

Characteristics of Associative Cohesion in *Tuoi Tho Du Doi* by Phung Quan

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ABSTRACT: The novel *Tuoi tho du doi* by Phung Quan is one of the outstanding works written for children on the theme of revolutionary war. Alongside its moving content, vivid storytelling, and impressive characters, the work also leaves a mark due to its distinctive language art-particularly through the use of association. This method not only helps readers vividly visualize the inner world of child characters but also adds artistic depth to the text. This article surveys the forms of association used in *Tuoi tho du doi* classifies them, and analyzes the expressive, ideological, and aesthetic values they bring. Based on this, the article suggests ways to exploit the method of association in teaching literature at the primary and secondary school levels, contributing to enhancing students' literary appreciation skills.

KEYWORDS: associative cohesion; *Tuoi tho du doi*; Phung Quan; stylistic devices; children's literature; literature education

1. INTRODUCTION

Metaphor is a sophisticated writing technique in which the writer uses synonyms or antonyms to replace previously used words, creating richness and diversity in the language of the text. By using metaphor, the writer can achieve cleverness and creativity in language use. In addition to its linking effect, this method helps the text carry high artistic value, leaving an impression on the reader or listener. In *Tuoi tho du doi* by Phung Quan, metaphor is used diversely and flexibly to portray child characters in the resistance movement, both realistically and with high imagery.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In linguistic research, text coherence methods in general and metaphor in particular have been discussed in depth. According to authors Le A, Phan Phuong Dung, and Đàng Kim Nga (in the textbook "Vietnamese Language Textbook 3"), metaphor is a technique that uses words with semantic relationships to create connections between sentences. The types of metaphor mentioned include: inclusion, similarity, quantification, localization, and causation. Tran Ngoc Them (2003) expanded the classification system into seven types, divided into two groups: homogeneous (inclusion, similarity, quantification) and heterogeneous (localization, function definition, characteristics, causation), while emphasizing the high frequency of the inclusion type. Diep Quang Ban also confirms this classification. Overall, the perspectives agree on the concept and classification of metaphor; however, there is still a lack of studies that delve into its application in specific works. Therefore, analyzing the role of metaphor in *Tuoi tho du doi* is necessary to clarify the artistic effectiveness of this technique in children's literature.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a combination of textual content analysis and discourse-based linguistic categorization to investigate associative cohesion in *Tuoi tho du doi* by Phung Quan.

The research data comprises the entire novel, which was meticulously read, annotated, and categorized based on cohesive ties between clauses and sentences. The focus was placed on associative relations established through semantically related word pairs or phrases (including types such as inclusion, synonymy, quantity, location, cause, etc.).

Representative examples were selected and analyzed for their semantic function and their role in textual cohesion and expressiveness within specific contexts. This evidentiary approach not only strengthens the analysis but also highlights the artistic effectiveness of language use in the narrative.

A qualitative method was primarily employed to identify and interpret various types of associative cohesion, while quantitative elements were used at a basic level to observe and compare the frequency of each type, thereby reinforcing the conclusions drawn.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. General Observations

Through the survey and study of the work *Tuoi tho du doi*, we have compiled sentences and passages that utilize metaphor, as shown in the table below:

	Total Number	Homogeneous Associations			Heterogeneous Associations			
		Inclusive Associations	Same-type Associations	Quantitative Associations	Locative Associations	Functional Associations	Characteristic Associations	Causal Associations
Quantity	180	73	47	16	14	10	6	14
Percentage (%)	100	40,6	26,1	8,9	7,8	5,6	3,3	7,7

Through the statistical table, we observe that the author Phung Quan has utilized a relatively rich and flexible range of metaphors in the work *Tuoi tho du doi*. Specifically, metaphors are divided into two groups: the homogeneous metaphor group and the heterogeneous metaphor group.

In the work, the inclusion metaphor, belonging to the homogeneous metaphor group, is used the most, with 136 instances, accounting for 75.6%. The heterogeneous metaphor group is used less frequently, with 44 instances, making up 24.4%. Below, we will elaborate further on the characteristics of each metaphor group included in *Tuoi tho du doi*.

4.2. Features of Associative Cohesion in *Tuoi tho du doi*

4.2.1. Homogeneous Associations

a. Inclusive Associations

Inclusive associations are frequently found in *Tuoi tho du doi*. Here, the inclusive relationship is formed between a general or whole element and a specific or partial element. Although the sequence between general and specific terms is not fixed, data shows that specific terms appear more frequently. These relationships convey various meanings:

- Inclusive association indicating human-related objects

Example: “Leading the run is *Ve Quoc Quan*, the commander. He is about twenty-three or twenty-four years old, of medium height, broad shoulders, and a muscular build, with his hair styled in a bun like a donkey's hoof, and a shiny brass whistle hanging from his neck.”

(Part One - Page 8)

In the example above, the author uses an inclusive association to represent objects related to human beings. In the first sentence, the *subject referent* is *Ve Quoc Quan*, the commander, and in the second sentence, the *associated elements* are “shoulders, chest, hair, and neck”. Here, the subject referent and the associated elements are in an inclusive relationship.

- Inclusive association indicating animal-related objects:

Example: “Dozens of dogs, having lost their owners, gather in packs wandering aimlessly on the streets, competing to sniff through piles of trash in search of food. Each one has sunken hips, and their ribs stick out as if they have just swallowed dozens of baskets full of food...”

(Part One - Page 8)

In the two sentences above, Phung Quan describes the image of stray dogs. We consider each sentence a separate *utterance*. The first utterance is connected to the second through an *inclusive association*. Here, the dog represents the *whole entity* while the parts mentioned - *flanks, ribs, and belly* - represent components. In other words, the *subject referent* - the dog - and the *associated elements* - its body parts - are in an inclusive relationship. They represent things related to an animal.

- Inclusive association indicating physical objects:

Example: “Back then, *Mirng* was still wandering around looking for medicine for her mother and had passed by *Quynh's villa* many times. Each time she passed by, she would always stop for a moment, huddled next to the green-painted iron fence, listening to the sweet sounds of music drifting through the window on the second floor. The window was wide open, and on the windowsill were pots of blooming roses...”

(Part Two - Page 83)

We can see that the above example is a sequence of three utterances connected through an inclusive relationship. The first utterance has the *subject referent* “the villa”, which is linked to the second utterance through the *associated element* “iron fence” and to the third utterance through the associated element “window frame”.

- Inclusive association indicating natural phenomena:

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Example: “The night sky was unusually low and heavy. From the direction of Thuận An, dark gray clouds piled up continuously as if they wanted to completely cover the city’s sky...”

(Part One - Page 53)

In the example above, we can see that the *subject referent* “the night sky” and the *associated element* “dark gray clouds” are in an inclusive relationship. They represent objects related to a natural phenomenon occurring in our daily lives, signaling the arrival of rain, storms, or thunder. The sentence evokes an image of nature seemingly rising up to join our side in the battle against the enemy.

b. Same-type Associations

The novel *Tuoi tho du doi* also employs a substantial number of same-type associative pairs. In this type, the referents have a parallel relationship; that is, one does not subsume the other, which distinguishes it from inclusive associations.

- Same-type association involving objects related to humans:

Example: “Everyone immediately stood up straight, their mouths murmuring. Some even pretended to be bold, puffing out their chests, sucking in their stomachs, with their hands placed on their hips.”

(Part One – Page 13)

In this passage, the associative linkage between sentences is constructed using same-type association. The primary element (*mouth*) and the associated elements (*chest, belly, arms*) share a horizontal relationship, all referring to different body parts. This linkage underscores their co-equality within the semantic field of human anatomy.

- Same-type association involving animals:

Example: “While walking with the slingshot and shooting, he managed to catch four red-whiskered bulbuls and one turtle dove, tying their feet together and carrying them in a bag that hung down. This doesn’t include one kingfisher and one doves that fell too far from the road; he didn’t dare neglect the task of running to retrieve them.”

(Part Two - Page 118)

The words: *red-whiskered bulbul, dove, kingfisher and pigeon* are all nouns referring to types of bird. They share a same-type relationship and link the following sentence to the preceding one in the paragraph through a same-category association.

- Same-type association in the depiction of daily life:

Example: “He skillfully used all types of weapons: rifles, submachine guns, medium machine guns, heavy machine guns, grenades, and even cannons. His marksmanship with a pistol was legendary throughout the battlefield.”

(Part Two - Page 97)

Reading the two sentences above, we can see that weapons such as *rifles, submachine guns, light machine guns, heavy machine guns, mortars and cannons* all appear in combat. A same-type association is created by these items, as they are related objects belonging to the same category.

- Same-type association represents phenomena:

Example: “Two months earlier, on a rainy afternoon in Huế, when the wooden gate reinforced with iron at Thừa Phủ slammed shut behind him, all hope of escaping prison had completely vanished in the heart of this fifteen-year-old soldier of the National Salvation Army. But suddenly, on that very coincidental morning, Luợm found himself sitting in a Jeep speeding through the streets, seeing the houses, the shadows of trees, and the distant green mountains, while the surface of the Hương River shimmered with waves.”

(Part Six – Page 131)

With just two short sentences, the author enables readers to recognize two different moments in time, which evoke emotional shifts in the young soldier. Not long ago, when he first stepped into the Thừa Phủ prison, he felt as though he had lost his freedom the moment the prison door closed. But now, something miraculous has occurred—he begins to kindle a small sense of hope upon seeing the familiar everyday scenes once again. The two sentences are tightly connected by two same-type concepts: *afternoon* and *morning*. “Afternoon” and “morning” are recognized as periods of time that occur within a single day.

- Same-type association represents concepts:

Example: “Thoughtful, dedicated, and disciplined - these are the qualities Vĩnh-sư learned from the political officer during the days he lived beside him. After his death, he left behind a model life, pure and beautiful, along with his love conveyed through the warmth of the guard uniform that he still wore every day...”

(Part One – Page 33)

The author connects the two sentences by using conceptual adjectives such as: *thoughtful, dedicated, disciplined, exemplary, upright, and virtuous*. All of these adjectives are used to describe human personality traits. Here, the author employs these words to portray the image of political officers participating in the war, helping readers feel a greater sense of pride in the characteristics of these pioneering soldiers.

- Same-type association represents actions:

Example: “You must take this as a source of anger to make you even braver and more enthusiastic in battle, to strike them hard in revenge for Uncle Hùng and for the countless fellow countrymen who have been oppressed by them. We must definitely drive them all back to their country so that our Vietnamese people will no longer be tormented by them.”

(Part One – Page 23)

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The verbs *to bully* and *to torture* both refer to the cruel actions of the French colonialists. The cohesive device used here reflects a same-type relationship between the two verbs.

c. Quantitative Associations

In this novel, quantitative associations, including partitive and comparative subtypes, are used sparingly. This type of association involves quantity-related terms—either general quantities connected to specific quantities or items within a group.

- Partitive quantitative association:

Example: “*Bong-da-ran, Chau-sem, and Hien, after their time in Sia, moved up to the war zone, where the team leader assigned them to a reconnaissance unit specifically tasked with monitoring enemy positions and investigating enemy activities. The three of them were given the mission to monitor the Dat Do area..*”

(Part Seven – Page 226)

In this passage, the subject (*Bong-da-ran, Chau-sem, and Hien*) from the first sentence represents individual units (a specific part), and the phrase *three of them* in the second sentence refers to the general quantity. The association here is a partitive one, connecting specific names to a total count.

- Distributive quantitative association:

Example: “*Through Quynh's recounting, the two learned an intriguing fact: some people became patriotic fighters mainly because of revolutionary songs. The regiment commander and the deputy provincial military commander asked Quynh about his thoughts when writing the song...*”

(Part Seven – Page 216)

This example demonstrates a distributive relationship: *two people* as the total, which is distributed into *Regiment Commander* and *Deputy Commander of the Provincial Military Force*. The connection stems from a general term being split into specific elements.

- Comparative quantitative association:

Example: “*He read the sheet music aloud for the second time. And for the third time, he sang it.*”

(Part Seven - Page 213)

This is a clear comparative association where *the second time* and *the third time* are placed in sequential contrast. The connection emphasizes a progressive numerical order through a stepwise comparison.

4.2.2. Heterogeneous Associations

a. Locative Associations

In *Tuoi tho du doi*, locative associations are relatively rare and mostly describe the spatial or temporal relationships of people, objects, or events. Some instances also reflect actions or typical scenes associated with certain places.

- Association between a person/object and a location:

Example: “*Just like when he was at the military medical station in the C area, Quynh became the favorite of the entire field hospital. From the chief doctor to the physicians, nurses, aides, and patients, everyone loved him and treated him like their own child or younger sibling.*”

(Part Seven - Page 254)

Here, the reference to *military medical station* and *Quynh* being cherished there is a locative association. It links *Quynh* to the functional space where he operates.

- Association between an event and the typical time it occurs:

Example: “*The sunshine flooded the city with a vibrant golden hue. A morning like today would be perfect for a stroll through the streets!*”

(Part Six - Page 376)

The author uses the pair of words “*sunshine*” and “*morning*” to connect the sentences in the paragraph. They are linked to each other through a temporal relationship. The phenomenon mentioned here is sunshine.

- Association between an action and time:

Example: “*The mountain air at night is even more biting cold. The guard sits in front of the hut, with his rifle resting across his knees, dozing off...*”

(Part Seven - Page 316)

The pair of words “*night*” and “*dozing off*” are elements related to actions over time. At night, everything almost comes to a standstill to make way for human rest, yet the image of the guard still performing his duty emerges; he falls into a light sleep due to exhaustion, resting his head on his rifle but not daring to sleep deeply. Therefore, the author uses the associative pair “*night - dozing off*” to connect the paragraphs together.

b. Functional Associations

Upon analyzing *Tuoi tho du doi*, we observed that functional associations appear infrequently, accounting for only about 5.6% of all associative types. This type of association occurs when an entity is linked to its typical function or activity.

- Association between a person and their typical function:

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Example: “Before the August Revolution, Mr. Nguyễn Hình was a music teacher at Quoc hoc School. He was one of the founders and leaders of the cultural center for the war zone. Despite the extremely difficult and scarce conditions, he was able to establish a choir that served as the core of the cultural center. He was responsible for gathering, selecting, training, and conducting the choir. For a long time, he had nurtured the idea of composing a song about the Hoà Mỹ war zone. Taking advantage of the rare moments of free time amidst his leadership of the local militia, he wrote the song.”

(Part Seven – Page 212)

In this example, the subject *music teacher* is functionally associated with *gathering, selecting, training, leading, composing*. These actions define the functional role of a music teacher, especially in the wartime context. It illustrates a person-function relationship.

- Association between body parts and their functions:

Example: “Out of respect for the young soldier's affection for his friend, he picked up the sheet music, intending to just glance at it. Suddenly, his eyes sparkled as if they had unexpectedly come into contact with a ray of light.”

(Part Seven - Page 213)

Here, the body part *eyes* is associated with the action *glance*. The link emphasizes the typical function of the eyes, serving as an instrument for seeing. This reflects an instrument-action functional association.

- Association between animals and their typical behavior:

Example: “As Lưøm leaned over to dig into the cake barrel, a bark sounded: “Who’s there!” A short-legged, wolf-haired Belgian Malinois, as big as a calf, rushed out from behind the flowerbed.”

(Part Two - Page 127)

These two sentences are connected through an associative relationship defined by the pair of elements “bark - dog.” This is an example of the associative definition of animals in the form of subject - action.

- Association between objects/tools and their functions:

Example: “On the front lines, the sound of gunfire gradually diminished. A few sporadic blasts occurred before falling silent completely.”

(Part One - Page 61)

This example describes a dangerous and challenging front line. There is an associative relationship defined between these two sentences. When the trigger is pulled, the object being defined is the gun, and its function is to fire. This is an example of the concept of defining an object as a tool - action.

c. Characteristic Associations

Through our analysis of *Tuoi tho du doi*, we found that characteristic associations are the least frequently used type, accounting for only about 3.3%. These associations occur when an object is connected to its typical or distinctive features. In this type of association, when the feature appears as the subject, it tends to function in an explanatory capacity; when it appears as the predicate, it serves a descriptive purpose.

- Characteristic association for an object:

Example: “As night fell, the prison was silent as if buried deep in darkness. Occasionally, the sound of gunfire pierced the ears, and bullets whistled past the rooftops.”

(Part Five - Page 25)

In this excerpt, the subject *prison* is associated with the sounds *gunfire* and *bullets*. These are characteristic sounds that describe the atmosphere of the prison, enhancing its sense of danger and death. The auditory imagery deepens the tension of the scene.

- Characteristic association for an animal:

Example: “The drizzle had stopped, but the cold wind continued to blow in gusts. The children took off their clothes and hung them over the bridge railing. Everyone was shivering, covered in goosebumps.”

(Part One - Page 13)

In the two passages above, writer Phung Quan employs a *distinctive association*. The object being referred to is the *cold wind* with the sensation of chilliness serving as its distinctive feature. Through a realistic descriptive style, the author narrates the weather and climate conditions in which the young soldiers are studying and performing their duties, allowing readers to vividly sense the environment.

d. Causal Associations

Based on the collected and analyzed data from *Tuoi tho du doi*, we found that causal associations were not commonly used. Moreover, the causes in these associations were most frequently actions or events.

- Cause and result are both actions:

Example: “I and Mung decided to go outside, and as you jumped over the trench behind the barracks, you stepped on a sharp piece of glass. You let out a cry and then fell to the ground.”

(Part Two - Page 105)

It is easy to see that Phung Quan has used the technique of causal association. The cause is that she stepped on a sharp piece of glass, which caused her foot to hurt and prevented her from walking. This is an example of causal association. The sentence

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realistically describes the situation when she, the nightingale, encountered an unexpected accident with her foot while carrying out a mission with Mung. We can see that both the cause and effect are actions.

- Cause and result are both events:

Example: "Hunger, scabies, lice, and malaria have caused all the members of the Youth Scout team to deteriorate. Only Mung has lost more weight than everyone else."

(Part Seven - Page 218)

Here, the causes *hunger, scabies, lice, malaria* lead to the event of physical deterioration *decline*. The author uses a causal association to emphasize the toll of war on the children, especially Mung. The tone is realistic and empathetic, reflecting the harsh conditions and the sacrifices endured by these young characters.

5. CONCLUSION

Associative cohesion in *Tuoi tho du doi* plays a vital role in shaping a coherent, emotionally rich narrative structure. It serves as an effective means of character portrayal and enhances the artistic depth of the work. Among the various types of associations, inclusive associations appear most frequently, followed by same-type and quantitative associations. Meanwhile, non-homogeneous associations such as functional, characteristic, and causal associations, though used less often, contribute significantly to the artistic highlights of the narrative. This study not only sheds light on a distinct stylistic feature of Phung Quan's writing but also opens up pedagogical opportunities for utilizing this cohesive method in the teaching of children's literature.

6. REFERENCES

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