

# Adopting Translation Anthologies to Teach Mother Tongues and Culture: Insights From the Chinese Singaporean Experience

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As a multicultural nation, Singapore has adopted English as the official language of communication among the members of its large multiethnic society, whereas Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil are considered mother tongues. English has gradually replaced these other languages and become the lingua franca of school, work, and home life because of the national language policy. Chinese Singaporeans have employed many methods to preserve their mother tongue and culture, including the publication of translation anthologies. This study examined two anthologies, *Droplets* and *A Scholar's Path*. *Droplets* introduces readers to Singapore's prominent writers, their styles, and the nation's Chinese culture and values. Although *A Scholar's Path* only introduces readers to one writer, the editors create a detailed world enabling readers to deeply understand the writer's life, his writing, and the history of Chinese Singaporeans from several perspectives.

*Keywords:* multiculturalism, lingua franca, language policy, preservation of mother tongue and culture, translation anthology

Received: April 7, 2021

Revised: August 18, 2021

Accepted: November 23, 2021

## 以翻譯選集提升母語及其文化： 從文化角度分析新加坡華人個案

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新加坡政府秉持多元文化主義制定其語言政策，選擇英文作為主要溝通語言，而華文、馬來文以及淡米爾文則被視為母語。然而，隨著時間演變，英文逐漸取代其他三個語言，成為求學、工作甚至在家時所使用的通用語。新加坡華人採取諸多對策以進行母語及文化維護，其中包括出版翻譯選集。本研究取得兩本相關出版物，分別為 *Droplets* 及 *A Scholar's Path*，在深入分析後發現，閱讀 *Droplets* 能讓我們對新加坡在地重要作者有所認識，同時也能熟悉他們的寫作風格以及從中學習中華文化與價值觀。相較之下，*A Scholar's Path* 只收錄單一作者的作品，但編輯在這本選集中提供讀者多方面的資料，讓人能從各個角度深度了解一名作者並且賞析其作品，此外，讀者還能學習中華文化、價值觀與中文詩之美。

關鍵詞：多元文化主義、通用語、語言政策、母語及文化維護、翻譯選集

收件：2021 年 4 月 7 日

修改：2021 年 8 月 18 日

接受：2021 年 11 月 23 日

## Changes in Singapore's Linguistic Landscape

The Singapore Bicentennial, which occurred in 2019, was often discussed because it marked the 200th anniversary of the arrival of Sir Stamford Raffles from the British Empire. Before 2019, Singapore had been ruled successively by several Malay kingdoms and sultanates for approximately 500 years, serving as an emporium for regional trade. Raffles went to Singapore and established a port city for the benefit of the British Empire. Although this mission had colonial purposes, it not only initiated the modernization of Singapore but also raised its status to a key hub for maritime trade between the East and West.

In 1965, Singapore parted ways with Malaysia and established its own republic, at which time the population was 76% Chinese, 15% Malay, 7.2% Indian, and 1.7% other (Saw, 1969, p. 41). Because the complexity in ethnicity and numerous conflicts with Malaysia created chaos in society, the founding government strove to maintain harmony among all communities through national policy (Mohanty et al., 2018, p. 154; C. Tan, 2017, p. 127; Wee, 2003, p. 214). Since 1965, multiculturalism has become an essential trait of Singapore. To create an equal and globally competitive state, the government lists Mandarin, Malay, Tamil, and English as the state's four official languages. Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil are considered mother tongues, whereas English has been adopted as the language of public administration, communication, education, and business to facilitate communication among people of different backgrounds (Wee, 2003, p. 214).

The effects of this language policy have been far-reaching because “many language policies have promoted English as the lingua franca of Singapore at the expense of all other languages” (St. André, 2006b, p. 142), leading to a decrease in mother-tongue proficiency among younger generations. We analyzed this phenomenon by using reproduction theory, proposed by Bourdieu and Passeron

(1990) and central to their book entitled *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*. The theory describes how in a hierarchical society, the education system is a crucial means of cultural reproduction whereby the dominant class transfers social and cultural capital to certain young individuals. These individuals receive the traditions and values that the dominant class upholds. Social capital and cultural capital are essential for reaching a high social status. Young people with such aspirations must access the milieu of the dominant class to join their ranks. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) identified linguistic capital as part of cultural capital and indicated that mastery of the predominant language determines a person's ability to become an elite. Bourdieu and Passeron's reproduction theory applies to Singapore; English dominates the other languages because the government has granted it supremacy, making English proficiency the most useful form of linguistic capital for those who wish to climb higher in Singaporean society. Although some schools continued to use Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil as the language of instruction when the language policy was implemented, they had shut down by 1987 because parents preferred to enroll their children in English schools to ensure they had the opportunity to succeed. English has since become the principal language of instruction (Cavallaro & Serwe, 2010, p. 133), inadvertently decreasing the prevalence of mother tongues.

Elder Chinese Singaporeans have proposed several methods of halting and even reversing the loss of mother tongues and culture among young generations. At the government level, the Promote Mandarin Council was established in 1979 by the late Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew 李光耀 as a part of the Speak Mandarin Campaign to encourage Chinese Singaporeans who spoke Chinese dialects to communicate in Mandarin. Over time, the council began to focus on improving the Mandarin proficiency of those educated in English and on encouraging young generations to speak Mandarin. They held various events such as speech contests and invited celebrities to become ambassadors. Educational institutions, such as

elementary schools, high schools, and university presses, and members of the Chinese community, such as Chinese clan associations and those working in mass media companies and cultural institutions, also contributed. Although events and scholarships were the most common methods of promoting Mandarin and Chinese culture, some literati adopted an alternative method: translation.

Although citizens of numerous countries have striven to prevent the disappearance of their mother tongues and cultures, the case of Chinese Singaporeans is specifically worth investigating because Mandarin is a widely spoken language with high economic value. Wee (2003) coined the term “linguistic instrumentalism,” which describes “the view of language that justifies its existence in a community in terms of its usefulness in achieving specific utilitarian goals” (p. 211). The Singaporean government once believed that linguistic instrumentalism would motivate Chinese Singaporeans to learn their mother tongue and participate in the expansive Chinese market, but the Chinese Singaporean experience indicates that this concept may not always apply.

## **Changes in the Role of Translation Anthologies in Singapore**

In a multiethnic country such as Singapore, translation is crucial. When the British Empire colonized Singapore, translators and interpreters served as a channel of communication between British administrators and the locals (P. K. W. Tan, 2012, p. 128); they held similar roles during the Japanese occupation and when Singapore was a Malaysian state. After Singapore declared independence, the government strove to create a society in which people of various ethnic backgrounds could live harmoniously and adopted four official languages. Thus, translation has become essential and permeates everyday life in Singapore; public and private announcements, road signs, commercial advertisements, and TV subtitles are

examples of such.

Although Singapore's literary translation industry is smaller than those of China, the United States, and the United Kingdom, the country has several aspirants. For example, although translated fiction from publishers in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan is directly imported into Singapore, local publishers in the Chinese-English translation industry—including Epigram Books, Lingzi Media, Canopy, Asiapac, Canfonian, and university presses—contribute to literary translation. Imported translations often lack local color (e.g., differences in wording or the names of certain celebrities) because their editors and translators are not Singaporean. In response, Singaporean publishers recruit local translators to produce localized renditions. For example, Epigram Books translates and publishes works by Singaporean writers, such as Xi Ni Er's 希尼爾 *The Earnest Mask*. Lingzi Media published a Chinese version of *Le Petit Prince* to suit Singaporean students' reading proficiency. Canopy released *Living in Babel*, a translation anthology of works by famous Chinese Singaporean writers. The National University of Singapore's Department of Chinese Studies published *Droplets* (St. André, 2001) and *Yours Truly* (St. André, 2002), translation anthologies of poems and stories by Singaporean writers.

This study evaluated translations of famous Chinese Singaporeans' works and translation anthologies and discovered that anthologization is common practice in the Singaporean translation industry and that editors always provide paratexts (e.g., prefaces and translator's notes) describing the context of the anthology. These paratexts facilitated categorization and comparison in this study. Seruya et al. (2013, p. vii) indicated that analyzing anthologies and collections is a promising research direction. Therefore, this study investigated translation anthologies.

An anthology “is a collection of artistic works that have a similar form or subject, often those considered to be the best” (Cambridge University Press, n.d.)

and “creates a meaning and value greater than the sum of meanings and values of the individual items taken in isolation” (Frank, 1998, p. 13). Anthologists determine whose works to include in an anthology and in which language(s) they should be presented. According to Feng and Washbourne (2019, pp. 696-699), the selection of works is based on (a) ideology (i.e., anthologists’ motives and viewpoints), (b) representativeness (i.e., to cover all representative authors, works, and themes in the field that the anthologist is working on), and (c) audience. Seruya et al. (2013, pp. 3-10) indicated that anthologies can be created for nine purposes: (a) pleasure (e.g., for the audience’s reading), (b) education (e.g., to teach students about certain ideologies, social values, and aesthetic values), (c) preservation (e.g., the preservation of texts that are valuable to a country), (d) innovation (e.g., conveying new ideas through novel collection or evaluation methods), (e) protection (e.g., protecting works of literature created by minority groups), (f) accessibility (e.g., distributing texts to a wider audience), (g) dissemination (e.g., ease of circulation), (h) subjectivity (e.g., disseminating personal values and ideologies), and (i) profit. Translation anthologies that introduce a culture’s works of literature and non-literature to other cultures (Seruya et al., 2013, p. vii) usually fulfill at least one of these nine purposes.

This study investigated not only the translated texts in Singaporean anthologies but also their paratexts, namely their cover page, title, front matter, and back matter.<sup>1</sup> Analyzing the paratexts enabled us to determine the purpose of a text and its translation method (Genette & Maclean, 1991, p. 261). We also discovered a change in the purpose of publication over time in Singaporean society.

The earliest anthology this study discovered was *An Anthology of Singapore Chinese Literature*, published in 1983. In the preface, editors Wong Meng Moon 黃

<sup>1</sup> Paratexts also include external materials such as interviews with authors and translators and records of correspondence (Genette & Maclean, 1991, p. 264); we will investigate these materials in subsequent studies.

孟文 and Wong Yoon Wah 王潤華 stated that the purpose of the anthology was “to enable non-Chinese to obtain a better perspective of Singaporean Chinese literature, and to promote an exchange of literary works between the various language streams in Singapore” (Wong & Wong, 1983, p. xiii). Because this anthology was created for non-Chinese readers interested in Singaporean Chinese literature, its primary purpose was accessibility, and its secondary purposes were pleasure and preservation.

In addition to *An Anthology of Singapore Chinese Literature*, four translation anthologies were reviewed: *Droplets* (St. André, 2001), *Yours Truly* (St. André, 2002), *A Scholar's Path: An Anthology of Classical Chinese Poems and Prose of Chen Qing Shan - A Pioneer Writer of Malayan-Singapore Literature* (Chen & Tan, 2010a) (hereinafter referred to as “*A Scholar's Path*”), and *Living in Babel* (D. F. Tan, 2017). These anthologies were all published after 2000, nearly two decades after *An Anthology of Singapore Chinese Literature*. Their paratexts reveal a change in target audience and that the purpose of publication was to promote Chinese culture and help readers from a Chinese background learn Chinese (corresponding to the education and accessibility categories in Seruya et al., 2013). The editors and translators of only two of the anthologies noted the purpose of publication: to enhance Chinese Singaporeans’ knowledge and interest in Chinese language and culture. This study analyzed how the anthologies achieved these goals.

In the introduction of *Droplets*, editor James St. André indicated that the target audience was:

adult Singaporeans who could not read Chinese, and therefore do not have access to or even knowledge of a large body of literature written by their fellow-Singaporeans on an important contemporary social issue, and schoolchildren currently learning Chinese in secondary school. For the first

group, we hope that reading these stories, essays, and poems will provide the opportunity to learn how Chinese-speaking Chinese in Singapore felt (and, in many cases, still feel) about the changing nature of Singaporean society roughly between independence and 1990. For the second group, we hope that the stories may encourage the students to persevere in their study of Chinese at least through their A levels, if not at the university level. (St. André, 2001, pp. 15, 17)

This passage reveals that the purpose of the anthology was to promote Chinese literature and culture to adult Singaporeans who do not speak Chinese (both those with and without Chinese ancestry) and those studying Chinese. This purpose is distinct from that of *An Anthology of Singapore Chinese Literature*, the target audience of which was non-Chinese Singaporeans. St. André (2001) also described a desire to “promote a dialogue between different social groups” and to “raise awareness concerning the status of Chinese in Singapore” (p. 17). Therefore, *Droplets* was created not only for pleasure and accessibility but also to educate society.

*A Scholar's Path* was edited by Peter Chen Min-Liang 陳敏良 and Michael Tan Min-Hua 陳敏華, both sons of Chen Qing Shan 陳晴山, the author of the works in the anthology. The prefaces of the anthology describes its purpose:

Published in both Chinese and English editions, it should cater for a wider readership. Younger Chinese Singaporeans, who may not be inclined to read anything written in Chinese, especially the Chinese classical poetry, could find the Chinese edition rather intimidating. However, they have recourse to the English edition which explains in English the allusions and sayings found in the book and traces them back to their sources. This could help to open for them the doors to the treasure trove of Chinese language and literature [preface by Singapore President S. R. Nathan]. (Nathan, 2010, pp.

xiii, xiv)

The publication of *A Scholar's Path* has come at an opportune time. The Ministry of Education is continuing its review to refine the learning and teaching of Mother Tongue Languages, for instance, for the learning and teaching of the Chinese Language, the objective is to help our students learn the language [...] I hope, too, that the book will be an encouragement to all learners of the Chinese language to rediscover the joy of learning the language [preface by Singapore Minister for Education Dr. Ng Eng Hen 黃永宏]. (Ng, 2010, p. xv)

Although these prefaces were not written by the editors, President Nathan and Education Minister Dr. Ng likely wrote the prefaces after communicating with the editors and determining their motives. Therefore, the anthology not only commemorated of the editors' late father but also promoted Chinese literature and culture to Singapore, particularly to young Singaporeans intimidated by Chinese literature. The prefaces indicate that the anthology was created for pleasure and accessibility and was expected to fulfill an educational purpose by helping students learn Chinese.

Chan (2002, p. 65) examined translation and bilingualism and described four types of readers: (a) monolingual readers of original English texts, (b) monolingual readers of Chinese translations, (c) bilingual readers of original texts, and (d) bilingual readers of translations. In terms of these categories, between 1983 and the 21st century, the target of Singapore's literary translation industry shifted from non-Chinese Singaporeans (monolingual readers of original English texts) to Singaporeans with and without Chinese ancestry, and the education of young generations became a key concern. This indicates that young Chinese Singaporeans have increasingly become monolingual readers of English, which supports older Chinese Singaporeans' concerns regarding the loss of younger generations' mother

tongues. Therefore, we investigated anthologies for readers with little or no command of Chinese by analyzing *Droplets* and *A Scholar's Path*, which were published for such an audience.

## Translation Anthologies for Education

*Droplets* and *A Scholar's Path* cater to readers who are unfamiliar with Chinese language and culture by introducing Chinese literary works. By examining *Droplets* and its paratexts, this study discovered that the footnotes and endnotes in the anthology helped its readers understand its context. Table 1 presents an example.

**Table 1**

*First Excerpt From Xi Ni Er's Story "Turnabout"*

浮城初级学院（旧称浮城私立中学，前身为浮乡私塾）五十周年金禧校庆——历届学长上台致词用语一录。

注：此记录只供大会司仪及总务参考用。

年代	学长	代表致词用语／（备注）
五十	<b>霍元佳</b> <b>许文强</b>	国语（普通话，Chinese） 母语（粤语？ <sup>①</sup> ） <sup>①</sup> 有待确定
六十	刘金妹（锦梅） <b>汪祖宗</b> （Charles）	母语（不是方言） 英语（Queen's English）

Note. Adapted from *Droplets* (p. 22), by St. André, 2001, National University of Singapore. Copyright 2001 by National University of Singapore.

The excerpt is from Xi Ni Er's story "Turnabout" (回). In the story, several characters' names (those in boldface) are either homophonous with those of real-life Chinese figures or convey irony. In the translation, these names are rendered as

Huo Yuan Jia 霍元佳, Hsu Man Keong 許文強, and Ong Zuo Tiong 汪祖宗, and readers with little knowledge of Chinese history miss the humorous element. The translator added footnotes to resolve this problem.

**Table 2**

*Footnote to First Excerpt Explaining Wordplay With Historical Figures' Names*

**Notes:**

Huo Yuan Jia and Hsu Man Keong were well-known figures in China during the 1950s. Huo Yuan Jia opened a martial arts school to promote Chinese culture.

Ong Zuo Tiong (Wang Zu Zong) is a homonym for “forgetting one’s ancestors,” which satirizes the fact that some Chinese Singaporeans cannot speak Chinese or have forgotten their roots.

*Note.* Adapted from *Droplets* (p. 25), by St. André, 2001, National University of Singapore.

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Numerous translators use footnotes to offer supplementary information that would be too long to embed in the body of the text. Footnotes are provided at the end of *Droplets* to explain the text’s hidden messages. The notes enable readers to fully comprehend the story and gain knowledge of Chinese history; some readers even proceed to research the real-life figures. Footnotes are provided both at the end of the story and at the bottom of the page.

**Table 3**

*Footnotes to Explain Wordplay*

Source text	Translation	Footnote
“怎么，就是这些东西！报纸上不是说有什么——什么泰国马桶的？”	‘What, so these are the things! The newspaper called them...them... <b>Thailand’s Toilet Bowl?</b>	In Chinese, the phrase “Thailand’s Toilet Bowl” and “Ch’in Clay Figures” look similar.
“嘘——，是秦国的泥土人。”	‘Shh...there’re <b>Ch’in Clay Figures.</b> ’	
大哥瞪着她，带有几分责叱的样子。	My brother glared at her reproachfully.	

*Note.* Adapted from *Droplets* (pp. 40, 41), by St. André, 2001, National University of Singapore.

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Table 3 presents an example from another story by Xi Ni Er 希尼爾, “The Terra-Cotta Figures’ Survival” (俑之生); the footnotes explain the mother’s misunderstanding of Chinese words. Although “秦國馬俑” and “泰國馬桶” look alike, the former means “clay figures found in the mausoleum of China’s Ch’in Emperor,” whereas the latter means “toilet bowl in Thailand.” Because this misunderstanding cannot be directly rendered in English, the translator compensates by providing a footnote at the bottom of the page enabling readers to understand the humor and appreciate the Chinese wordplay.

In an article on Singapore’s translation market, editor St. André (2006a) indicated that footnotes and glossaries are used in literary translation for foreign audiences’ reference because local readers do not have difficulties understanding culture-specific terms and values (p. 783). These comments with respect to *Droplets* allude to the fact the linguistic and cultural landscapes of Singapore have changed so substantially that even some Chinese Singaporeans (local readers) do not understand Chinese-specific terms and values.

*Droplets* contains acknowledgments, a preface, and stories, and every part is accompanied by an English translation. Throughout the anthology, footnotes are used to help the reader understand the stories and teach them about Chinese language and culture. *A Scholar’s Path* includes more supplementary information, and the foreword indicates that this was intentional on the part of the editors:

We decided very early on, that every poem in the book should be complete with a Background, a verse Translation (in the English edition), a Paraphrase, and an Appreciation. (In the poems)... No translation could ever capture all the qualities of the original poem. To make up for the deficiency of a translation, every chapter includes a Paraphrase and an Appreciation of the poem. What the reader misses in the translation, may be picked up in the Paraphrase. What is missed in the Paraphrase, is amplified in the

Appreciation. Reading all three will, hopefully, help the reader to enjoy the ‘poetry’ of the original poem. It will help even more those who read Assoc Prof Chan’s detailed notes in every chapter. (Chen & Tan, 2010b, p. xxii)

To cater to the target audience, those with little knowledge of Chinese language and culture, in addition to the translated stories and footnotes, the editors created a world out of their father’s literary works in which the reader could immerse themselves. Because both editors were inexperienced in translation and translation anthologies, they invited professor Chan Chiu Ming 陳照明 to review the anthology and provide notes in every chapter for the audience’s reference.

### Figure 1

*Biography in A Scholar’s Path*

## Biography of Chen Qing Shan

by Peter and Michael

Father was born in 1894, the 25th Year of the Reign of Emperor Guangxu of the Qing Dynasty. His given name was Tian Fu (天福) which means “heavenly blessing”. He was born to a late Qing scholar (*xiu cai* 秀才) Chen Jun Hou (陈俊侯) who lived in Putian city, Xinghua in Fujian Province (生于福建省兴化府莆田县城内). Grandfather Jun Hou was a learned scholar, well known locally as a strict schoolmaster and disci-

*Note.* Adapted from *A Scholar’s Path* (p. xxvii), by Chen & Tan, 2010a. Copyright 2010 by World Scientific Publishing Company.

Figure 2

Poem From A Scholar's Path

qīng niǎo èr shǒu  
青鸟二首

其一

xī fēi qīng niǎo qù huán lái ,  
西 飞 青 鸟 去 还 来 ，

jiān zhá yáo dǎng wèi rěn kāi 。  
缄 札 瑶 瑁 未 忍 开 。

zhèng sì kàn huā suī yù zhé ,  
正 似 看 花 虽 欲 折 ，

bù fāng huā wài zàn pái huái 。  
不 妨 花 外 暂 徘 徊 。

其二

kāi jiān zhà sì jiě luó rú ,  
开 缄 乍 似 解 罗 襦 ，

xiāng zé wēi wén sī yǒu yú 。  
香 泽 微 闻 思 有 余 。

qiū zài xīn tóu zhī jǐ hǔ ,  
秋 在 心 头 知 几 许 ，

huì jiāng chóu zì bù jiāo shū 。  
讳 将 愁 字 不 教 书 。

Note. Adapted from *A Scholar's Path* (p. 2), by Chen & Tan, 2010a. Copyright 2010 by World Scientific Publishing Company.

*A Scholar's Path* begins with a biography of Chen Qing Shan (Figure 1) to familiarize the audience with the author. Proper nouns (e.g., Tian Fu 天福, Putian city, Xinghua in Fujian Province 福建省興化府莆田縣城) and culture-specific terms (e.g., “scholar”) are accompanied by their Chinese counterparts so that the reader can learn Chinese while reading. The explanation of the Chinese words also clarifies terms that cannot be fully expressed in English. For example, *xiucai* 秀才 was a title bestowed on those who passed the imperial examination at the county level in the Qing Empire. “A late-Qing scholar” would be insufficient to convey the meaning of this word because the term “scholar” is too general. The explanation of *xiucai* enabled the reader to understand the difference between the Chinese term and its English translation and provided a path for the reader to seek more information.

The author's poems and their translations follow the biography. In the poems' original language (Figure 2), every Chinese character is accompanied by its pinyin (phonetic transcription). From the educational perspective, the pinyin would help those who do not know how to pronounce Chinese characters and enable them to recite the poems with the proper rhythm and rhyme.

Regarding the translations of the poems, the editors provided two versions. Figure 3 presents one version: the typical translation style for Chinese poems, which prioritizes conciseness, aesthetics, and rhyme. Figure 4 presents a version with more information: a paraphrased translation that favors meaning over poetic characteristics. The second version is longer, and every sentence is straightforward and easy to understand. Chinese characters are included to explain wordplay that cannot be rendered in English: 秋 + 心 = 愁. The two versions fulfill different functions but complement each other, and the reader can use both to fully comprehend the poems and the author's creativity.

**Figure 3***Translated Version I*

## The Messenger of Love

(Two Verses)

**Verse 1**

My courier flies west; upon its return  
 Brings a beautiful letter I forbear to open.  
 To enjoy the flowers, pluck them I should,  
 But linger awhile to admire them I would.

**Verse 2**

Opening the letter's like undoing her silken blouse.  
 Just a whiff of fragrance, my many thoughts arouse.  
 Heavy does Autumn sit upon your Heart.  
 The word "Sorrow" from your letters depart.

*Note.* Adapted from *A Scholar's Path* (p. 3), by Chen & Tan, 2010a. Copyright 2010 by World Scientific Publishing Company.

**Figure 4***Translated Version II***Verse 1**

L1: My courier the Blue Bird flies away westwards, and returns  
 L2: With this beautiful letter from you. I refrain from opening  
 it immediately,  
 L3: As I wish to prolong the joy and excitement of reading it,  
 As in the enjoyment of flowers, rather than plucking the  
 blooms immediately,  
 L4: I first pace around the flowers awhile longer to admire  
 them.

**Verse 2**

L1: To open the letter is like undoing the silken blouse of a  
 loved one.  
 L2: I am immediately met with a whiff of fragrance. It is more  
 than enough to stir up my many thoughts and longings.  
 L3: Heavy do the sad thoughts of "Autumn" (秋) weigh upon  
 your "Heart" (心).  
 L4: "Sorrow" (愁) is a word you have henceforth banished  
 from all your letters.

*Note.* Adapted from *A Scholar's Path* (pp. 3, 4), by Chen & Tan, 2010a. Copyright 2010 by World Scientific Publishing Company.

Each poem and corresponding translation are followed by a background section in which the editors explain the author's life when he composed that particular poem (Figure 5). Although the background sections are not related to knowledge of the Chinese language, they contain valuable information regarding (a) historical events, (b) traditional Chinese (or Singaporean Chinese) values, and (c) Chinese (or Singaporean Chinese) culture. In addition, photographs of individuals and places depicted in the poems (Figure 6) are presented to enhance the anthology and the reader's impression of the poems.

### Figure 5

#### *Background Passage in A Scholar's Path*

##### **Background**

There are at least three distinct periods in Father's life when he was separated from his wife and family for any length of time.

<u>Separation</u>	<u>Period</u>	<u>Family</u>	<u>Father</u>
First	1931	Putian	Kampar, Malaya
Second	1934–1936	Putian	Kampar, Malaya
Third	1942–1945	Ipoh	Kuala Lumpur

This poem was composed probably during the "first separation" during the second half of 1931.

In 1931, Father was then teaching in Pei Yuan (培元) Primary School in Kampar, Malaya. With the onset of the Great Depression, schools were closed and he lost his job like thousands of others. Grandfather in China asked him to return. There was some family land at home and, if nothing else, they could at least live off the land and not starve. Fortunately, he secured a teaching post in Li Qing (砺青) Middle School in his native Putian. In the second half of 1931, he sent his wife and family of two sons and a daughter home to China

*Note.* Adapted from *A Scholar's Path* (p. 4), by Chen & Tan, 2010a. Copyright 2010 by World Scientific Publishing Company.

The editors likely had access to such documents because they were the author's sons; they may have even experienced some of the historical events

together with the author. Their collection of such a wide range of materials for the anthology is admirable and valuable because they help the reader comprehend the poems. In his masterpiece, *Truth and Method*, Gadamer (2004) described how translators often make renunciations when they do not comprehend unclear passages in original texts. For Gadamer (2004), “even if it is a masterly re-creation, it must lack some of the overtones that vibrate in the original” (p. 388). This also applies to poetry translation. One challenge encountered during the translation of Chinese poetry is the difficulty in achieving full comprehension. Chinese poems are often concise, feature word play, and allude to historical events, the author’s experience, or Chinese culture. Therefore, translators (and readers) often cannot fully comprehend poems on the basis of the source and target texts alone. Background information provided by authors’ associates can deepen the reader’s understanding of poetry and enable them to correctly interpret ambiguity and metaphor.

### Figure 6

*Photograph From the Background Section*



Qing Shan's wife Yi Song 义宋  
(c.1920s). "Heavy does Autumn sit  
upon your Heart. The word Sorrow  
from your letters depart."

*Note.* Adapted from *A Scholar's Path* (p. 5), by Chen & Tan, 2010a. Copyright 2010 by World Scientific Publishing Company.

**Figure 7***Appreciation Section in A Scholar's Path***Appreciation**

This poem of two verses was probably composed during the second half of 1931 when Qing Shan was separated from his wife and family—he in Malaya and his family in China. The circumstances for this separation are explained in the Background of the poem.

Verse 1 expresses how keenly the poet looks forward to receiving a letter from his wife. It uses the imagery of the legendary magical Blue Bird *qing niao* 青鸟 delivering the letter from his wife to him. He must have missed her so much that even a simple letter from her is described literally as “a document adorned with a beautiful jade pendant” (緘札瑤瑯) as reflected in Line 2. It goes on to describe his anticipatory pleasure on opening and reading the contents of that precious document. The word *ren* 忍 (to bear) in the same line sums up

*Note.* Adapted from *A Scholar's Path* (p. 6), by Chen & Tan, 2010a. Copyright 2010 by World Scientific Publishing Company.

Background sections are followed by appreciation sections in which each poem is analyzed in relation to the life of the author (Figure 7). These sections explain the objects, names, and stories told in the poems that are related to Chinese culture.

An index of allusions used in the poems is provided at the end of the anthology (Figure 8). The reader can find explanations of unclear terms in the background and appreciation sections, the list of allusions, a dictionary, or the Internet. The allusions are sorted alphabetically, and their locations in the text are provided, enabling the reader to easily reference the list while reading.

**Figure 8***Part of Index of Allusions Used in the Poems in A Scholar's Path*

Pinyin Pronunciation	Chinese Text	Reference
<b>B</b>		
bā rén (xia li bā rén)	巴人 (下里巴人)	43(6)
bái bì zhī xiá	白璧之瑕	29(13)
bǎi huā qí fàng	百花齐放	41*(3)
bǎi shì fēi	百事非	25*(3)
bǎi wú yì jiù (bǎi wú yì yòng)	百无一就 (百无一用)	10(2)

Index of Allusions Used in the Poems 585

*Note.* Adapted from *A Scholar's Path* (p. 585), by Chen & Tan, 2010a. Copyright 2010 by World Scientific Publishing Company.

*Droplets* offers ancillary information in the form of footnotes, whereas *A Scholar's Path* provides additional content. *A Scholar's Path* contains more supplementary information because the editors were the author's sons and thus had access to various materials.

## **Analysis From the Perspectives of Patronage and Culture Planning**

Snell-Hornby (1990) first proposed the incorporation of culture into translation studies. Lefevere and Bassnett (1990) deemed this a cultural turn and stated that translation should account for both a text's linguistic composition and the factors surrounding it, such as context, traditions, power relationships, and the status of the source text (pp. 1-13). This deviation from the age-old dichotomy between word-based and meaning-based translation strategies provided a new path

for theorists.

Lefevere (1992) identified power, ideology, institutions, and manipulation as factors affecting the selection of a method for translating literary works (p. 2). For example, a Chinese translator would alter “臺灣總統” (the President of Taiwan) to “臺灣領導人” (the leader of Taiwan) because of ideological differences. When translating Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Yu Kwan Chung 余光中 deliberately used “任真” (a Chinese homophone with “認真”, meaning “earnest”) and “梁勉仁” (a Chinese homophone with “兩面人”, meaning “two-faced man”). Although these translations differ from the original, this manipulation helps render the comedic essence of the play in the target text. These examples demonstrate that the translation of a literary work is not necessarily determined by the work’s linguistic composition because several other factors ensure the translation “does not fall too far out of step with the other subsystems society consists of” (Lefevere, 1992, pp. 14, 15). Lefevere proposed the concept of patronage: “the action of persons or organizations that offer financial support or use their influence to advance a translation activity” (as cited in Bai, 2009, p. 222). Here, the persons and organizations can be publishers, translators’ clients, the government, advisers, or translators. Their various political, educational, and sociocultural concerns dictate the methods and content of the translation. Several scholars have explored patronage and indicated that translation is not purely linguistic conversion. This is consistent with Venuti’s (1999) discussion of the formation of cultural identity (p. 68). He noted that translations not only mirror written works rooted in a foreign culture but also represent their creators’ ideologies.

Patronage has widespread effects. Culture planning, a related concept, was proposed by Even-Zohar (2008). It refers to creators’ and patrons’ attempts to achieve sociocultural cohesion to create or sustain a large entity. Culture planning can be performed through several processes:

1. A group seizes control of a territory by force and dominates its inhabitants.
2. A group of individuals organizes itself and engages in a power struggle to regain control.
3. An individual or group devises a plan to justify the establishment of an entity in a certain territory that may not be theirs.
4. A group that cannot survive culturally or physically as an entity in one territory (where they may be a persecuted or underprivileged minority) emigrates to another territory and utilizes the repertoire that cannot be implemented in their home country. (Even-Zohar, 2008, pp. 281-283)

The cultural turn allows theorists to “see translation not as an innocent process in cross-cultural communication, but as one that negotiates between cultures with unequal power status” (Lee, 2009, p. 63). This study explored how translation in Singapore is negotiated through patronage and culture planning.

In terms of patronage, we explored reasoning behind the anthologists’ selection of texts in relation to the criteria proposed by Feng and Washbourne (2019, pp. 696-699). The two anthologies share ideologies and audiences and thus were created for the same purpose: to enhance Chinese Singaporeans’ knowledge of their mother tongue and culture. However, *Droplets* is more representative because it consists of texts from several authors, whereas *A Scholar’s Path* focuses on one.

With respect to Lefevere’s (1992) concept of patronage, although no considerable meaning change between the source and target texts of the anthologies was observed, the two anthologies create different atmospheres for the reader. The footnotes in *Droplets* enable the reader to understand key writers in Singapore, their styles, and Chinese culture and values, whereas *A Scholar’s Path* introduces the reader to the literary world of a single writer; Chinese culture, values, and history; and the life of the author and helps them appreciate the beauty of Chinese

poetry by providing the pinyin transcriptions. Unlike *Droplets, A Scholar's Path* offers an opportunity for the reader to understand the author intimately from several perspectives.

With respect to Even-Zohar's (2008) definition, the two anthologies and their paratexts belong to the second category of culture planning; Chinese Singaporeans as a group reject the dominance of the English language and restore the status of their mother tongue and culture. This is also related to patronage because it is a method by which Chinese Singaporeans teach each other about Chinese language and culture.

In response to the loss of Chinese Singaporeans' mother tongue and culture amid the predominance of English, the editors of the anthologies implemented a culture plan and utilized the effects of patronage to create translation anthologies that educate Chinese Singaporeans. Because the two anthologies were created for educational purposes, their effectiveness is crucial. To determine whether the anthologies had the desired effects, this study surveyed 70 Chinese Singaporean university students in their early or mid-twenties. Before the survey, the participants were informed of the purpose of the anthologies for context and to elicit informative feedback. Evaluative statements regarding the anthologies were not used during the explanation to ensure neutrality. The participants were allotted 20 minutes to read the anthologies and ten minutes to complete the survey. Table 4 presents the results.

**Table 4**

*Results of First Two Survey Questions (see Appendix for Details of the Survey)*

	<i>Droplets</i>	<i>A Scholar's Path</i>	Both	Other
Q1	16%	57%	27%	-
Q2	23%	52%	24%	1%

The survey began with two fundamental questions requiring the participants to select the anthology that most increased (Q1) their Chinese proficiency and (Q2) their interest in Chinese language and culture. *A Scholar's Path* received the most positive feedback (the second and the third columns), with only 16% and 23% selecting *Droplets* for Q1 and Q2, respectively. Fewer than half of the participants considered *Droplets* helpful (Table 4). To explore the participants' reasoning, five essay questions (Q3-Q7) were used.

Most participants indicated that the pinyin, annotations, and supplementary information in *A Scholar's Path* made it educational. They also indicated that for those with an adequate understanding of Chinese language and culture, the annotations and supplementary information may be distracting but that they would help those with little knowledge of Chinese language and culture to learn. Several participants stated that the annotations and supplementary information helped contextualize the source and target texts and enabled them to appreciate the beauty of the poems and their traditional Chinese values, making the anthology highly engaging. The pinyin also helped them recite the poems and understand the rhyme scheme. The participants stated that although *Droplets* presents texts from several famous Chinese Singaporean writers, the footnotes are not sufficient for language learning or cultural preservation. Some participants considered *Droplets* helpful only to some extent, and they expressed a strong preference to *A Scholar's Path*. This may be a reason that some participants selected only *A Scholar's Path* rather than both texts for Q1 and Q2.

To provide reference for subsequent studies, this study surveyed readers' opinions of the anthologies. The survey results indicate that the format of *A Scholar's Path* is more effective for enhancing young Chinese Singaporeans' Chinese proficiency and their interest in Chinese culture than that of *Droplets*. In addition, the pinyin, annotations, and supplementary information helped *A Scholar's Path* achieve its purposes. However, whether the text can help reverse the

dominance of English versus Chinese language and culture remains unclear. This is one limitation of this study; the COVID-19 pandemic prevented studies with a large number of interviewees and participants from being conducted. This remains a worthwhile topic for subsequent studies.

## Concluding Remarks

This study discussed the ethnic complexity and linguistic composition of Singapore and explored changes in its linguistic landscape and the apprehension regarding the loss of mother tongues and cultures that these changes entail. Singapore has been a multiethnic country for centuries and will continue to be one for the foreseeable future. Some inhabitants worry about the process of linguistic homogenization under the national language policy. These inhabitants desire the coexistence of heterogeneity and homogeneity and hope that their descendants speak both English and their mother tongue. Translation has become a method of achieving these goals. This study examined how several Chinese Singaporeans published bilingual translation anthologies to spark residents' interest in Chinese language and culture and educate them.

This study also analyzed *Droplets* and *A Scholar's Path*. *Droplets* consists of works written by several famous Chinese Singaporean writers, whereas *A Scholar's Path* familiarizes audiences with a single writer. The survey results indicate that the format of *A Scholar's Path* is superior for promoting bilingual proficiency and Chinese culture.

Finally, this study identified a change in the purpose of translation anthologies in Singapore by analyzing the format of anthologies created for educational purposes and demonstrated that the target audience preferred the format of *A Scholar's Path*. The findings can serve as reference for those creating anthologies for educational purposes and researchers investigating educational anthologies in other countries.

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## Appendix

### Understanding Whether Translation Anthologies Can Be Useful Educational Tools

This survey is being conducted for an academic study investigating whether two translation anthologies can help target readers learn Mandarin and can spark their interest in Chinese culture. The target readers are Chinese Singaporeans unfamiliar with Chinese language and culture. The survey results will be analyzed in a journal article. The survey is anonymous, and your identity will not be revealed, regardless of your responses.

- Q1. Select the anthology(-ies) that you thought enhanced your Chinese proficiency:
- (a) *Droplets*
  - (b) *A Scholar's Path*
  - (c) Both
  - (d) Other\_\_\_\_\_
- Q2. Select the anthology(-ies) that sparked your interest in Chinese language and culture:
- (a) *Droplets*
  - (b) *A Scholar's Path*
  - (c) Both
  - (d) Other\_\_\_\_\_
- Q3. Do you think that *Droplets* achieves its *skopos*? What knowledge or insights did you gain from this text? (short answer)

- Q4. Do you think that *A Scholar's Path* achieves its *skopos*? What knowledge or insights did you gain from this text? (short answer)
- Q5. What type of anthology content do you prefer? Why? (short answer)
- Q6. Do you find thick translations distracting or useful? (short answer)
- Q7. Can you think of any other elements that may help the texts achieve their *skopos*? (short answer)