

Language Characteristics of Quan Ho Folk Songs of Bac Ninh and Vi Dam Folk Songs of Nghe Tinh

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Abstract: *This article focuses on surveying and compiling over 300 pieces of data on Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh and Vi dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh, sourced from surveys conducted through books, newspapers, and various online platforms. During our research, we found that there have been no studies to date on the linguistic characteristics of Quan Ho folk songs of Bac Ninh and Vi Dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh; existing research has only explored their cultural aspects and artistic features without delving into the linguistic perspective. Our study aims to clarify linguistic features such as metaphors, forms of address, and rhetorical devices used in composing folk songs and Quan Ho, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the cultural characteristics of the local population.*

Keywords: *Vi Dam Folk Songs of Nghe Tinh, Quan Ho folk songs of Bac Ninh, the languages, Quan ho, Vi dam*

INTRODUCTION

Folk culture is one of the prominent characteristics in many Southeast Asian countries, including Vietnam. Preserving and developing intangible cultural values has long been a focal point in the efforts to safeguard cultural heritage in our country over the past period.

However, looking at the current reality, the Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh and the Vi dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh are somewhat being forgotten by the younger generation, who are increasingly drawn to modern music trends. In order to preserve and uphold the unique essence and rich cultural heritage of Vietnam's intangible cultural heritage through Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh and Vi dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh, each individual must first enhance their understanding and, at the same time, cultivate a consciousness to conserve and develop the cultural heritage of our nation. It is for these reasons that our group has decided to delve deeper into the Quan Ho folk songs of Bac Ninh and the Vi dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh, comparing their semantic and cultural characteristics, thereby contributing to the enhancement and preservation of the beautiful traditional values of our national folk culture.

2. Overview of Research Situation

2.1. Research Situation Abroad

During our research on issues surrounding the Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh and the Vi dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh, we observed that to date, there have been no studies abroad focusing on Quan Ho folk songs of Bac Ninh và Vi Dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh from a linguistic perspective.

2.2. Research Situation in Vietnam

There is a rich and diverse body of research and conference proceedings with numerous articles on Quan ho and the North region over a considerable period, helping to explain the distinctive cultural aspects of Vietnamese folk songs. Notable researchers include Tran Linh Quy and Nguyen Hong Thao with their work on “*Tìm hiểu dân ca quan họ*” discussing the Quan ho folk songs as intangible cultural heritage of Vietnam. Nguyễn Tiến Chiếu's study on “*Exploring the origins of Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh*” also contributes significantly.

Additionally, studies like “*Khảo sát sáng tác của đại thi hào Nguyễn Du - Thêm một cách nhìn về từ “quan họ”*” offer insights into the origins and developmental process of Quan Ho.

3. Overview of Vi Dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh and Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh

3.1. Overview of Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh

Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh have been a spiritual nourishment and a beautiful cultural activity among the people of Kinh Bắc since ancient times. These distinctive folk melodies originate from the Red River Delta region and represent the richest genre of folk songs in the treasure trove of Vietnamese folk culture.

Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh involves alternating male and female singers in a dialogue-like singing style, and it features 213 different melodies with over 400 songs. Each song consists of a main verse reflecting the core content and a refrain composed of non-lexical sounds like “i hi, u hu, a ha, etc”

3.2. Overview of Vi Dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh

Vi dam Nghe Tinh is a popular form of folk song performance in Nghe An and Hà Tĩnh provinces. These songs are characterized by simple yet profound lyrics rich in local dialect, combined with melodious and deeply resonant tunes. As representative intangible cultural heritage of humanity, they contribute to promoting exchanges among communities, artists, and researchers. Enhancing awareness of the importance of intangible cultural heritage at local, national, and international levels, efforts are being made to strengthen protection measures. These include supporting community transmission, oral teaching methods, formal education programs, and active participation from learners, experts, and specialized organizations, with positive government support.

4. Research Results on Linguistic Characteristics

4.1. Comparisons Features

4.1.1. Comparisons Features of Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh

In Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh folk songs, the use of comparison often creates powerful and profound imagery, enabling listeners to easily visualize and feel the emotions and meanings conveyed in the songs. These images are typically drawn from nature, folklore, and everyday life, making the lyrics vivid and captivating.

Our research on Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh folk songs reveals that composers frequently employ metaphors (comparisons) to analogize and highlight the imagery and cultural aspects of the people in this region.

*“Bây giờ chia rẽ đôi nơi
để kể về tình chung, tình chung giãng là người ở
để kể về tình chung, tình chung giãng là người ở
như khơi mạch sâu
tình tang tính tính tang tình là chị rằng chị Hai ơi
đương vui như thế này
tôi trở ra về”
(Chia rẽ đôi nơi)*

The comparison expresses the lingering attachment when a relationship must part ways, no longer experiencing “*tình chung*” It also reflects our uncertainty and contemplation as I “return home”, which embodies the heartfelt sentiments of those left behind for the departed. Will I, upon “*trở ra về*”, still cherish the deeply felt affections wholeheartedly, or gradually forget the memories of a past worth remembering.

4.1.2. Comparisons Features of Vi Dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh

Vi Dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh effectively employs the literary device of metaphorical comparison. To elucidate the metaphorical features in Vi Dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh, we present the following examples:

“Rồi một chiều chợt nhớ Quê hương. Nghe Em hát dân ca Xứ Nghệ. Câu hát ru như một thời thuở bé. Đưa ta về bến bãi tuổi thơ xưa. Điều gì Quê hương giữa bộn bề bận rộn. Đất Quê mình còn nghèo lắm người ơi. Sao Điều gì.”

(Điều Gì Dặm Là Em)

Deep emotions are expressed through the melody “*Điều Gì Dặm Là Em*” like a beckoning call from the homeland, from the melodies of folk songs, from the childhood images lingering in memory. The lyrics seem to guide people back to the realm of beautiful and beloved childhood memories of the homeland. The author uses the metaphorical comparison of “*câu hát ru như thời thuở bé*”. Looking back at those early years, the Vi dam verse becomes a familiar sentiment deeply engraved in the minds of the people of Nghe.

4.2. Metaphorical Features

4.2.1. Metaphorical Features of Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh

In Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh, the content often portrays emotional states: longing, sorrow of separation, and the joy of reunion between lovers, using a language rich in implicit metaphors. To clarify these metaphorical images, we provide the following examples:

*Ruột tâm chín khúc quặn đau
để lòng này tình chung, tình chung giảng là ai tỏ
để ông này tình chung, tình chung giảng là ai tỏ
cho nhau hơi lòng
tình tang tính tính tang tình”*

(Chia rẽ đôi nơi)

The metaphorical image of “*ruột tâm*” serves as a metaphor for the emotions of the young woman, symbolizing her feelings towards her lover. “*Em*” expresses her heartfelt longing for him, highlighting her steadfast loyalty and deep emotional commitment, unchanged over time. The image of “*Ruột tâm*” also symbolizes the inner turmoil and affection of the young woman towards the young man. “*Ruột tâm chín khúc quặn đau*” describes nine different levels of pain, nine degrees of sorrow originating from the sincere heart of the character. This usage of the metaphorical image “*uột tâm*” to depict the emotions of the young woman enhances the expressive intensity of the verse. Thus, through examples utilizing metaphorical devices in Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh, the linguistic characteristics and cultural perspective of the people of North region are vividly portrayed. The flexible and diverse use of metaphorical images creates attraction and captivates listeners in receiving this form of folk culture that embodies the traditional characteristics of the local people.

4.2.2. Metaphorical Features of Vi Dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh

Exploring the method of metaphor in Vi Dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh focuses on elucidating the general mechanism of metaphor, identifying its aesthetic nature, and the mechanism of creating meaning to express content. The metaphorical imagery in Vi Dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh originates from the thoughts, feelings, and expressions of the people of Nghe Tinh, turning familiar objects and

phenomena from everyday life into distinctive artistic symbols. Therefore, folk authors employ metaphorical devices to convey their sentiments. In many cases, this artistic technique enables them to articulate sensitive or complex matters in indirect and nuanced ways.

“Con chim phượng hoàng đại lẫm không khôn
Núi Tam Thai không đổ lại đổ còn cỏ may”

(Hát phường vải)

Hoặc:

Ong ra vào mây chuyén

Bướm qua lại mây lằn

Để bỏ liễu chút thân

Xót trong lòng nông nổi

(Hát giặm)

“Ngàn ngọn nến, sáng rực trời Can Lộc

Tháng bảy về, đôi sim tím nhớ ai

Nén hương thơm, mùi ngôi sao Đồng Lộc

Hoa trinh nữ giữa lòng đất Mẹ yêu”

(Huyền thoại mùi đóa hoa)

“*Mimosa pudica*” symbolizes the young women with their pure, golden beauty in their twenties. These young women volunteered day and night, facing hardships and challenges, as part of their duty. Ten young women bravely laid down their lives at Dong Loc. The author employs the metaphor of “*mimosa pudica*” to highlight the graceful and charming beauty of these young women. They rest in the “*lòng đất mẹ*”, where upon completing their mission, the motherland expands its arms to welcome these sisters back. This metaphor enriches the folk song lyrics, making them profound, expressive, and emphasizing the subjects they are directed towards.

4.3. Features of Oxymoron and Hyperbole

4.3.1. Feature of Oxymoron and Hyperbole in Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh

In the process of studying the characteristics of antithesis, Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh utilize images of antithesis, also known as paradoxes or contradictions. However, the use of this linguistic feature is not widespread. Based on our survey, we present the following example:

“Đêm xuân ó ơ dậu mà ai dễ ói ơ hự rằng ói hư.

Này cầm í ơ ơ hợ ơ lòng.

Này chót í ơ ơ ở ơ đang, đêm i, đêm là nửa đương đêm

Giờ là thức mấy mơ, mơ a a mơ màng

Đêm i là đêm là nửa đương đêm.

Giờ là thức mấy mơ, mơ a a mơ màng ì”

Paradox has created contradictions and irrationality, yet it is remarkably natural. “*Giờ là thức mấy mơ, mơ a a mơ màng*” describes the awakened state of human consciousness, yet it is expressed in the context of a dreamy sleep, a contradiction conveyed through the words “awake” and “dreamy”.

In addition to using paradoxical elements to enrich the singing style, Quan Ho folk songs of Bac Ninh also employ vocatives. Our study reveals that within Quan ho folk songs of Bac Ninh, the use of vocatives and paradoxical imagery enhances the expressive quality of the songs. Below are some examples:

“Mấy mươi mà à chả a chơi, anh ba ơi giai à nhân i..i..

Tài tử ư có mấy ở ở ơ đời à là tính á a tính á a tình tình i i..

Thanh nhàn hự hư là lịch i sự ứ hời hời hư ư hời hư ư..ư ơ hự hư lá hội hừ hừ..

Mấy la người thần à tiên, anh tư ơi trăm à năm ii

Ba vạn có mấy sáu ngàn ngày, à là tính á a tính á a tình tình” (Đào Nguyên)

The use of large numbers such as “ba vạn”, “mấy sáu ngàn” and “mấy trăm” creates a sense of grandeur and vast space. This can imply an extended period of time or a large quantity related to time or emotions. The imagery is used to draw attention, as in “mấy la người thân à tiên” and “a tính á a tình tình”. Additionally, the emphasis on quantities (“mấy trăm”, “mấy sáu ngàn”) may serve to enhance the allure of the mentioned “người thân tiên”

4.3.2. Feature of Oxymoron and Hyperbole in Vi Dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh

The folk songs of Vi Dam employ antithetical (paradoxical) imagery, although such imagery is not extensively used in their songs. Through our survey, analysis, and selection process, we found that only two instances of antithetical imagery are used, with the following example being typical:

“Trâu cày, bò gặt, nhà giàu còn chật chội” for the people of Nghe Tinh, buffaloes are closely tied to the laborious life of the locals. However, the unique aspect of this imagery lies in the contrast between “rich people” và “crowded”. The antithetical imagery clarifies the contrast between different entities and events.

Such expressions reflect a high level of determination in romantic relationships. The poetic devices constructed in the associative manner typical of Nghe Tinh relationships imbue Vi Dam with profound meanings and layers of suggestive connotations, inviting the imaginative faculties of the audience.

*“Bụng tròn như vại nhút
Béo như con tru (trâu) lào”*

(Hát giặm)

Magnifying the figure of “béo như con tru (trâu) lào” his comparison depicts a person (or object) as robust as a Laotian buffalo. Laotian buffaloes are known for their large, robust, and obese stature. The effect of exaggeration aims to portray individuals with a stout and sizable physique.

5. CONCLUSION

The study of folk cultural artistic forms from a linguistic perspective, through the survey of over 300 Quan Ho folk songs of Bac Ninh và Vi Dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh, has provided us with a comprehensive view and cultural landscape of the local people's lives. Influenced by their livelihoods and traditional cultures, the linguistic usage of the North region and Nghe Tinh people bears the cultural imprint of the region. Therefore, this research has contributed to elucidating the characteristics of vocatives, antitheses, allegories, and metaphors in the Vi Dam folk songs of Nghe Tinh and the Quan Ho folk songs of Bac Ninh. This topic serves as a reference and research material on folk songs and Quan Ho.

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