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**Modern Folk poetry (Ca Dao): A Form of Folklore  
Linguistic Composition on the Internet**

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# Modern Folk poetry (Ca Dao): A Form of Folklore Linguistic Composition on the Internet

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## Abstract

The context of globalization along with the development of electronic media has opened a new era for folklore in general as well as forms of linguistic composition of folk literature in particular. In addition to the form of composing and keeping media documents in the traditional way, the Internet explosion has dominated the main spaces of communal life and has gradually changed the mode of human interaction. Cyber space is considered as a tool to convey traditional values, to create many new cultural activities, and to be a place to circulate folk cultural works in contemporary society, in which folk poetry (Ca dao) is one.

Modern folk poetry studies are still a controversial issue in academic circles in Vietnam, but with the dominance of today's Internet communication technology, the emergence of lyrics rhymes circulated on the Internet is a remarkable and inevitable phenomenon in the context of development of various forms of "reformed", "processing", "parody" lyrics, songs, poems according to the direction of humor and entertainment rather than focusing on aesthetics and art. From a linguistic cultural approach, this article aims to discuss modern folk poetry on such issues as: Why did such folk poetry come about? How would we circulate or share this poetry on the Internet and to approach folk culture in an era of dominance of visual culture (TV, video, film, photography) and Online culture; how does socio-economic change on modern folk poetry impact on the Internet in terms of thinking innovatively, and how does it tend to break traditional cognitive structures due to the diverse forms of reflection and reality in modern society?

*Keywords:* Cyber space, Ca dao, Online culture, Traditional values, Visual culture

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## Traditional and modern folk poetry

Traditional folk poetry is closely associated with the daily life of people. Folk poetry has the function of expressing directly the emotional souls of the working class. A folk poem sung with accompanying music becomes a folk song (dân ca) (Đình Gia Khánh 2003; Nguyễn Xuân Kính 2004). People often think of a folk poetry as having basic characteristics of the folk lyrical genre. These are works that reflect folklore's consciousness within people's aspirations, created by the community as a collective (multi-authoring), handed down from person to person through generations (Word of mouth) and exists as many different versions. Traditional folk songs are composed in folk performances during summer festivals, spring festivals, labor activities, and social events of working class families. The majority of folk poetry lyrics are short, with the predominant number having two-line words; Due to its limited capacity, each verse reflects only

one aspect of life's reality. For example, the verse of the six-syllable style having a back verse demonstrates the concept of learning:

No field or pond involvement  
Take part in the pen of the scholar.  
(*Chẳng tham ruộng cả ao liền*  
*Tham vì cái bút cái nghiên anh đồ*)

Modern folk poetry has been identified by Vietnamese researchers as composed between 1945 and the present day. Composition occurred during the French and American wars in Vietnam and these were largely collected after 1975. According to Nguyen Xuan Kinh (2013), the traditional phase includes work only emerging and disseminated before the August Revolution (1945), modernity refers to what was circulated after the August Revolution (1945). The identification of modern folk poetry has been associated with the "open criteria" of modern times and with attention to current affairs. If traditional folk poetry consists of folk poems which reveal lyrical emotion, then these are associated with village space and agricultural production activities, typical of social relations of feudal eras. Modern folk poetry signifies the typical reality of modern Vietnamese life, in which the reflecting space is more open, not only in relation to the countryside but also with strong urban impressions. The purpose and function of modern poetry in each development period markedly differ. In the period between 1945 and 1975, folk poetry was more concerned with the propaganda of mass production, the struggle of revolution, where lyrics of this period were composed of the imprint of national war. Modern folk poetry from 1975 until the present day mainly tends to criticize, mock, and entertain, through reflecting on social issues. In particular, in recent years, in addition to the classic forms of folk composition, the criticism of social issues in modern folk poetry has been strongly expressed along with the development of the Internet. Modern folk poetry with its characteristic genre and folklore has had more opportunities to adapt to new forms of transmission and circulation. Folklore compositions, including folk poetry, collected and stored on the Internet, is seen as a remarkable part of modern folklore.

Modern folk literature on the Internet constitutes one of three main branches of Vietnamese Online literature, along with the literary Online branches originating from personal blogs and literary Online branches regularly originating from the Vietnamese language literary journals (Tran Ngoc Hieu 2012). With a predominant tendency to mock, and to look at social issues through humorous, critical perspectives, folklore literature is expressed through its own characteristics and is considered to be a new folklore genre. Folklore literature is composed of traditional methods, as well as having technical characteristics, in which works posted Online are not a completed process, where readers can participate in creative work with the authors. The content in modern folklore and folk literature is reflected in urban contexts, in the life of citizens, rather than in 'mundane' village spaces, such as in traditional folk literature. These elements include inflation, natural disasters, social evils, and conceptions of modern living. These are also the reflections of modern folk poetry collected and posted on the current websites in Categories *Cười*, *Giải trí*, *Thư giãn* from *VNexpress*, *xaluan.com*, *chinhphucvumon.vn*, *gomtin.com*, *kenhtin.net*, *cadaotucngu.com*.

Perhaps it is difficult to affirm that modern folk poetry on the Internet is the work that represents present folk poetry in general, but with work circulated throughout the Internet,

modern folk poetry on the Internet is confirmed to be a new form of composition with characteristics of folklore literature.

### Cyber space and modern song compositions

Common points between Online folklore and traditional folklore include the following: they exist in an unorthodox space, they voice the masses, the authors can be anonymous, authors frequently do not own copyright (Tran Ngoc Hieu 2012). Non-orthodoxism is one of the characteristics of folklore, but the concept of the unorthodox space of Online folklore is relativistic, seen in the context of the boundary between democracy and open expression of composing in the cyber world. Censorship occurs by power elements according to the criteria of the social values of orthodox space, requiring permission and censorship prior to publishing. While control of the standard value system has set a range of social and cultural topics in information-oriented spaces, the freedom of cyberspace contributes to the diversification of information, and has oriented towards the multi-dimensional approach by recognizing the differences between what is suitable for printing on mainstream newspapers and what folk work circulates on websites (Russell Frank 2011).

Alternatively, to attract the attention of readers, many individuals have made an impression using shocking speeches as "Online game" language, to increase sensationalism. Modern poetry also has many words written in such a way. A majority of professionals are inclined toward the notion that many Online poetry compositions are variations of lyrics, becoming a "parody" of folk poetry. For example:

*Where you go I will follow  
But I will stay if you have food and leave if without food*

Variations from traditional folk verses with the faithful husband and wife:

*Where you go I will follow  
I will stay forever with food or without food*

Clearly, the meaning of the content of these lyrics is still a matter of discussion in academic circles and public opinion; Perhaps it is almost exclusively conveyed in cyberspace as a marginal "speaking" channel, standing at the periphery compared to the center under strict control of official standard values. However, it is undeniable that these lyrics are still being published and circulated in a lively way on popular websites: Modern folk poetry exists in which these lyrics are composed by many anonymous people, collecting and utilizing the free interactivity of cyber space to publish and circulate itself.

While in the era of print, radio and television, readers only have the right to silently read, listen and watch. The Internet has broken all silence, empowering active readers to participate in the network "social space" with comments, selection, production and composition ability, dissemination of the message content which modern folk poetry well exemplifies. Therefore, cyberspace becomes a multi-dimensional interactive space, where democratization is promoted, opening up access opportunities for multi-dimensional information, and breaking the monopoly of official public space.

## Composing and circulating modern folk songs in the Internet era

Folklore's method of dissemination and popularity is generally word of mouth, but in the present. Folklore circulation is somewhat diverse and broad depending on the characteristics of each genre. A click of Google can locate the keyword "Modern folk poetry," where we can find many websites posting modern proverbs and folk poetry with variations from traditional genres. However, if proverbs have short features and 'mouth sentences' of the people working, then transmitting experiences and knowledge of daily life should have a wide living and communication environment, not only on the Internet but also in many aspects of modern life such as in the series of words, specific communication circumstances, and in newspapers with the headline "headline." As such, modern folk poetry seemingly circulates more popularly on the Internet with a tendency to entertain, laugh, and to relieve stress.

For modern folklore on the Internet, factors easily accepted and handed down by the Online community are the content of stories and humorous compositions; Exploiting from a humorous perspective issues that are perceived as socially sensitive is one of the most effective methods that authors choose to compose on the Internet. Modern folk poetry with its characteristic genre constitutes a traditional folk poem that has been circulated on the Internet and is considered a news network bearing the characteristics of folk poetry to reflect the problems of modern social life from different angles: For example, lyrics reflect gambling evils such as:

*If want to across overseas then make the bridge  
If you want to be a widow, love the drug addict*

Some suggest that by simply emplying moral lyrics, the poems will not be memorable. However, memory should increase through use of disruptive humor, as "upside down" as it meets entertainment criteria, necessary for modern life's pressure. And so, it can be seen, the use of content words in modern folk poetry on the Internet integrating main trends requires mocking, laughing, and criticizing so as to convey social messages, and assisting its lyrics to become circulated Online.

## Modern folk poetry on the Internet in the context of social and traditional thinking and innovation

Globalization with economic changes leads to changes in the fields of culture, politics and society. The ideology of society changes, impacting significantly on individuals, changes mindsets focusing on speaking and on diversifying forms of composition.

The tendency of divine relief with a jagged, wry-looking, mocking, skeptical view of orthodoxy constitutes a main ideology of peripheral literature in contemporary cultural space. But the sacred prize with an unorthodox view seems to develop more strongly in dynamic and self-centered space. Contemporary folklore genres contain jokes, institutional forms, parodies, anecdotes, proverb idioms, and modern folk songs, with lyrics such as the following: "*The bone-casting cakes of life - Some civil servant's life has enough salaries?*" (xaluan.com); "*To cross the river to Kieu bridge - To have a high mark then lets bribe to teacher*" (xaluan.com). Here it can be seen that the expression of words does not contain a delicacy like in traditional folk poetry that tends

to mock, yet entertain by directly reflecting the problems of current society. At some point, this can partly be considered as a need to be liberated, to overcome the pressure of social prejudice, within cultural moral institutions which supplement the gaps that express standard language. However, contemporary folklore writings on the web stand in peripheral positions, becoming difficult to be accepted in academia.

The attitude of "soft as water" is regarded as one of the basic characteristics of the Vietnamese culture of behavior. This behavior is of standard value in the context of Vietnamese society and culture and is chosen to be used in all situations. McElwee (2007), when observing the reaction of weak people in Vietnamese society to economic injustices, found that instead of direct reaction or protest, they often express force through language. Jokes, folk songs, or rhymes become the most ingenious way to express vulgar, obscene, and aggressive attitudes, as they do through puns and word manipulation (lead by Neil Jamieson 2010). This shows that even in social reaction, Vietnamese people always use vague speech with aesthetic words to express their purpose. The vague way is said to be a deliberate form of expressing a critical intention with which to ensure the application of harmony in social relations in Vietnam. And so, even though the content of modern lyrics is a realistic description of negative issues in current society, face-to-face speech style is "pat on the face" like "*Civil servants' lives have enough money to use*", "*If you want to have good study, then come to bribe the teacher*". Such a modern society is said to be somewhat crude and lacks the aesthetic elements necessary in poetry where language art is always highly appreciated.

## Conclusion

The Internet is a new and innovative tool for delivering social messages. The pressures of life and social conflict have led modern people towards the need to use language in the form of entertainment and mockery, rather than using normative descriptions of denotative language. Although the legitimacy of modern folk poetry on the Internet still contains many points of contention, it can be said that modern folk poetry on the Internet is part of modern folk literature. This is worth noting, based on aspects of the method of composing, as well as on the content of each poems in the context of the open space of the Internet and the developmental trend of society in an age of modernization.

I have aimed to portray the overall picture of modern folklore compositions published and circulated on the web so as to point out specific characteristics of Online compositions as they address society, yet in the free space of Online networks. The problems discussed in this study assist to explain the problems of conflicting public opinion on modern proverbs in particular and modern folklore compositions in general, as well as Online linguistic issues, and the effects of globalization on thinking about the diversity of social aspects of network creation, the thinking of which remains limited in orthodox public spaces.

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