

Studying Vietnamese Studies Opens Many Opportunities in Research and Arts

Applying with the research topic “River and sea ecological consciousness in Quang region folk songs”, Le Van Thang, students of class K20 VHD1, major in Culture and Tourism (under Vietnamese Studies) at the DTU Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, was invited to the fifth International Conference on Vietnamese Studies (ICVS) 2016, organized on December 15 and 16, 2016, at the Vietnam National Convention Center, Hanoi capital. Back from the conference, Le Van Thang shares his happiness and the valuable experience he acquired from the many prestigious scholars from 30 nations around the world.

Le Van Thang at the fifth International Conference on Vietnamese Studies

Hello Le Van Thang. Can you explain what fate brought you to this very prestigious international conference?

LVT: It started by chance indeed, when I went to see a bai chôi performance in Tran Hung Dao street in Danang with my class teacher, who at the time was Tran Thi Anh Nguyet. We both like bai chôi, so when listening to the thoroughly folksy Quang region melodies in the middle of Danang, we were both immediately determined to get to know more about bai chôi. While modern music, like pop and rock, attracts the young ever more, the fact that there does not yet exist any effective method to preserve our traditional folk song heritage and hand it down to future generations will make us forget our past and lose our Vietnamese soul. From that thought, we both decided to realize the research “River and sea ecological consciousness in Quang region folk songs”. After sending an abstract to the organizing committee of the fifth Conference on Vietnamese Studies, I was invited to the conference as a co-author of the research paper with Dr Tran Thi Anh Nguyet.

How did you feel to attend a conference with so many famous scholars from thirty countries around the world?

LVT: Perhaps my first feeling was of nervousness, to go to Hanoi on my own and also to join an environment of such specialized learning for the first time in my life. Maybe the scholars and lecturers there were taken aback at the appearance of a “green” student with a Central Vietnamese accent at a conference of that scale, making me feel like I was an alien. (Laughs.) Apart from that, I feel very happy and consider myself unquestionably lucky to have been selected to take part in that high-quality conference organized only once every five years, and to be granted a code for my research.

Le Van Thang with his prize for Promising Presenter at the Be Your Dream 2016 contest

The conference, with the theme “Sustainable Development in the Context of Global Change” was a forum where scientists from all over the globe could present their research results on Vietnam, to help the country understand itself better. The conference undoubtedly left you with very new perspectives on the country and on the Vietnamese, didn’t it?

LVT: Each of the research projects presented at the conference suggested very interesting knowledge on the country and the people of Vietnam. Combined with the knowledge I learned and researched on Vietnamese tourism, I feel that our nation is focused on expanding and exploiting resort and leisure tourism, and cares little about its traditional culture - its customs, practices, and festivals, which are a real strength. If we could exploit that for tourism, coupled with investing in preserving it and handing it down to future generations, it is certain that the Vietnamese cultural heritage and festivals will not only survive, but will also get worldwide renown. This is why students who are majoring and researching Tourism and Vietnamese studies like me should investigate and get an understanding of tourism, of the culture and the lives of the Vietnamese, to help promote and develop the potential of local culture, and also to boost cultural integration, promote the development of cultural exchange not only domestically, but also internationally. Maybe after the closure of this conference and a stroll around the capital, I will take part in research to better understand Vietnamese culture. As part of that, I will do more research on bai choi. It is an extremely unique form of popular art, but the vitality and “impact power” of bai choi do not yet match those of other arts. This is why I really want this art form to receive more interest and be performed more often, on a larger scale, and more widely. As Chairperson of the Danang Association for Science and Tourism Bui Van Tieng said so nicely: *“Folk arts can walk the streets alongside modern people.”*

Which knowledge and skills did you acquire studying Vietnamese Studies at DTU?

LVT: Quite a number of universities have been offering Vietnamese Studies for a long time, but I decided to study it at DTU because I found the major to have many particularities. Not taught academically, Vietnamese Studies at DTU have a clear major of Culture and Tourism. We study both knowledge about culture and professional skills useful in the hospitality sector. With this extensive knowledge, our job opportunities are extended to the agencies and organization in both fields of culture and hospitality. For example, after graduating from Vietnamese Studies at DTU, one can do many activities in tourism, such as being a tour guide, working at receptions or in room service, and so on; or one can work at companies and agencies as culture expert, cultural manager, and so on. I particularly like the work of a tour guide, and with the knowledge I acquired here, I am confident that I will be able to live well from that profession after leaving university.

Not only passionate about research, you are also quite accomplished in artistic activities. For example, you were one of the six DTU team members to have obtained a First prize of Central Vietnam and the

Central Highlands and a Consolation prize at the national level at the 2015 Singing Twenties contest, and the prize of Promising Presenter at the Be Your Dream 2016 contest. What motivates you to always be so hard-working?

LVT: As people online are wont to say, “just do what you like”. Just joking - I like being active and I like doing new things to challenge myself. Each of these contests provides me with a different experience and makes me more mature. Where Singing Twenties unleashed my passion and allowed me to be on television on a large state for the first time, Be Your Dream 2016 (in the Presenter section) was a big challenge to myself, as I had no particular natural talent for it. Taking part in the International Conference on Vietnamese Studies makes my scholarly side proud. This conference or doing scientific research are actually a more difficult and bumpy turn in my life. But it is certain that, the more bumpy the challenge, the more I am motivated to go ahead - whether I succeed or fail time and again, I will have lived every moment with the challenge and I will never regret not having been true to my dreams.

Thank you for this interesting conversation.

(Media Center)