

DOCTORAL THESIS IN BRIFT

PHAM SY CUONG. *Dialogic language in compositions of Nguyen Cong Hoan, Vu Trong Phung and Nam Cao*

Major: Vietnamese Literature

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Nguyen Cong Hoan, Vu Trong Phung and Nam Cao were three outstanding figures representing three developmental stages of the realism in Vietnam. Such authors' compositions were of great value, significantly contributing in many respects to Vietnamese modern prose. From the perspective of the language of dialogue, the three writers composed several fascinating and meaningful works. Each of them, from his own perspective, vision and talent, used the language of dialogue to write picturesque, diverse and unique texts. Reviewing some of their typical works from the perspective of the dialogic language, the dissertation *Dialogic language in compositions of Nguyen Cong Hoan, Vu Trong Phung and Nam Cao* Pham Sy Cuong systematically reflected the special characteristics of dialogic language in their compositions. Apart from the introduction, conclusion, list of research works, references, the dissertation consists of 4 chapters.

Chapter 1: *Overview of the research topic and summary of dialogue language in Vietnam's critical realism literature*

The dialogue language is an important aspect of the language of art, which is closely linked to the writer's art style, contributing to the achievement of a literary movement, especially critical realism literature. Through dialogues,

the writer built characters, reflected the reality and revealed their attitude and thought. The realistic writers, by their own aesthetic principles, took direct reality as the object of description, interpretation, using dialogues very effectively. The language of dialogue, therefore, is not only the concern of the composer but also of particular attention by readers and researchers.

Although there have been many studies on the dialogic language in the compositions of three great writers, Nguyen Cong Hoan, Vu Trong Phung and Nam Cao, most of them only dealt with a narrow scope. Reviewing the three authors in the developmental process of critical realism literature, the dissertation studied the dialogic language at many different levels; analyzed and clarified the special characteristics of the dialogic language in their compositions. Thereby it pointed out the consistency in their viewpoints of life and people and their use of dialogues in their works, which partly creates their unique style and the realist movement.

Chapter 2: *Dialogic language in Nguyen Cong Hoan's compositions*

Nguyen Cong Hoan was a realist writer with a satirical writing style. He made a very important contribution to the realistic movement in particular and modern prose in general. His viewpoint of life as a tragicomedy made him to compose his short stories as prose plays. Each of his short stories was similar to short, lively and effective scenes in traditional "chè" theatre or dramas. So high occurrence

of dialogues in Nguyen Cong Hoan's short stories created his own artistic effectiveness. The characters' situations were shown naturally and sharply. The personalities of the characters, especially villains, were clearly depicted. Through dialogues, the writer drew the character's portraits, expressed their situations and developed the plots and increased dramatics.

Out of Nguyen Cong Hoan's 103 short stories studied in the thesis, 98 stories used dialogic language. Among them, 54 short stories had 10 or more occurrences of dialogue in a page, even 5 short stories had 20 or more occurrences in each page: *Nhân tình tôi* (My Lover) (21 occurrences / page), *Oăn tà roăn* (20 occurrences /page), *Cái ví ấy của ai* (Whose wallet is that) (21 occurrences /page), *Cái lò gạch bí mật* (The secret brick kiln) (24 occurrences / page). The work with the most frequency of occurrences was *Cái lò gạch bí mật* (The secret brick kiln) (174 occurrences), *Oăn tà roăn* (91 occurrences), *Samandji II* (83 occurrences) and *Sóng vũ môn* (82 occurrences). From the perspective of the dialogue sequence, the most common were the stories with three sequences like three-scene plays (30 short stories). Then 20 short stories had 2 sequences. Conversely, only one story had 8 or 10 sequences (*Cái lò gạch bí mật* (The secret brick kiln)). Besides, 35 stories ended with the character's monologue. Many story pages had only 2 to 3 narrations, the rest were the characters' consecutive dialogues.

With the characters' dialogic language, Nguyen Cong Hoan contributed to bringing new vitality and power of expression for Vietnamese literature,

creating laughter that was fun and ironic but extremely emotional and touching. The dialogic language became the soul in Nguyen Cong Hoan's short stories, making natural, unexpected and attractive features.

Chapter 3: *Dialogic language in Vu Trong Phung's compositions*

Vu Trong Phung is considered by many foreign scholars to stand on a par with any of the great writers of the world. His novels, reports and short stories, etc. have undoubtedly lived much longer than their composer who only had a short life span. From his view of a shift and "meaningless" life and extremely evil-minded and corrupt people, Vu Trong Phung used exclusive dialogues in his serious realistic and satirical novels and reports not only to portray characters but also to provide information, reveal true nature of a complex and multi-faceted personality of those who especially play an important role and have strong influence on capitalist society in urban areas during the process of Europeanization. Interestingly, the writer indicated the typical language of a group of people as a miniature of social chaos and disorder. These groups, presented in all genres of short stories, plays, reports and novels, could be of farmers (*Vỡ đê* (The Dike Breaks)), burghers (*Số đỏ* (Dumb Luck)), sometimes journalists, even addicts, prostitutes (*Giông tố* (The Storm)), or gamblers (*Cạm bẫy người* (Human Traps)), etc.

Through dialogues, Vu Trong Phung detected and described the chaos and disorder of the reality. In each type of his writing, Vu Trong Phung used different dialogic language in his own ways to

promote its artistic effectiveness, which partly creates not only beautiful but also prolific realist prose.

Vu Trong Phung wrote and succeeded in many genres of writing. The dialogic language partially created his unique characteristics of his serious realist novels (*Giông tố* (The Storm), *Vỡ đê* (The Dike Breaks), *Trúng số độc đắc* (Winning the Lottery), satirical realist novels (*Số đỏ* (Dumb Luck)), and reports (*Cạm bẫy người* (Human Traps), *Kỹ nghệ lấy Tây* (The Industry of Marrying Europeans), *Cơm thầy cơm cô* (Household Servants), *Lục xì* (Prostitution and Venereal Disease in Colonial Hanoi)). Dialogues of groups of people in his satirical novels were unique as well, which occurs up to 25, 23, 17 and 12 times in *Số đỏ* (Dumb Luck); *Giông tố* (The Storm), *Vỡ đê* (The Dike Breaks), *Trúng số độc đắc* (Winning the Lottery) respectively. The occurrence of these dialogues gets the readers to laugh and see multiple realist layers, so that many personalities of people were revealed.

Vu Trong Phung's sense of dialogue and willingness of confrontation were obvious and fierce. He did not mind when he so actively developed hot, high-risk and sensitive topics that he was misunderstood, attacked and even retaliated by both of persons exposed in his works and readers. Vu Trong Phung was not only a writer but also a researcher, a critic and a social activist. His devotion and commitment are successfully converted into his characters' dialogic language which has its own color, more flexibility and modernity in comparison with that in the compositions written by Nguyen Cong Hoan.

Chapter 4: *Dialogic language in Nam Cao's compositions*

Emerging when the realism began to show signs of recession, Nam Cao contributed great works to this movement. He attaches importance to "feeling and thought," concerned with alienation processes of the character but does not lose faith in man, so he organized his dialogic language with a particular depth. For Nam Cao, the dialogic language of a character might not be much, but his sense of dialogue in his works was outstanding. The dialogic language expressed the characters' personalities, mainly in terms of psychology. He used the language of dialogues to create the interior monologue language that deeply evoked "feeling and thought" in humans. The characters' dialogic language coordinated with the narrative language to create the semi-direct language which expressed the depth of reality and psychological depth and levels of human mind.

From hard Dai Hoang field to sluggish and oppressive private schools, a poor teacher and writer Nam Cao witnessed how many people had lived in poverty and deadlock. The writer created his own "eyes" and viewpoint of people and life. He was always interested in the characters' feelings, emotions and thought. He delved into the people's internal life to listen to, understand and converse with them, etc. He realized that ordinary people in their daily lives burdened with bread and butter, making their living and intrigues. But he also paid much attention to reasonable persons who think high of ideology. He even believed in persons who were on the way to become scoundrels and in the state of depersonalization. He could see the

light at the end of the tunnel despite of the fact that it would take a long way to go.

From his profound viewpoint of man, Nam Cao used the dialogic language to continue his journey of “trying to understand” the man with his love and trust. The writer organized the dialogic language to depict the characters with psychological depth and persons having personality. Compared with Nguyen Cong Hoan, Vu Trong Phung, Nam Cao didn’t use the characters’ dialogic language with great frequency, but the dialogic language in his stories was closely tied with polytonality and polyphony. For him, the dialogue was not only the direct language of characters but also the semi-direct language (intensively and extensively engaged in the interior monologues). Thereby, he could both reflect the reality from many angles of view, in many tones and create dialogues between thoughts and the age.

In addition to the interior monologues of participants in dialogues, the interior monologues of the non-participants who unwittingly or deliberately listen to such dialogues and then meditate, contemplate and silently converse, has made Nam Cao’s literature become fresh and flexible. These interior monologues appeared in a series of short stories such as *Chí Phèo*, *Dì Hảo* (Aunt Hao), *Nửa đêm* (Midnight), *Một bữa no* (One full meal), *Một chuyện xú vơ nia* (A Souvenir Story), *Điếu văn* (Funeral oration), *Giăng sáng* (Bright moon), *Mua nhà* (Buying house), etc. Nam Cao used the interior monologue to look inward into themselves and create

profoundness. Then, both the characters and the readers were sunk in reflection and contemplation. Further, Nam Cao desired to generate a polytonality even when the story ended. Up to 18 out of his 39 short stories ended with interior monologues.

Studying the unique characteristics of the characters’ dialogic language in the compositions of Nguyen Cong Hoan, Vu Trong Phung and Nam Cao, the thesis not only finds out three different typical features of the dialogic language but also sees the changes and development of dialogic language in their compositions. The works of Nguyen Cong Hoan, Vu Trong Phung and Nam Cao bring about a delighted laugh, feelings of anger and resentment, and reflection, obsession and sadness but so much hope, respectively, etc. From another angle of view, it’s said that people could not see a normal and ordinary life without reading the dialogic languages in Nguyen Cong Hoan’s short stories; could not see all mess, ridiculousness, complexity, chaos and disorder of life without reading the dialogic language in Vũ Trọng Phụng’s novels and reports; could not see the spiritual tragedies, the depth of inner life and the levels of human thought without reading the dialogic language in Nam Cao’s short stories.

The thesis was successfully defended before a doctoral examination council at Hanoi National University of Education in 2017.

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