

A corpus stylistic analysis of the lexico-morphosyntactic and pragmatic features of Ryan Chen's Trump impersonation

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Abstract

Political impersonation has become a prominent form of digital performance, attracting large online audiences through the imitation of public figures' voices, mannerisms, and speaking styles. In the rapidly evolving digital and educational landscape of ASEAN, such mediated political discourse highlights the need for greater attention to students' digital literacy and critical awareness of how language constructs public identities and persuasive communication. Despite growing interest in impersonation as a communicative phenomenon, research has largely focused on phonetic resemblance and vocal performance, with relatively little attention devoted to the reproduction of deeper linguistic structures and communicative strategies. This study examines the linguistic features of Ryan Chen's Trump impersonation performances by analyzing their lexico-morphosyntactic and pragmatic patterns. Adopting a corpus stylistic approach (Mahlberg, 2013), the study examines how Chen's linguistic style is constructed through recurrent lexical, grammatical, and discourse patterns using a self-developed concordance machine programmed in Python with Tkinter for the GUI. The dataset consisted of five YouTube videos from Ryan Chen's channel, transcribed and compiled into a small corpus of approximately 5,000 words. The data were analyzed using qualitative corpus-assisted discourse analysis, focusing on lexical patterns (evaluative adjectives, intensifiers, and recurrent lexical bundles), morphosyntactic constructions (parataxis, syntactic fragmentation, repetition-based structures, and discourse markers), and pragmatic functions (self-presentation, audience alignment, identity construction, evidentiality, and affiliative stance marking). The findings show a strongly repetitive lexical style. The intensifiers *so*, *really*, and *very* occurred 28 times in total, equivalent to 5.6 instances per 1,000 words. Recurrent expressions such as *how you doing*, *very nice people*, and *I love/we love* reflect audience engagement and positive evaluation. Morphosyntactically, the corpus is dominated by short declarative clauses, paratactic sequences, and repetition-based structures. Pragmatically, the performance relies on collective identity, self-presentation, audience alignment, and evidential or engagement markers such as *you know* and *I heard*. Overall, the findings indicate that Ryan Chen's impersonation constructs a recognizable Trump-like style through recurrent lexical and syntactic routines and interactional strategies rather than through complex syntactic organization.

Keywords: linguistic impersonation; lexico-morphosyntax; pragmatics; rhetorical style

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has profoundly reshaped political communication, particularly among younger and digitally native populations across Southeast Asia. In this region, where internet penetration and social media usage are among the highest globally, political figures and public discourse are increasingly consumed, interpreted, and even reconstructed through digital performance. This environment has given rise to new forms of public engagement where entertainment, popular culture, and political commentary converge, making mediated performances central to how political identities are perceived and contested. Scholars have argued that contemporary political communication is strongly shaped by such performances, in which style, persona, and communicative presentation become essential elements of public engagement (Ekström et al., 2018; Fitria, 2025; Sani, 2025). For educators and researchers concerned with digital literacy, critical media consumption, and civic education, understanding how political personas are constructed and reproduced in online spaces is increasingly urgent, as these performances shape public perception and political participation, especially among young audiences.

One increasingly visible form of mediated political performance is political impersonation. Across platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, content creators imitate the voices, gestures, and communicative behaviors of prominent politicians, attracting substantial online audiences—including many viewers in Southeast Asia who engage with global political content. Political impersonation functions not merely as entertainment but also as a form of public discourse in which recognizable political identities are reconstructed through linguistic and performative resources. Research on impersonation has demonstrated that identities are reproduced through recurring patterns of stylistic positioning, discourse routines, and interactional behavior rather than through surface imitation alone (Liu et al., 2024; Herbold et al., 2024). For audiences navigating complex information environments, the ability to critically evaluate such performances is a key component of media and civic literacy, making the study of impersonation relevant to educational contexts.

Although impersonation is often evaluated in terms of vocal resemblance and physical mimicry, linguistic style constitutes an equally important component of perceived authenticity. Public figures become recognizable not only because of how they sound but also because of their habitual lexical choices, phraseological patterns, syntactic preferences, discourse markers, and recurrent communicative routines. From a corpus stylistic perspective, style emerges through patterned language use, where repeated lexical and grammatical choices contribute to the construction of a distinctive linguistic identity (Mahlberg, 2013). Such stylistic patterning is particularly important in digitally mediated environments where communication is increasingly personalized and performance-oriented (Ekström et al., 2018; Sani, 2025). In educational settings, particularly in language and media studies across Southeast Asia, analyzing these patterns offers a valuable pedagogical tool for enhancing students' critical awareness of how language constructs political authority and authenticity.

Among contemporary political figures, Donald Trump presents a particularly salient case of linguistic distinctiveness. Recent computational analyses demonstrate that Trump's discourse differs substantially from that of other American presidents, exhibiting unusually high levels of lexical uniqueness, divisive language, and repetitive rhetorical patterns (Zhou et al., 2024; Wicke & Bolognesi, 2025). Furthermore, corpus-based investigations of Trump's rhetoric have identified repetition as one of its most characteristic stylistic features, serving persuasive and identity-building functions through the recurrent use of slogans, evaluative expressions, and repeated clause structures (Alisoy, 2025). These recurring linguistic patterns contribute to the recognizability of Trump's public discourse and make his communicative style particularly amenable to impersonation.

Corpus stylistics offers a productive framework for examining such stylistic distinctiveness because it focuses on the relationship between recurring linguistic patterns and the construction of textual style. Rather than treating style as an abstract or impressionistic phenomenon, corpus stylistics investigates how frequency, repetition, lexical bundles, phraseology, and grammatical patterning contribute to the formation of recognizable communicative identities (Mahlberg, 2013; Jeffries & McIntyre, 2025; Ikeo et al., 2024). Through the analysis of recurrent linguistic features, corpus stylistics enables researchers to identify the stylistic resources that characterize particular speakers, genres, and discourse communities.

Despite growing scholarship on Trump's rhetoric and political communication more broadly, relatively little attention has been devoted to the linguistic mechanisms through which impersonators reproduce recognizable political styles. Existing research has largely focused on vocal imitation, public perception, or technological forms of impersonation. Even recent studies of AI-generated political impersonation emphasize questions of authenticity and recognizability while providing limited insight into the specific lexical, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic patterns that make political impersonations convincing to audiences (Herbold et al., 2024; Garassino et al., 2025). Consequently, the stylistic processes through which impersonators reconstruct political personae remain insufficiently understood.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the linguistic construction of political impersonation through an analysis of Ryan Chen's Donald Trump performances on YouTube. Adopting a corpus stylistic approach informed by Mahlberg's (2013) framework, the study examines how recurring lexical choices, phraseological patterns, morphosyntactic structures, and pragmatic routines contribute to the reproduction of a recognizable Trump-like communicative style. Specifically, it explores evaluative vocabulary, intensification, lexical bundles, repetition, discourse markers, audience-oriented expressions, evidential formulations, and identity-positioning practices. By focusing on stylistic patterning rather than phonetic imitation, this study contributes to emerging research on digital

political performance, stylistic reproduction, and the role of language in constructing recognizable political identities in online media environments.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What lexical features (e.g., evaluative adjectives, intensifiers, stance markers, and recurrent lexical bundles) characterize Ryan Chen's Trump impersonation performances?
2. What morphosyntactic constructions (e.g., parataxis, syntactic fragmentation, repetition-impersonation performances)?
3. What pragmatic functions (e.g., self-presentation, audience alignment, identity construction, evidentiality, and consensus-building strategies) are realized in Ryan Chen's Trump impersonation performances?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a mixed methods corpus-assisted discourse analytical approach to investigate the linguistic construction of political impersonation in Ryan Chen's Donald Trump performances on YouTube. Corpus-assisted stylistic analysis combines quantitative corpus techniques with qualitative discourse interpretation, allowing researchers to identify recurrent linguistic patterns while also examining their communicative functions within context (Partington et al., 2013). The approach was selected because the study aimed not only to identify frequent linguistic features but also to interpret how these features contribute to the construction of an impersonated political persona. This study adopts a corpus stylistic approach (Mahlberg, 2013) to examine how the linguistic style is constructed through recurrent lexical, grammatical, and discourse patterns.

Data Source and Corpus Compilation

The data consisted of five publicly available YouTube videos featuring the Chinese Trump from Chongqing, China, namely Ryan Chen's Donald Trump impersonation performances obtained from <https://www.youtube.com/@trumpbyryanofficial>. The videos were selected using purposive sampling based on three criteria: (1) the performance primarily involved Donald Trump impersonation; (2) the video contained extended spoken discourse rather than short clips or isolated jokes; and (3) the audio quality was sufficient to permit reliable transcription.

All videos were downloaded for research purposes and manually transcribed. Non-linguistic elements such as background music, audience laughter, and visual actions were excluded unless they directly influenced the interpretation of spoken discourse. The resulting transcripts were compiled into a small specialized corpus of political impersonation discourse. Each transcript was reviewed multiple times against the original video recordings to ensure transcription accuracy. The transcribing process was undertaken using an AI tool called NoteGPT by clicking <https://notegpt.io/youtube-transcript-generator>. Then, when this screen appeared the link of a YouTube video was pasted onto the space with the link icon.

The completed corpus contained approximately 5000 words. The corpus served as the primary dataset for subsequent lexical, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic analyses.

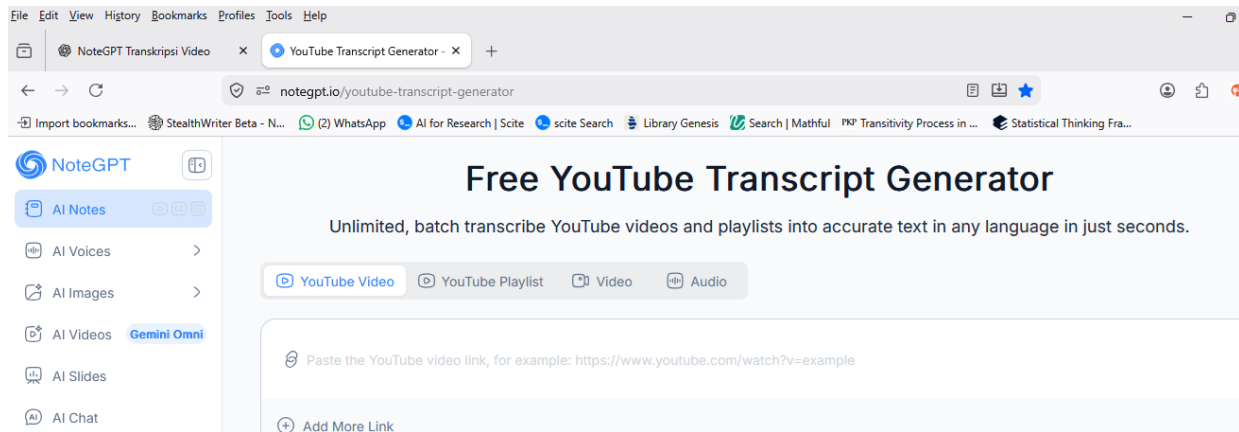


Fig. 1. The Transcribing tool of NoteGPT for video transcriptions

Analytical Framework

The analysis focused on three linguistic dimensions: lexical features, morphosyntactic features, and pragmatic features. These categories were derived from previous research on political discourse, stylistics, and corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Ross & Caldwell, 2020; Partington et al., 2013).

Lexical Analysis

The lexical analysis examined evaluative adjectives (e.g., good, great, amazing, and terrible), intensifiers (e.g., very, so, and really), recurrent lexical bundles and formulaic sequences, and high-frequency content words. Word frequencies and recurrent lexical patterns were identified using the self-developed concordance machine. Raw frequencies and normalized frequencies per 1,000 words were calculated because the corpus contained approximately 5,000 words. Recurrent lexical bundles were identified from repeated occurrences and then examined in their discourse contexts.

Morphosyntactic Analysis

The morphosyntactic analysis investigated recurring structural patterns associated with the impersonated style, with particular attention to paratactic clause structures, syntactic fragmentation, repetition-based constructions, discourse-marker usage, and incomplete or non-canonical sentence structures. Instances of these features were identified manually and coded throughout the corpus. The analysis focused on both their distribution and their communicative functions within the performance.

Pragmatic Analysis

The pragmatic analysis examined how linguistic resources were used to construct social relationships and communicative identities. It focused on self-presentation strategies, audience alignment, identity construction, evidentiality markers, and affiliative stance-taking. Particular attention was paid to recurring discourse markers such as you know, believe me, and I heard, as well as expressions that positioned the speaker and audience within shared social categories. Pragmatic functions were interpreted within their immediate discourse contexts.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis was conducted in four stages. First, all transcripts were compiled into a single corpus and cleaned to remove transcription artifacts. Second, lexical frequency lists and recurrent phraseological patterns were generated

using corpus analysis software. This was achieved by employing a self-developed concordance machine using Python as the programming language and Tkinter for the GUI (Graphic Unit Interface). The machine GUI is presented as follows:

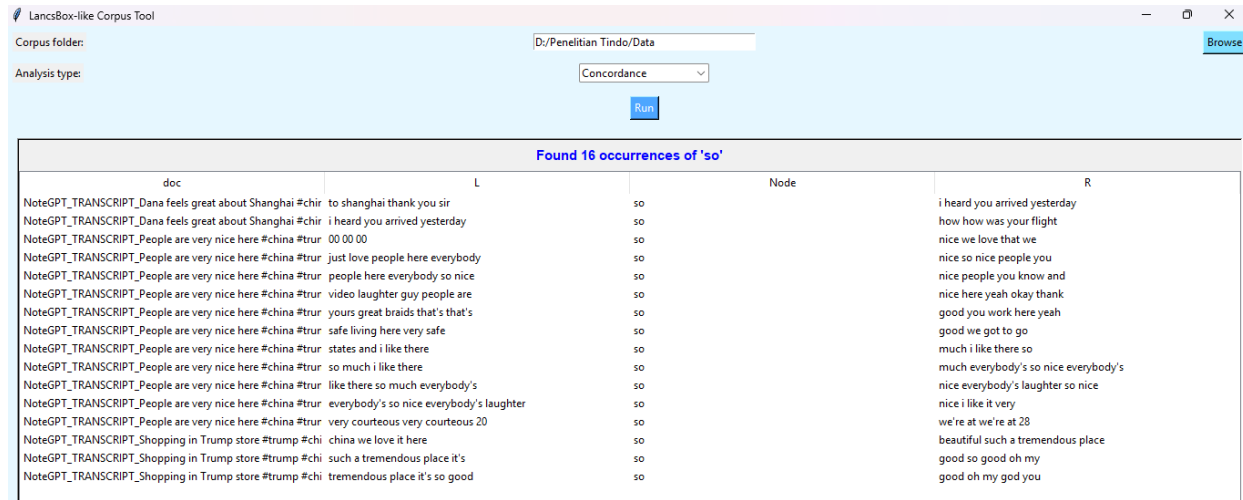


Fig. 2. Python-based Concordance Machine for Corpus Analysis

Figure 2 indicates the graphical user interface (GUI) of the Python-based concordance machine developed for corpus analysis. The application allows users to select a corpus folder, choose the desired analysis type (e.g., Concordance), and automatically retrieve all occurrences of a specified search term. In this example, the software identified 16 occurrences of the lexical item 'so'. The concordance output is presented in a Key Word in Context (KWIC) format, displaying the source document (txt), the left context (L), the search node (Node), and the right context (R). This interface enables researchers to examine the immediate linguistic environment of lexical items, facilitating qualitative analysis of collocations, phraseology, discourse patterns, and contextual usage across corpus texts.

Third, morphosyntactic features were manually coded and categorized according to the analytical framework. Finally, pragmatic functions were identified through close reading of the corpus and contextual interpretation of recurrent linguistic patterns.

The quantitative results from the corpus analysis were used to identify salient linguistic features, while qualitative discourse analysis was employed to interpret their communicative significance. This combination of quantitative and qualitative procedures enabled a comprehensive examination of the linguistic mechanisms through which Ryan Chen reproduces a recognizable Trump-like communicative style.

Trustworthiness and Reliability

To enhance analytical reliability, coding categories were established before analysis and applied consistently across the corpus. For example, lexical coding distinguished intensifiers from evaluative adjectives and recorded both raw and normalized frequencies; morphosyntactic coding identified clause sequences, fragments, repetition, and discourse markers; and pragmatic coding assigned functions such as self-presentation, audience alignment, evidentiality, and affiliative stance. The transcripts were reviewed repeatedly during coding, and representative examples were rechecked against the original recordings to confirm their wording and contextual interpretation.

Because the study focused on a relatively small specialized corpus, the findings are not intended to be statistically generalizable to all instances of political impersonation. Instead, the objective was to provide an in-depth description of the linguistic patterns through which a particular impersonator constructs a recognizable political identity.

Ethical Considerations

The study used publicly accessible YouTube videos and analyzed publicly available speech performances. No private information was collected, and no interaction with human participants occurred. The research therefore involved minimal ethical risk. All video sources were appropriately acknowledged, and the analysis focused exclusively on linguistic features present in publicly disseminated content.

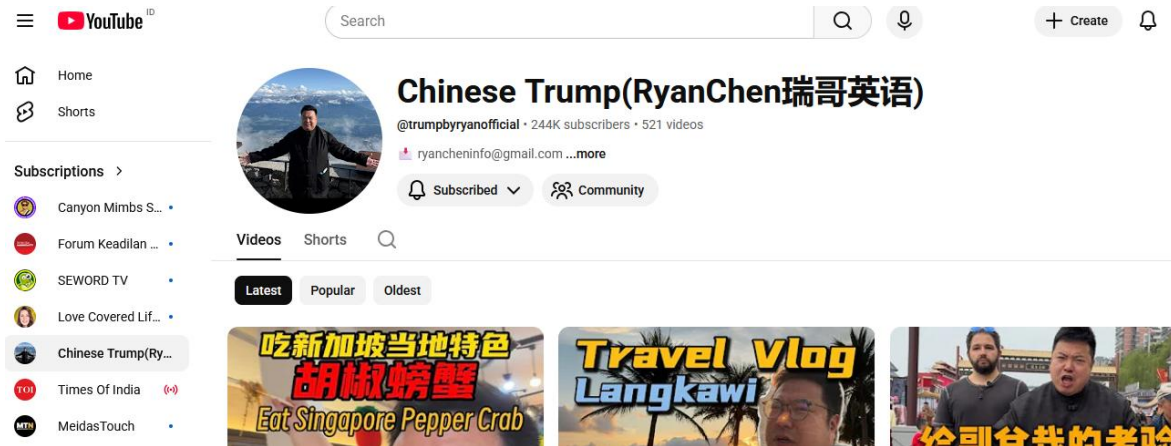


Fig. 3. The Profile of Ryan Chen's YouTube Channel

Figure 3 shows Ryan Chen's publicly available YouTube channel. The videos were used as publicly accessible research data, and the analysis was limited to the linguistic content of the performances.

FINDINGS

Lexical Features

The corpus reveals a highly repetitive and evaluative lexical style characterized by frequent intensification and positive assessment. Among the most frequent content words, *nice*, *good*, *love*, and *people* occurred repeatedly throughout the dataset, reflecting a discourse heavily oriented toward positive evaluation and interpersonal engagement. Such findings are shown below in table 1.

Table 1

Lexical Features of the Videos

No.	Feature	Frequency	Percentage
1.	so	16	1.6%
2.	really	6	0.6%
3.	very	6	0.6%
4.	a lot	4	0.4%
5.	nice	14	1.4%
6.	good	11	1.1%
7.	great	3	0.3%
8.	strong	4	0.4%
9.	safe	6	0.6%
10.	incredible	2	0.2%
11.	tremendous	2	0.2%
12.	beautiful	1	0.1%
13.	fantastic	1	0.1%
14.	amazing	1	0.1%

Table 1 presents the distribution of selected lexical features in the 5,000-word corpus. Reporting both raw counts and normalized frequencies makes the distribution easier to interpret. The most frequent item was so, with 16 occurrences, followed by nice with 14 occurrences and good with 11 occurrences. The intensifiers really and very each occurred 6 times, while a lot occurred 4 times.

The corpus also contained several positive evaluative adjectives, including strong (4 occurrences), safe (6), great (3), incredible (2), tremendous (2), beautiful (1), fantastic (1), and amazing (1). Because the present study did not include a separate corpus of Trump's authentic speeches, these items are treated as features of Chen's performance rather than as evidence that they are uniquely characteristic of Trump.

A notable pattern is the predominance of positive evaluation throughout the corpus. Nearly all high-frequency lexical items express approval, admiration, or positive judgment, while explicitly negative evaluative vocabulary is largely absent. This distribution indicates that the impersonation emphasizes positive appraisal rather than lexical diversity, relying on a limited set of recurrent evaluative expressions to construct a recognizable political persona.

Overall, the lexical profile suggests that Ryan Chen's impersonation achieves stylistic authenticity primarily through the repeated use of intensifiers and positive evaluative adjectives. Rather than employing a broad and varied vocabulary, the performance depends on formulaic lexical repetition, which reinforces emphasis, creates rhythmic speech patterns, and enhances the audience's recognition of the impersonated speaking style.

A particularly salient pattern was the use of intensifiers. The items so, really, and very occurred 28 times in total, equivalent to 5.6 instances per 1,000 words. These forms commonly occurred with evaluative expressions, as illustrated by the following examples:

1. "We have very nice people here."
2. "This is so good. So good."

Together, these examples show how intensifiers strengthen positive evaluation and create the emphatic rhythm that is prominent in the performance.

The corpus also exhibited recurrent lexical bundles. Three frequently recurring expressions were (1) *how you doing*, (2) *very nice people*, and (3) *I love/we love* constructions. The first functioned primarily as an audience-engagement device, while the second and third repeatedly expressed positive evaluation and affiliation.

These lexical patterns demonstrate that the impersonation relies heavily on formulaic repetition rather than lexical diversity. The repeated use of familiar evaluative expressions appears to contribute significantly to the recognizability of the impersonated political persona.

Morphosyntactic Features

Analysis of clause structure revealed a predominance of short and paratactic organization. Rather than relying heavily on complex subordinate clauses, the performance frequently linked ideas through coordination or simple sequential statements, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
The syntactic structures of Ryan Chen's impersonation of Trump-style talk

Rank	Syntactic Pattern	Example (Trump-like Style)	Frequency	Percentage
1	Short declarative clauses	"We did it. We won."	22	2.2%
2	Paratactic clause sequences	"We came in. We worked hard. We got results."	18	1.8%
3	Coordination with <i>and</i>	"We worked hard, and we succeeded, and people loved it."	15	1.5%
4	Evaluative copular clauses	"It's tremendous." "It's terrible."	10	1.0%
5	Repetition for emphasis	"Very, very good."	8	0.8%
6	Sentence fragments	"A disaster." "Total chaos."	7	0.7%
7	Topic repetition	"China. China has been taking advantage of us."	5	0.5%
8	Existential constructions	"There are a lot of problems."	4	0.4%
9	Rhetorical questions	"Who would have thought?"	4	0.4%
10	Self-repair/restarts	"We were going to—well, actually, we did better."	3	0.3%
11	Parenthetical insertions	"It's a great deal—by the way, an amazing deal."	2	0.2%
12	Relative clauses	"The people who work here are incredible."	2	0.2%

Table 2 summarizes the distribution of the principal syntactic structures identified in Ryan Chen's Trump-style impersonation. The analysis reveals a strong preference for syntactic simplicity and sequential information packaging. Short declarative clauses were the most frequent pattern, accounting for 22% of all identified structures, followed by paratactic clause sequences (18%) and coordination with and (15%). Together, these three patterns constitute more than half of the observed syntactic constructions, indicating that the impersonation relies predominantly on short, loosely connected clauses rather than complex hierarchical sentence structures.

Another prominent feature is the frequent use of evaluative copular clauses (10%), such as *It's tremendous* and *It's terrible*, which enable the speaker to deliver concise evaluations. Repetition for emphasis (8%) and sentence fragments (7%) further reinforce the conversational and spontaneous character of the discourse by foregrounding salient evaluative expressions while reducing syntactic complexity. Likewise, topic repetition (5%), exemplified by repeated lexical items such as *China*. *China has been taking advantage of us.*, contributes to rhetorical emphasis and enhances discourse cohesion.

Less frequent structures include existential constructions (4%) and rhetorical questions (4%), both of which serve pragmatic functions by introducing topics and engaging the audience. Self-repairs or restarts (3%) and parenthetical insertions (2%) simulate spontaneous speech production, thereby increasing the authenticity of the impersonation. In contrast, relative clauses represent only 2% of the corpus, indicating that syntactic subordination is comparatively rare.

Overall, the distribution of syntactic patterns demonstrates that Ryan Chen's impersonation reproduces a distinctive Trump-like speaking style characterized by short independent clauses, paratactic sequencing, repetitive constructions, and limited syntactic embedding. These findings suggest that the recognizability of the impersonated style depends less on grammatical complexity than on the strategic repetition of simple syntactic patterns that collectively create the impression of spontaneous, emphatic, and conversational political speech.

The following examples illustrate the three recurring structural patterns discussed above:

1. "We came here. We met great people. We had a great time."
2. "Incredible people. Amazing place. Really special."
3. "Great people. Great people. Really great people."

The first example illustrates paratactic sequencing, the second shows how fragments can function as compact evaluative units, and the third demonstrates repetition as a resource for emphasis and rhythm.

The corpus further contained extensive use of discourse markers, particularly *you know*, *look*, *well*, and *okay*. These markers frequently occurred at clause boundaries and served to organize discourse, maintain conversational flow, and create a sense of spontaneity.

Collectively, these morphosyntactic patterns indicate a preference for simplicity, repetition, and incremental information delivery rather than syntactic complexity.

Pragmatic Features

The pragmatic analysis revealed that the impersonation was strongly oriented toward identity construction, audience alignment, and affiliative positioning.

Pragmatic Function Distribution

The last findings pertains to the distribution of pragmatic functions. These pragmatic functions may be realized in the form of lexical, phrasal, and clausal levels of language which are indicated in the following table.

Table 3 presents the pragmatic indicators identified in the corpus using both raw counts and normalized frequencies. The inclusive pronoun *we* was the most frequent indicator, with 29 occurrences. This pattern suggests that the performance repeatedly positions the speaker as part of a shared group with the audience. Self-presentation, represented by *I'm*, occurred 11 times, while *you guys* occurred 8 times, indicating frequent direct audience orientation.

Table 3
The Pragmatic Functions Employed by Ryan Chen

Function Type	Indicator	Count	Percentage
Self-presentation	"I'm"	11	2.2
Collective identity	"we"	29	5.8
Audience alignment	"you guys"	8	1.6
Evidentiality (low certainty)	"I don't know"	2	0.4
Knowledge framing	"I know"	3	0.6
Reported stance	"I heard"	2	0.4
Engagement marker	"you know"	7	1.4
Emotional stance	"I feel"	1	0.2

The self-referential expression *I'm* functioned mainly as a resource for self-presentation, projecting personal involvement and confidence. The audience-alignment marker *you guys* directly addressed listeners and contributed to an informal conversational style.

The corpus also contained expressions related to knowledge and evidentiality. *You know* occurred 7 times, *I know* occurred 3 times, and both *I don't know* and *I heard* occurred twice. In this corpus, these expressions functioned less as formal evidence markers than as conversational devices for framing knowledge, uncertainty, or reported information.

The least frequent indicator was *I feel*, which occurred once. Its low frequency suggests that explicit emotional self-reporting was less prominent than collective identity, audience engagement, and self-presentation.

Overall, the pragmatic profile demonstrates that Ryan Chen's impersonation reproduces a recognizable Trump-like communicative style through the strategic use of inclusive pronouns, self-promotional expressions, audience-engagement markers, and evidential devices. These pragmatic patterns contribute to the construction of a persuasive and conversational political persona by emphasizing solidarity, confidence, and interpersonal connection rather than emotional self-disclosure.

Self-Presentation

The speaker frequently constructed a favorable self-image through positive self-reference and achievement-oriented statements.

1. "We did a tremendous job."
2. "Nobody does it better."

Such expressions functioned as self-enhancing strategies that projected competence, success, and authority.

Audience Alignment

Audience alignment emerged as one of the most recurrent pragmatic functions in the corpus. Inclusive pronouns such as *we* and *our* occurred frequently, positioning the speaker and audience as members of a shared group.

1. "We love these people."
2. "We're all together on this."

These constructions reduced interpersonal distance and fostered collective identification.

Evidentiality

The corpus also contained frequent evidential expressions, particularly *I heard*, *they say*, and *you know*. These markers presented information as socially shared knowledge rather than independently verified facts.

1. "I heard they're fantastic people."
2. "You know, everybody says that."

Such evidential strategies created an impression of widespread agreement and communal validation.

Affiliative Stance Marking

Positive stance-taking dominated the corpus. Expressions of admiration, approval, appreciation, and solidarity occurred substantially more often than negative evaluations.

The repeated use of expressions such as *I love*, *we love*, *great people*, and *nice people* positioned the speaker as supportive and socially connected. These recurring patterns reinforced an affiliative interpersonal style and contributed to the construction of a highly recognizable political persona.

Summary of Findings

Across all three dimensions of analysis, the corpus demonstrates a remarkably systematic linguistic style. Lexically, the impersonation relies heavily on evaluative adjectives, intensifiers, and recurrent lexical bundles. Morphosyntactically, it is characterized by parataxis, syntactic fragmentation, repetition-driven structures, and frequent discourse-marker usage. Pragmatically, the discourse emphasizes positive self-presentation, audience alignment, evidentiality, and affiliative stance-taking.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Ryan Chen's impersonation reproduces a recognizable Trump-like communicative style primarily through patterned repetition, evaluative language, and simplified interactional strategies. Rather than replicating complex ideological arguments or syntactic sophistication, the impersonation achieves recognizability through the repeated deployment of salient rhetorical routines associated with Trump's public discourse.

DISCUSSION

The analysis points to a consistent pattern across the three dimensions examined. The performance repeatedly combines positive evaluation, intensification, short clause sequences, and direct audience-oriented expressions. This supports earlier work that treats political style as something enacted through recurring forms of mediated performance rather than through propositional content alone (Ekström et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2024).

At the lexical level, the concentration of a relatively small group of evaluative words and intensifiers is important. The most frequent items in this corpus were *so*, *nice*, *good*, *really*, and *very*. Repetition of these forms gives the performance a stable lexical profile. This observation is compatible with research describing repetition as an important feature of Trump's rhetoric, particularly in relation to evaluation and emphasis (Ross & Caldwell, 2020; Alisoy, 2025). The present findings, however, concern Chen's performance and should not be taken as a direct measurement of Trump's authentic speech.

The recurrent expressions *how you doing*, *very nice people*, and *I love/we love* also show that the performance depends on phraseological routines, not only individual words. Such recurring sequences are useful for identifying stylistic patterning because their meaning in discourse is partly carried by their repeated use and interactional context (Biber et al., 2004). In Chen's performances, these expressions repeatedly direct attention to the audience or convey positive evaluation, helping maintain a conversational persona.

The morphosyntactic results show a preference for short declarative clauses, paratactic sequences, coordination, fragments, and repetition. These features are consistent with previous descriptions of Trump's communication style, which emphasize informality, dynamism, and relatively simple sentence organization (Ahmadian et al., 2017). In the present corpus, however, their relevance lies in how they are used by the impersonator: short sequences and fragments make the performance sound conversational and allow evaluative statements to be delivered in quick succession.

The pragmatic results add an interactional dimension to the lexical and syntactic patterns. The high frequency of *we*, together with *you guys* and self-referential forms such as *I'm*, repeatedly places the speaker in relation to an audience or an imagined collective. This pattern is consistent with research on political discourse that links stance and cohesion with the construction of social alignment (Mestre-Mestre, 2026). The expressions *you know*, *I know*, *I don't know*, and *I heard* similarly frame information as shared, known, uncertain, or reported. Such uses are relevant to the construction of interpersonal positioning in the performance (Bednarek, 2006).

Taken together, the results suggest that Chen's impersonation does not reproduce every aspect of Trump's political discourse. Instead, it selects a limited set of salient linguistic resources—positive evaluation, intensification, repetition, short clause structures, collective pronouns, and conversational markers—and combines them into a recognizable

performance. The small corpus does not allow a claim that these features are exclusive to Trump or that they alone explain audience recognition. What the analysis shows is that these recurring resources are prominent in Chen's performances and provide a linguistic basis for his portrayal of a Trump-like persona.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings have several implications for English language teaching and curriculum development in ASEAN contexts. The corpus stylistic approach provides a practical way to bring authentic digital discourse into language classrooms. Teachers can use political speeches, impersonations, and other mediated performances to help learners identify how lexical choices, syntactic patterns, and pragmatic routines contribute to different voices and identities in English. Recent research on university students in ASEAN and Indonesian students also treats digital literacy as a core educational competency (Suranata et al., 2024; Kasriyati et al., 2024).

Critical media literacy is another relevant implication. Students who encounter political content through social media need to distinguish linguistic performance from political information. Corpus-based classroom activities can ask learners to examine repetition, evaluation, stance, and audience-address strategies and then discuss how these features may influence perceptions of authority and authenticity. This is consistent with recent work linking students' digital literacy to their capacity to navigate digital information and communication environments (Suranata et al., 2024).

The study also illustrates a possible use of data-driven learning for advanced English learners. Students can work with concordance lines to identify recurring lexical bundles, intensifiers, or stance markers and compare their distribution across speakers or genres. Such activities connect language learning with evidence-based observation of real discourse.

Finally, the approach can be extended to Southeast Asian political discourse and English varieties. Comparative studies of impersonation in different languages and cultural settings could help establish which stylistic resources are specific to particular public figures and which are more general features of mediated political performance.

CONCLUSION

This study examined Ryan Chen's Donald Trump impersonation performances through lexical, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic analysis of a small corpus compiled from five YouTube videos. The analysis shows that the performance has a consistent linguistic profile rather than relying only on vocal or visual resemblance.

The most frequent lexical patterns involved positive evaluation and intensification. The items *so*, *nice*, *good*, *really*, and *very* were prominent, while recurring expressions such as *how you doing*, *very nice people*, and *I love/we love* contributed to audience engagement and affiliation. The morphosyntactic analysis showed frequent short declarative clauses, paratactic sequences, coordination, fragments, and repetition. Pragmatically, the performance made frequent use of collective identity, self-presentation, audience alignment, and conversational knowledge or evidential markers.

These results should be interpreted within the limits of the dataset. The study did not compare Chen's performances with a separate corpus of Trump's authentic speeches, so it cannot establish which features are uniquely Trumpian. Rather, it identifies the linguistic resources that are prominent in Chen's portrayal of Trump and shows how those resources work together to produce a recognizable political persona.

The study also points to a practical relevance for language and media education. Corpus-based examination of public digital discourse can help learners notice how lexical choice, syntax, repetition, and pragmatic positioning shape communicative style. The limitations of the present corpus nevertheless indicate the need for larger comparative datasets and multimodal analysis in future research.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the corpus consisted of only five YouTube videos from a single impersonator, limiting the scope of generalization. Second, the analysis focused exclusively on linguistic features and did not examine multimodal aspects such as gesture, facial expression, prosody, or audience response, all of which may contribute to impersonation effectiveness. Third, the study investigated only one political figure and one performer, making it difficult to determine whether the observed patterns are specific to Trump impersonations or represent broader characteristics of political impersonation discourse.

Future research could address these limitations by examining larger corpora, comparing multiple impersonators, or investigating impersonations of different political figures across cultural contexts. Comparative studies involving authentic political speech and impersonated performances may also provide deeper insight into which linguistic features are most central to audience perceptions of authenticity. Additionally, multimodal approaches incorporating prosodic, visual, and interactional analyses would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of political impersonation as a complex communicative practice.

Overall, the analysis suggests that linguistic patterning is an important part of political impersonation. In Chen's performances, repeated lexical choices, simple clause structures, and interactional routines work together to construct a recognizable Trump-like style. Future comparative and multimodal research can determine how far these patterns extend beyond this single performer and corpus.

Declaration on the use of GenerativeAI

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used AI tool for paraphrasing, proofreading, and language correction to improve the clarity and readability of the manuscript. The AI tool was used solely for language enhancement and did not contribute to the intellectual content, research design, data analysis, interpretation of results, or conclusions. After using this tool, the authors carefully reviewed and edited the manuscript as needed and take full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the published work

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