law, technology and poem and so on.

It’s in fact the writing style faithful to the original language. Of course,
that doesn’t mean the same and single way should be adopted in different language originals. Instead, different originals should be treated in different ways.

For example, literature will be translated in beautiful literature words, political works will be stated in some political terms, while when you translating something about contact, technology, or law, the related terminologies should be used properly and accurately.

How could we imagine that the science or medical are used in a poem style? The translation must be in a mess and readers will not understand it correctly. Thus, the characters or the writing styles of different types of writing should be well analyzed and the proper way to express it must be chosen carefully.

Elegance is also a standard of Yan Fu translation thought. Translating is not the information copied from the originals, but a creation process. A perfect translation is not only faithful and expressive, but also elegant. Elegance is based on the above two standard but higher than that.

Therefore the relations among Faithfulness, Expressiveness and Elegance is that they all formed a whole translation thought and played a different part in translation.

From the perspective of content, the target language must be Faithful to originals. And it is the preliminary level of Expressiveness, and Expressiveness is the higher level of Faithfulness.

However the elegance is the highest level of Faithfulness and Expressiveness. Any translator should do a good job with this three translation thoughts.