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## DISCLAIM RESOURCES IN DONALD TRUMP'S INAUGURAL SPEECHES: A CORPUS-BASED APPROACH

T.B.G. Nguyen<sup>1</sup> , X.H. Tran<sup>2</sup>  

<sup>1</sup> Duy Tan University, Da Nang City, Vietnam;

<sup>2</sup> The University of Da Nang, University of Science and Education,  
Da Nang City, Vietnam

✉ [txhiep@ued.udn.vn](mailto:txhiep@ued.udn.vn)

**Abstract.** This study employs a corpus-based mixed-methods approach to analyze the deployment of Disclaim resources – specifically the Deny and Counter subcategories of the Engagement subsystem – Donald Trump's 2017 and 2025 inaugural speeches. The analysis reveals an increase in the total number of Disclaim instances from 39 in 2017 to 56 in 2025, with Deny expressions rising from 23 (59.0%) to 39 (69.6%) and Counter expressions showing a slight increase in absolute terms from 16 to 17 but a proportional decrease from 41.0% to 30.4%. This shift reflects a more assertive rhetorical style in the 2025 speech, characterized by an intensified rejection of alternative viewpoints and reduced engagement with contrasting perspectives. The 2025 speech also demonstrates a broader lexical range of Counter resources, despite their lower relative frequency, indicating a sophisticated strategic variation. The findings of this study have significant implications for political discourse analysis by illustrating how political figures employ appraisal resources to construct ideological identities, manage intersubjective positioning, and guide audience alignment. Beyond linguistics, the findings inform political communication, media literacy, and English language education by elucidating the mechanisms, through which political actors influence public perception and discourse dynamics. This research thus advances understanding of Dialogic Contraction's evolving role in political rhetoric and underscores the functions of Disclaim resources in articulating and contesting meaning in contemporary political communication.

**Keywords:** engagement resources, disclaim, deny, counter, inauguration speech, political discourse, corpus analysis.

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## ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЕ СРЕДСТВА ВЫРАЖЕНИЯ ОТКАЗА В ИНАУГУРАЦИОННЫХ РЕЧАХ ДОНАЛЬДА ТРАМПА: КОРПУСНЫЙ ПОДХОД

Т.Б.Д. Нгуен<sup>1</sup> , С.Х. Чан<sup>2</sup>  

<sup>1</sup> Университет Дуй Тан, Дананг, Вьетнам;

<sup>2</sup> Университет Дананга, Университет науки и образования,  
Дананг, Вьетнам

✉ [txhiep@ued.udn.vn](mailto:txhiep@ued.udn.vn)

**Аннотация.** В данном исследовании используется корпусный смешанный метод для анализа использования лингвистических средств выражения отказа (Disclaim), в частности подкатегорий отрицания (Deny) и противопоставления (Counter), относящихся к подсистеме вовлеченности (Engagement), в инаугурационных речах Дональда Трампа 2017 и 2025 годов. Анализ показывает увеличение общего количества случаев использования ресурсов отказа с 39 в 2017 году до 56 в 2025 году: выражения отрицания выросли с 23 (59,0%) до 39 (69,6%), а выражения противопоставления показали небольшое абсолютное увеличение с 16 до 17, но относительное снижение с 41,0% до 30,4%. Это изменение отражает более напористый риторический стиль в речи 2025 года, характеризующийся усиленным отрицанием альтернативных точек зрения и снижением вовлеченности в противоположные позиции. Несмотря на меньшую относительную частотность, речь 2025 года также демонстрирует более широкий лексический диапазон ресурсов противопоставления, что указывает на изощренное стратегическое разнообразие. Полученные результаты имеют важное значение для анализа политического дискурса, показывая, как политические деятели используют оценочные ресурсы для построения идеологической идентичности, управления межкультурным позиционированием и выстраивания согласия аудитории. За пределами лингвистики результаты исследования способствуют развитию политической коммуникации, медиаграмотности и преподавания английского языка, раскрывая механизмы влияния политических акторов на общественное восприятие и динамику дискурса. Таким образом, исследование углубляет понимание развивающейся роли диалогического сжатия (Dialogic Contraction) в политической риторике и подчеркивает функции ресурсов отказа в формировании и оспаривании смысла в современном политическом общении.

**Ключевые слова:** ресурсы вовлеченности, отказ, отрицание, противопоставление, инаугурационная речь, политический дискурс, корпусный анализ.

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### Introduction

The intricate relationship between language and politics is especially pronounced in contexts where political leaders seek to shape public opinion, legitimize authority, and assert ideological positions. At its core, political communication is a discursive practice embedded in the strategic use of language to persuade, influence, and manage relationships between institutions and citizens [1, 2]. Far from passively reflecting social realities, political discourse actively constructs and sustains power relations through rhetorical choices designed to guide audience interpretation and establish control [3, 4].

Within this broader communicative landscape, the presidential inaugural address holds a unique rhetorical status. It represents not only a ceremonial transition of power but also a discursive moment, in which a leader articulates a vision for national unity, affirms institutional legitimacy, and sets the ideological and political tone for the incoming administration [5, 6]. In the context of American democracy,



inaugural speeches are deliberately crafted texts that address both domestic and global audiences, combining symbolic language with strategic messaging.

To better understand how meaning and stance are constructed in such speeches, Appraisal Theory, particularly the Engagement subsystem developed by Martin and White, offers a valuable analytical lens [7]. Engagement focuses on how speakers acknowledge, reject, or align with alternative viewpoints in discourse. Of particular interest in this study is the Disclaim category—comprising expressions such as *not*, *never*, *but*, *however*, *although*, etc. — which are used to deny or Counter prior claims or anticipated objections. These expressions play a key role in contracting Dialogic space, enabling speakers to assert their position more forcefully by narrowing the scope for disagreement or alternative readings.

In this light, Donald Trump’s inaugural speeches in 2017 and 2025 provide rich material for analysis. His rhetorical style — characterized by simplicity, repetition, directness, and populist appeal — has attracted widespread scholarly interest. Trump’s discourse often departs from conventional presidential rhetoric by foregrounding themes of decline and renewal, challenging political elites, and emphasizing nationalist priorities. His inaugural addresses, therefore, serve as strategic sites for analyzing how language functions to assert ideological authority and manage competing perspectives.

This study aims to examine how Trump uses Disclaim expressions to construct stance, reinforce authority, and shape audience alignment across two presidential terms. By applying Appraisal Theory and employing corpus-based methods, the research investigates the frequency, distribution, and rhetorical function of Disclaim resources in the 2017 and 2025 inaugural speeches. It is hoped that this study offers a diachronic view of Trump’s communicative strategies and contributes to the broader field of political discourse analysis.

#### *Research Aim and Objectives*

##### *Research Aim*

This study aims to uncover rhetorical and ideological shifts in Donald Trump’s inaugural discourse by examining how Disclaim resources contribute to constructing stance, asserting authority, and managing audience alignment over time.

##### *Research Objectives*

The research focuses on achieving the following objectives:

- Identify the Disclaim resources found in Donald Trump’s 2017 and 2025 inaugural speeches;
- Determine the frequency and distribution of Disclaim resources across the two inaugural addresses;
- Analyze how Disclaim resources are used to construct stance, position the audience, and reinforce authority in Donald Trump’s inaugural discourse;
- Compare the use of Disclaim resources in the 2017 and 2025 inaugural speeches to identify changes or continuities in Trump’s rhetorical strategy over time.

##### *Research questions*

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

- What Disclaim resources are used in Donald Trump’s 2017 and 2025 inaugural speeches?
- What are the frequencies and distributions of these Disclaim resources across the two inaugural speeches?
- How are these Disclaim resources used to construct political stance, manage audience alignment, and assert authority?
- What changes or continuities can be observed in the use of Disclaim resources between the two speeches over time?

##### *Research Significance*

This study contributes to political discourse analysis and systemic functional linguistics by using Appraisal Theory’s Engagement subsystem to examine Disclaim resources in Donald Trump’s 2017 and 2025 inaugural speeches. It offers a diachronic view of his rhetorical strategies, showing how language use shifts across presidential terms. Additionally, the study demonstrates how corpus-based analysis



and Appraisal Theory can support English teaching and learning, particularly in discourse-focused and advanced language courses.

Theoretical Background

Appraisal

Appraisal Theory, introduced by James R. Martin during the 1990s “Write it Right” initiative and further developed with contributions from scholars like Peter White, Rick Iedema, and Joan Rothery in Sydney, represents a major progression in the exploration of interpersonal meaning within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) [8]. Rooted in Halliday’s SFL model, Martin and White’s Appraisal Theory builds on the idea that language performs three core metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual [7, 9].

Martin and White conceptualize their Appraisal framework as a system of interpersonal meaning situated within the stratum of discourse semantics in SFL. From a semantic perspective, the framework is organized into three interrelated domains: *Attitude*, *Engagement*, and *Graduation* [7]. Each domain addresses a distinct aspect of how speakers and writers use language to position themselves and others in relation to the subject matter and their audience.

Table 1. The Key Components of the Appraisal Framework [7]

Domain	Subsystem	Description
Attitude	Affect	Expressions of emotional responses and feelings
	Judgment	Evaluations of behavior according to social norms (e.g., morality, capacity, tenacity)
	Appreciation	Evaluations of things, processes, or states of affairs in terms of aesthetic and other social values
Engagement	Monoglossia	Utterances that present a single, unchallenged voice or viewpoint—no Dialogic alternatives are acknowledged
	Heteroglossia	Utterances that acknowledge or engage with alternative voices, including agreement, disagreement, or modality
Graduation	Force	Adjustments in intensity or quantity of attitudes or phenomena (e.g., intensifiers, amplifiers, attenuators)
	Focus	Adjustments to the prototypicality or categorical clarity of evaluative meanings (e.g., sharpening or softening of category membership).

Engagement

The Engagement system, a key element of the interpersonal metafunction within discourse semantics, focuses on how speakers or writers position themselves in relation to other viewpoints to shape the Dialogic nature of a text. Rather than merely expressing a stance, Engagement involves managing the presence of alternative or supporting voices within communication. It distinguishes between *Monoglossic* utterances, which assert propositions without acknowledging other perspectives, and *Heteroglossic* utterances, which engage with alternative positions by affirming, contesting, or entertaining them. Rooted in Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia, this framework emphasizes the interactive, multi-voiced nature of discourse and highlights how language users negotiate meaning and interpersonal alignment through Dialogic positioning [10].

Monoglossic Engagement

Monoglossic utterances present propositions as internally authoritative and exclude recognition of alternative viewpoints, thereby positioning the speaker as the sole source of truth [11]. These statements are closed to Dialogic negotiation and often appear as unqualified assertions that function rhetorically as if they are self-evident and uncontested. The use of monoglossic language is shaped by contextual factors such as the communicative purpose, institutional stance, and the level of ideological or epistemic

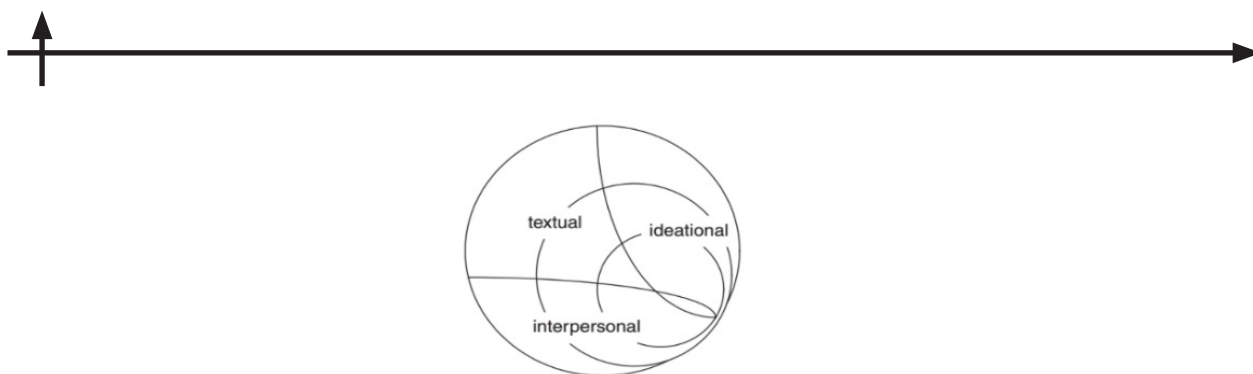


Fig. 1. Three Meta-functions of Language [7]

contestation surrounding the proposition [7]. This strategy serves to reinforce the speaker's authority and suppress competing interpretations.

#### *Heteroglossic Engagement*

Heteroglossia, in contrast to Monoglossia, refers to utterances that acknowledge and engage with alternative voices, reflecting the inherently Dialogic nature of communication [7]. Heteroglossic expressions recognize multiple viewpoints and position the speaker in relation to them. Heteroglossic resources include into two principal orientations: Dialogic Contraction, which limits alternative perspectives, and Dialogic Expansion, which invites them. Dialogic Contraction includes Disclaim (e.g., “not”, “however”) and Proclaim (e.g., concurrence, emphatic assertions, or endorsements) to assert the speaker's stance and restrict Dialogic alternatives. Conversely, Dialogic Expansion encompasses Entertain, which signals uncertainty (e.g., “might”, “it seems”), and Attribute, which introduces external voices either neutrally or with distance (e.g., “The minister stated...” or “It is alleged...”). These strategies collectively illustrate how speakers manage intersubjective positioning by either contracting or expanding the Dialogic space, offering a robust analytical lens for understanding the interpersonal dynamics of meaning-making in discourse.

#### *Subtypes and Dialogic Functions of Disclaim*

The following presents a comparative overview of the two subtypes within the Disclaim category of the Engagement system in Appraisal Theory: Deny and Counter. These subtypes represent distinct rhetorical strategies by which a speaker or writer contracts Dialogic space through the rejection or replacement of alternative propositions.

**Table 2. Subtypes and Dialogic Functions of Disclaim in the Engagement System of Appraisal [7]**

Aspect	Deny	Counter
Definition	Overt negation that directly repudiates or contradicts a prior or alternative proposition.	Replaces a presumed or anticipated viewpoint with a new, alternative proposition.
Function	To reject an invoked proposition that exists in the shared Dialogic space between speaker and audience.	To counter an expected assumption by foregrounding a more desirable or authoritative stance.
Linguistic Realizations	Grammatical negators: <i>not, no, none, never, nothing</i> ; structures like <i>not the case, failed to, there is nothing wrong with...</i>	Contrastive/concessive conjunctions: <i>but, although, however, yet, nevertheless</i> ; verbs: <i>neglect, ignore</i> ; adjuncts: <i>still, even, surprisingly</i> .

#### **Previous related studies**

In recent years, the Appraisal framework – particularly the Engagement system – has gained increasing prominence in the analysis of political discourse. Appraisal framework provides a means of exploring how speakers position themselves in relation to alternative viewpoints by utilizing Dialogic resources. To begin with, several foundational studies have examined political discourse through the lens of Appraisal, with a particular emphasis on Engagement. For example, Miller conducted a pioneering



study on President George W. Bush's address to the United Nations, integrating dialogism, ideology, and the Appraisal framework [12]. His analysis revealed how Bush utilized monoglossic and heteroglossic resources – especially Disclaiming ones – to construct an authoritative stance. However, this study was limited in scope, relying solely on a single speech and lacking a corpus-based methodology, which in turn constrained its broader applicability.

Similarly, Ismail explored the Engagement system in Barack Obama's 2009 Cairo speech, emphasizing the role of monoglossic and contractive heteroglossic strategies in limiting Dialogic alternatives [13]. While the study provided valuable insight into Obama's rhetorical positioning, it did not isolate or closely analyze Disclaim resources. Moreover, the study employed a qualitative approach and did not utilize corpus tools to systematically quantify Engagement elements.

More directly relevant to the present study, El-Sufi focused on Disclaim resources in Donald Trump's 2017 and 2021 inauguration speeches [14]. Employing a mixed-methods approach, El-Sufi found that *denial* was the most dominant Engagement strategy in both addresses, suggesting a consistent rhetorical pattern across Trump's presidential terms. Although this study provided a strong foundation for examining Disclaim elements, its scope was limited to two speeches and lacked frequency-based corpus analysis, leaving room for further investigation through more robust and replicable methods.

Furthermore, recent comparative studies have begun to incorporate corpus tools into political discourse analysis, although many still fall short of integrating the Engagement system. For example, Chen, Yan and Hu used AntConc to compare Hillary Clinton's and Donald Trump's campaign speeches during the 2016 election [15]. They found that Trump's language was more emotional and negative, while Clinton's was more logical and policy-focused. Despite the use of corpus methods, the study did not apply the Appraisal framework, thereby missing an opportunity to examine Dialogic strategies such as Disclaim.

Similarly, Fernandez adopted a corpus-assisted discourse analysis using Voyant Tools to examine Trump's speeches from 2015 to 2022 [16]. While this longitudinal approach identified patterns of modal verbs and emotional repetition, it did not incorporate a theoretical model like Appraisal, thus limiting the interpretive precision of the findings.

Comparative studies across political cultures have also contributed to this field. For instance, Garifullina D, Khismatullina, Giniyatullina, Garaeva and Gimadeeva compared the inaugural speeches of Trump and Putin, identifying differences in rhetorical tone and thematic focus – Trump's personal and emotive appeals versus Putin's emphasis on tradition and unity [17]. Nevertheless, the study relied on thematic and metaphorical analysis without engaging the Appraisal framework. Likewise, Yang, Jia, and Cao applied Appraisal Theory in a comparative analysis of Obama's and Trump's inaugural speeches, concluding that both leaders frequently used *graduation* resources [18]. However, they did not provide a detailed breakdown of the Engagement system, nor did they isolate Disclaim strategies for closer scrutiny.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate a growing scholarly interest in applying linguistic frameworks such as Appraisal to political discourse. However, several limitations remain evident. First, many studies conflate or overlook the subcategories of Engagement, particularly Disclaim resources. Second, a significant number of analyses rely on small samples and qualitative methods without the support of corpus tools. Third, few studies adopt a longitudinal perspective that would allow researchers to trace rhetorical patterns and shifts across time.

All in all, the present study aims to address these gaps by conducting a corpus-based analysis of Disclaim resources in Donald Trump's inauguration speeches. By focusing specifically on *Denial* and *Counter-expectation*, and by employing WordSmith 8.0 to quantify usage patterns, this research seeks to offer a more systematic, replicable, and temporally comparative account of Dialogic Contraction in presidential rhetoric. This approach deepens our understanding of how political speakers handle ideological positioning by engaging with alternative viewpoints.





## Methodology

The study analyzes the official inaugural speeches delivered by Donald Trump on Friday, January 20, 2017, and Monday, January 20, 2025. These speeches are treated as primary texts for an in-depth examination of the use of Disclaim resources.

The corpus includes transcripts and full video recordings of Donald Trump's 2017 and 2025 inaugural addresses. The 2017 speech (1,433 words, 16 minutes) was sourced from *Politico*<sup>1</sup> and YouTube<sup>2</sup>. The 2025 speech (2,888 words, nearly 30 minutes) was obtained from *The American Presidency Project*<sup>3</sup> and YouTube<sup>4</sup>.

## Findings and Discussions

### *Disclaim Resources in Donald Trump's Inaugural Speeches*

In political discourse, particularly inaugural speeches, speakers use rhetorical strategies to align with or oppose dominant ideologies. Appraisal Theory, especially the Engagement system, helps analyze how they manage alternative viewpoints [7]. The Disclaim category – comprising Deny and Counter – enables speakers to assert their stance. In Donald Trump's 2017 and 2025 inaugural addresses, examining these resources reveals how he constructs his political identity and persuasive stance.

#### *Deny*

This subsystem involves the explicit negation of a proposition, often through lexical items such as “not”, “no” or “never” and so on. *Deny* functions to directly reject an alternative viewpoint, signaling a clear opposition to a particular idea or assumption.

#### *Deny in Donald Trump's 2017 Inaugural Speech*

In his 2017 inaugural address, Donald Trump employed Deny resources to reject the prevailing political establishment and assert a transformative vision for America. By negating the accomplishments of prior administrations and emphasizing the failures of the status quo, he positioned his leadership as a necessary departure aimed at restoring power to the people and revitalizing the nation. This rhetorical strategy served to delineate a clear break from the past and to galvanize support for his “America First” agenda.

Example 1: “*I will fight for you with every breath in my body and I will **never**, ever let you down.*” (D1, S801)

In the sentence, Donald Trump employs the word “never” as a Deny resource to explicitly negate any alternative proposition that he might fail or disappoint his audience. By asserting “never” he not only rejects the possibility of letting the audience down but also acknowledges and counters any existing doubts or criticisms regarding his commitment. This strategic negation serves to contract the Dialogic space, limiting alternative viewpoints, and reinforcing his stance as a steadfast and reliable leader. Such use of Deny resources is instrumental in building trust and solidarity with the audience, aligning with the ideological function of Disclaim in political discourse to delineate the speaker's position and challenge opposing views.

Example 2: “*When you open your heart to patriotism, there is **no** room for prejudice.*” (D1, S1,023)

The word “no” is utilized as a Deny resource to explicitly negate the possibility of coexistence between patriotism and prejudice, asserting that genuine patriotism inherently excludes discriminatory attitudes. By declaring “*there is no room for prejudice*”, he not only rejects any association between patriotic sentiment and prejudice but also preempts and counters potential criticisms that nationalism

<sup>1</sup> **Politico**, Full text: Donald Trump inauguration speech transcript, 20.01.2017. Available at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/01/full-text-donald-trump-inauguration-speech-transcript-233907> (accessed 27.02.2025).

<sup>2</sup> **NBC News**, Donald Trump's full inauguration speech (C-SPAN) [Video], YouTube, 20.01.2017. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8QgvqaxpwE> (accessed 27.02.2025).

<sup>3</sup> **The White House**, Inaugural address [Speech transcript], The American Presidency Project, 20.01.2025. Available at: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/inaugural-address-54> (accessed 27.02.2025).

<sup>4</sup> **The Independent**, Donald Trump's full 2025 inauguration speech, YouTube. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNArBr\\_J8mA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNArBr_J8mA) (accessed 27.02.2025).



may harbor exclusionary tendencies. This strategic negation serves to contract the Dialogic space, limiting alternative interpretations and reinforcing his stance that patriotism is inclusive and unifying. Such use of Deny resources is instrumental in aligning national identity with positive values, promoting unity, and distancing his political vision from divisive ideologies.

#### *The Frequencies of Deny Resources in the 2017 Inaugural Speech*

The following table displays the frequencies and percentages of Deny resources identified in Donald Trump's 2017 inaugural speech.

**Table 3. Deny Resources in Trump's 2017 Inaugural Speech**

Deny Resources	Frequency	Percentage
not	10	0.69%
never	6	0.42%
no	4	0.28%
no longer	2	0.14%
failed to	1	0.07%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>≈1.60%</b>

Table 3 presents the distribution of five deny expressions: “*not*”, “*never*”, “*no*”, “*no longer*”, and “*failed to*”. These lexical items serve to reject or negate alternative positions or prior assumptions. The expression “*not*” appears most frequently, with 10 instances (0.69%) to indicate a strong rhetorical tendency to negate propositions. “*Never*” occurs 6 times (0.42%) to emphasize categorical rejection, often for dramatic effect. “*No*” is used 4 times (0.28%), and “*no longer*” appears twice (0.14%), typically signaling a break from past policies or conditions. Additionally, “*failed to*” occurs once (0.07%), highlighting criticism of past actions or administrations. Collectively, these deny resources appear 23 times in the speech (≈1.60%) to demonstrate a consistent effort to close down Dialogic space and assert a definitive stance. This pattern reflects the speaker's intent to present a clear, authoritative vision and disalign from previous administrations or competing viewpoints.

#### *Deny in Donald Trump's 2025 Inaugural Speech*

The deployment of Deny resources in Donald Trump's 2025 inaugural speech strengthens the speaker's position through explicit negation of alternative perspectives. In Trump's 2025 speech, these Deny resources are strategically employed to invalidate Counterarguments and assert his ideological stance as definitive and uncontested.

Example 3: “*We will **not** be conquered, we will **not** be intimidated, we will **not** be broken, and we will **not** fail.*” (D2, S 2,863)

The repeated use of “*not*” functions as a key Deny resource explicitly rejects any possibility of submission, fear, defeat, or failure. The strategic repetition of “*not*” serves to contract the Dialogic space by preemptively closing off alternative outcomes or interpretations that might suggest weakness or vulnerability. By consistently negating these negative states, the speaker fortifies a collective identity of resilience and strength, presenting these assertions as unequivocal truths. This use of “*not*” not only asserts a firm stance but also mobilizes the audience's confidence and solidarity to emphasize determination in the face of potential adversity. The cumulative effect of the repeated Deny resource is to create a powerful rhetorical rhythm that reinforces the speaker's unwavering resolve.

Example 4: “*Our liberties and our nations glorious destiny will **no longer** be denied.*” (D2, S 639)

The phrase “*no longer*” functions as a significant Deny resource signals the cessation of a previously ongoing state – specifically, the denial of liberties and national destiny. By asserting that these conditions “*will no longer*” persist, the speaker explicitly rejects the continuation of past injustices or constraints to contract the Dialogic space by foreclosing the possibility that such Denial might continue into the





future. The use of “*no longer*” not only negates the status quo but also projects a commitment to change and progress. It positions the speaker as an agent of transformation, affirming a shift from repression to empowerment. This negation creates a rhetorical emphasis on renewal and reclamation to reinforce the speaker’s authoritative stance and invite the audience to share in a collective hope for restored freedoms and a fulfilled national destiny.

*The Frequencies of Deny Resources in the 2025 Inaugural Speech*

The following table demonstrates a concise quantitative overview of Deny resources in Trump’s 2025 inaugural speech to illustrate how the frequent use of negation serves to reinforce his stance and marginalize opposing perspectives.

**Table 4. Deny Resources in Donald Trump’s 2025 Inaugural Speech**

Disclaim Resources	Frequency (2025)	Percentage
not	16	0.54%
never	9	0.31%
no	6	0.18%
no longer	2	0.07%
nothing	2	0.07%
nobody	2	0.07%
no one	1	0.03%
without	1	0.03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>1.23%</b>

The above table illustrates the distribution of Deny resources found in Donald Trump’s 2025 inaugural address. A total of 39 Deny tokens were identified, accounting for 1.26% of the entire speech content. The most frequently used Deny term is “*not*” (16 instances, 0.54%), indicating a strong tendency toward direct negation. This is followed by “*never*” (9 instances, 0.31%), with the collocation “*never before*” occurring *five times*, emphasizing historical uniqueness and rhetorical intensification. Other negative markers such as “*no*” (6 instances, 0.18%) and “*nothing*”, “*nobody*”, “*no one*”, “*without*” and “*no longer*” appear with lower frequency, each individually contributing between 0.03% and 0.07%. The predominance of “*not*” and “*never*” suggests that Trump strategically employed these Deny resources to contract the Dialogic space, reject contrary viewpoints, and strengthen authoritative declarations about America’s future. The frequent use of these forms contributes to a rhetoric of certainty, determination, and opposition to align with persuasive political discourse aimed at mobilizing support and affirming national identity. All in all, the variety and distribution of Deny resources reinforce Trump’s rhetorical strategy to reject previous failures, assert national revival, and portray his vision as both corrective and exceptional.

*The comparison of Deny resources in Donald Trump’s 2017 and 2025 inaugural speeches*

The comparative table below provides a diachronic comparison of Deny expressions identified in Donald Trump’s 2017 and 2025 inaugural addresses, detailing their respective frequencies and proportional occurrences to reveal patterns of rhetorical continuity and change.

The preceding table shows notable shifts in the use of Deny resources between Donald Trump’s 2017 and 2025 inaugural addresses. While the overall number of Deny resources increased from 23 instances in 2017 to 39 in 2025, the total percentage slightly declined from approximately 1.60% to 1.23%, indicating a broader lexical base or increased discourse volume in the latter speech. The expression “*not*” remained the most frequently used Deny resources across both speeches, though its proportional use decreased slightly (from 0.69% to 0.54%). Similarly, “*never*” and “*no*” were used more frequently in 2025 than in 2017, though their percentages also declined, suggesting that while Trump relied on these



familiar negation strategies, they constituted a smaller share of the overall discourse. New Deny expressions such as “*nothing*”, “*nobody*” “*no one*” and “*without*” appeared in 2025 but were absent in 2017, reflecting an expansion of the rhetorical repertoire used to reject alternative viewpoints or undesirable conditions. Conversely, the expression “*failed to*”, which appeared in 2017, did not recur in 2025, possibly indicating a strategic shift away from overt criticism of predecessors toward more implicit forms of negation. Notably, “*no longer*” remains consistent with 2 occurrences in both speeches, though its percentage decreases from 0.14% to 0.07%. Overall, the data indicate a diachronic trend toward greater lexical variety and more subtle, embedded forms of denial in Trump’s later rhetoric.

**Table 5. Comparative Deny Resources in Donald Trump’s 2017 and 2025 Inaugural Addresses**

Deny Resources	Frequency (2017)	Percentage (2017)	Frequency (2025)	Percentage (2025)
not	10	0.69%	16	0.54%
never	6	0.42%	9	0.31%
no	4	0.28%	6	0.18%
no longer	2	0.14%	2	0.07%
nothing	—	—	2	0.07%
nobody	—	—	2	0.07%
no one	—	—	1	0.03%
without	—	—	1	0.03%
failed to	1	0.07%	—	—
<b>Total</b>	23	≈1.60%	39	1.23%

### *Counter*

This section examines the use of Counter resources in Donald Trump’s 2017 and 2025 inaugural speeches and focuses on their frequency, distribution, and rhetorical functions across both texts.

#### *Counter in Donald Trump’s 2017 Inaugural Speech*

Donald Trump’s 2017 inaugural speech makes notable use of Counter resources to construct contrastive meanings and assert ideological positioning. The use of Counter not only enhances the argumentative force of the speech but also reflects a deliberate strategy to challenge the status quo and establish a break from preceding administrations.

Example 5: “*Today’s ceremony, **however**, has very special meaning. Because today we are not merely transferring power from one Administration to another, or from one party to another, **but** we are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People.*” (D1, S119)

This sentence exemplifies the strategic use of Counter resources — specifically “*however*” and “*but*” — to construct a contrastive and ideologically significant narrative. The adverb “*however*” signals a departure from what the audience might expect from a typical inauguration speech, framing the event not as a routine ceremony but as one with exceptional importance. This sets up a Counter-expectation that Trump further reinforces by explicitly rejecting the conventional understanding of a power transition through the phrase “*not merely transferring power from one Administration to another, or from one party to another*”. This denial anticipates and challenges a widely held public assumption. The contrastive pivot marked by the adversative conjunction “*but*” then asserts an alternative and more radical framing: “*we are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People*”. Also, “*but*” functions as a Disclaim: Counter to reject a presumed proposition and replace it with a more assertive, ideologically marked alternative. This Counter move achieves multiple rhetorical purposes: it contrasts institutional continuity with populist rupture, delegitimizes previous transitions as superficial, and constructs a populist stance by positioning Trump as the agent of a political reclamation on behalf of “*the people*”. Thus, “*however*” and “*but*” are not merely cohesive devices but ideologically charged



mechanisms that challenge the status quo and recast the inauguration as a transformative moment of anti-establishment significance.

Building on the contrastive and ideologically charged use of Counter resources seen with “*however*” and “*but*” in the above mentioned, Example 6 similarly employs the intensifier “*even*” to escalate ambition to reinforce the theme of challenging expectations and promoting a transformative vision.

Example 6: “*Finally, we must think big and dream even bigger.*” (D1, S 1,112)

In this sentence, the word “*even*” functions as an intensifier that signals a Counter to mark a departure from the expected scale of ambition. The phrase “*think big*” already encourages boldness, but “*dream even greater*” introduces an enhanced, more extreme alternative, rejecting any limitations that the initial clause might imply. The deployment of “*even*” creates a contrast between two levels of aspiration – thinking big as a baseline, and dreaming bigger as the ideal. This scalar contrast functions rhetorically to elevate the audience’s expectations and align them with an expansive, visionary outlook. Ideologically, it reinforces Trump’s populist appeal by inspiring a sense of limitless possibility and national renewal. In this way, “*even*” serves not merely as a modifier but as a Dialogic device that challenges complacency and urges the audience to transcend conventional goals, positioning the new administration as a catalyst for extraordinary achievement.

#### *The Frequencies of Counter Resources in the 2017 Inaugural Speech*

The table below presents the frequency and percentage of Counter expressions used in Donald Trump’s inaugural speech, highlighting the linguistic resources he employed to introduce contrastive or opposing viewpoints.

**Table 6. Counter Resources in Donald Trump’s 2017 Inaugural Speech**

Counter Expression	Frequency	Percentage
but	13	0.90%
even	2	0.14%
however	1	0.07%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1.11%</b>

The aforementioned table provides an overview of the Counter expressions found in Donald Trump’s inaugural speech to illustrate how he used linguistic resources to signal contrast or shift in perspective. The most frequently used Counter expression is “*but*”, occurring 13 times, which accounts for 0.90% of the total words in the speech. This indicates a strong reliance on this common conjunction to introduce opposing ideas or to contrast previous statements. The word “*even*” appears 2 times (0.14%), often used to emphasize unexpected or intensified contrast. Meanwhile, “*however*” appears only once (0.07%), suggesting a more limited use of formal or academic-style contrastive markers. In total, 16 Counter expressions were identified, making up approximately 1.11% of the speech, reflecting Trump’s rhetorical tendency to contrast ideas as part of his persuasive strategy.

#### *Counter in Donald Trump’s 2025 Inaugural Speech*

The use of Counter resources in Donald Trump’s 2025 inaugural speech reflects a strategic effort to challenge prevailing assumptions and reinforce contrastive meanings, contributing to the construction of a persuasive and ideologically marked narrative.

Example 7: “*In recent years, our nation has suffered greatly, but we are going to bring it back and make it great again, greater than ever before.*” (D2, S2,755)

This sentence demonstrates that Donald Trump employs the adversative conjunction “*but*” as a Counter resource to reject or soften a preceding negative proposition – “*our nation has suffered greatly*” – and replace it with a more hopeful, assertive alternative: “*we are going to bring it back and make it great again*”. This use of Counter shifts the evaluative focus from a portrayal of decline to one of renewal and national



restoration. The sentence strategically constructs a contrastive meaning: the initial clause acknowledges hardship and decline, which resonates with public discontent, while the second clause reverses this framing with a confident commitment to recovery. This rhetorical maneuver helps Trump align himself with the people’s grievances while simultaneously positioning himself as the agent of change. The phrase “*greater than ever before*” further intensifies the optimistic Counterclaim, amplifying the promise of transformation and reinforcing a populist, future-oriented narrative. In brief, the use of “*but*” exemplifies a common rhetorical strategy in Trump’s discourse: acknowledging dissatisfaction to enhance credibility, then pivoting to a bold, restorative vision that underscores his leadership as a turning point.

Example 8: “*And we have an education system that teaches our children to be ashamed of themselves in many cases, to hate our country **despite** the love that we try so desperately to provide to them.*” (D2, S558)

The conjunction “*despite*” in the sentence functions as a concessive marker, signaling a contrast between two opposing ideas. It introduces a Counter-expectation by acknowledging that, although there is a strong and sincere effort to provide love to the children, the outcome is paradoxical: the children are taught to feel shame and even hatred toward their own country. This concessive relation highlights the tension between the positive intention (“*the love that we try so desperately to provide*”) and the negative result (“*to be ashamed of themselves... to hate our country*”). Ideologically, the use of “*despite*” serves to position the speaker’s effort and patriotism as genuine and earnest, while framing the education system as problematic or even harmful by contradicting those good intentions. This contrast subtly critiques the educational content or approach, suggesting it undermines national loyalty even in the face of nurturing care. The concessive structure thus functions to evoke sympathy for the speaker’s viewpoint and to delegitimize opposing influences in the education system.

#### *The Frequencies of Counter Resources in the 2025 Inaugural Speech*

The subsequent table illustrates the frequencies and percentages of Counter resources identified in Donald Trump’s 2025 Inaugural Speech.

**Table 7. Counter Resources in Donald Trump’s 2025 Inaugural Speech**

Counter Resources	Frequency	Percentage
but	9	0.31%
even	4	0.14%
still	2	0.07%
despite	1	0.03%
yet	1	0.03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0.58%</b>

It can be seen that the distribution of Counter resources in Donald Trump’s 2025 inaugural speech, focusing on lexical items that function to introduce contrastive or Counter-expectational meanings. These expressions signal a shift in perspective or acknowledge alternative viewpoints while reinforcing the speaker’s stance. The term “*but*” appears most frequently, with 9 instances (0.31%), underscoring its central role in contrasting propositions and asserting ideological distinctions. The resource “*even*” follows with 4 occurrences (0.14%), typically used to intensify or highlight unexpected assertions. “*Still*” is found twice (0.07%), suggesting ongoing relevance or persistence in the face of opposition. Both “*despite*” and “*yet*” occur only once (0.03%) each to introduce concessive or contrastive ideas that reinforce the speaker’s position. Altogether, these Counter resources appear 17 times, accounting for 0.58% of the total discourse. While numerically modest, their strategic placement contributes to Dialogic Contraction by acknowledging other perspectives only to discount them to strengthen the speaker’s rhetorical authority. The relatively low percentage also suggests that these resources are selectively employed for rhetorical emphasis rather than frequent reliance.



### *The Comparison of Counter Resources in Donald Trump's 2017 and 2025 Inaugural Speeches*

A comparison of the Counter resources in Donald Trump's 2017 and 2025 inaugural speeches reveals differences in both frequency and lexical selection, indicating a shift in rhetorical strategies and ideological emphasis over time.

**Table 8. Comparative Counter Resources in Donald Trump's 2017 and 2025 Inaugural Addresses**

Counter Resources	2017 Frequency	2017 Percentage	2025 Frequency	2025 Percentage
but	13	0.90%	9	0.31%
even	2	0.14%	4	0.14%
however	1	0.07%	0	0.00%
still	0	0.00%	2	0.07%
despite	0	0.00%	1	0.03%
yet	0	0.00%	1	0.03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1.11%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0.58%</b>

The aforementioned table indicates a comparative analysis of Counter resources in Donald Trump's 2017 and 2025 inaugural speeches, highlighting both the frequency and percentage of specific contrastive expressions. The total number of Counter resources remains relatively consistent across the two speeches – 16 in 2017 and 17 in 2025 – yet notable differences emerge in their distribution and usage. In 2017, the dominant Counter resource is “*but*” accounting for 13 instances (0.90%), whereas its frequency declines to 9 (0.31%) in 2025, indicating a reduced reliance on this common adversative marker. Conversely, the use of “*even*” remains proportionally stable at 0.14% in both speeches, although its frequency increases from 2 to 4 occurrences, suggesting a growing emphasis on scalar contrast. Interestingly, while “*however*” appears only once in 2017, it is entirely absent in 2025, implying a potential shift away from more formal conjunctive structures. The 2025 speech also introduces a broader lexical range of Counter resources – such as “*still*”, “*despite*” and “*yet*” – none of which are present in the 2017 address. These additions, though infrequent, reflect a diversification of contrastive strategies. All in all, while the 2017 speech is characterized by a concentrated use of a few dominant Counter expressions, the 2025 address demonstrates a more varied, though less frequent, deployment of these resources, suggesting a subtle shift in rhetorical style and engagement.

### *Comparative Analysis of Disclaim Resources in 2017 vs. 2025 Speeches*

Table 9 illustrates a detailed comparative analysis of the frequency and proportional usage of Deny and Counter Disclaim resources in Donald Trump's 2017 and 2025 inaugural addresses, highlighting shifts in rhetorical strategies over time.

The above table demonstrates a comparative analysis of the distribution of Deny and Counter Disclaim resources in Donald Trump's 2017 and 2025 inaugural speeches. The findings reveal an increase in the absolute frequency of deny expressions from 23 instances in 2017 to 39 in 2025, albeit with a slight decrease in their relative percentage within the overall discourse. Predominant deny markers such as “*not*”, “*never*” and “*no*” are consistently employed across both speeches, with “*not*” demonstrating a marked increase in usage in the later address. Furthermore, the 2025 speech incorporates several Deny expressions absent from the 2017 speech, including “*nothing*”, “*nobody*” and “*no one*” suggesting a diversification in the speaker's rhetorical repertoire. Conversely, Counter expressions exhibit a marginal increase in frequency but a notable decline in proportional use, with “*but*” remaining the most frequent marker despite reduced occurrence. Additional Counter terms such as “*still*”, “*despite*” and “*yet*” emerge exclusively in the 2025 speech, whereas “*however*” present in 2017, is omitted in 2025. These patterns indicate that the 2017 speech employs Disclaim resources with greater density, while the



2025 speech demonstrates a broader and more sophisticated application of such resources, potentially reflecting shifts in ideological positioning and discursive strategy over time.

The table below demonstrates a comparative overview of the use of Disclaim resources in Donald Trump’s 2017 and 2025 inaugural speeches. It outlines the total number of instances and the percentage distribution of the two subtypes – *Deny* and *Counter* – each speech. This comparison highlights the differing emphasis placed on these engagement strategies across the two addresses.

**Table 9. Full Disclaim Comparison (2017 vs. 2025)**

Disclaim Resources	2017 Frequency	2017 Percentage	2025 Frequency	2025 Percentage
<b>Deny Resources</b>				
not	10	0.69%	16	0.54%
never	6	0.42%	9	0.31%
no	4	0.28%	6	0.18%
no longer	2	0.14%	2	0.07%
nothing	—	—	2	0.07%
nobody	—	—	2	0.07%
no one	—	—	1	0.03%
without	—	—	1	0.03%
failed to	1	0.07%	—	—
<b>Deny Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>≈1.60%</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>1.23%</b>
<b>Counter Resources</b>				
but	13	0.90%	9	0.31%
even	2	0.14%	4	0.14%
however	1	0.07%	0	0.00%
still	0	0.00%	2	0.07%
despite	0	0.00%	1	0.03%
yet	0	0.00%	1	0.03%
<b>Counter Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1.11%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0.58%</b>

**Table 10: Disclaim Distribution by Subtype in Donald Trump’s 2017 and 2025 Inaugural Addresses**

Year	Total Disclaim Resources	Deny (Instances)	Deny (%)	Counter (Instances)	Counter (%)
<b>2017</b>	39	23	≈ 59.0%	16	≈ 41.0%
<b>2025</b>	56	39	≈ 69.6%	17	≈ 30.4%

The data in Table 10 and Figure 2 illustrate a notable shift in the distribution of Disclaim resources across Donald Trump’s 2017 and 2025 inaugural addresses. The total number of Disclaim instances increased from 39 to 56, reflecting a growing reliance on Dialogic Contraction as a rhetorical strategy. More specifically, Deny resources rose in both absolute terms and proportionally – from 23 instances (59.0%) in 2017 to 39 instances (69.6%) in 2025 – indicating an intensified use of direct negation to reject alternative viewpoints. In contrast, the share of Counter resources declined from 41.0% to 30.4%, suggesting a reduced engagement with Dialogic alternatives and a less frequent acknowledgment of opposing voices before introducing contrastive claims. These changes point to a rhetorical shift toward a more monoglossic stance in the 2025 address, characterized by greater assertiveness and ideological firmness, and a diminished openness to Dialogic negotiation.



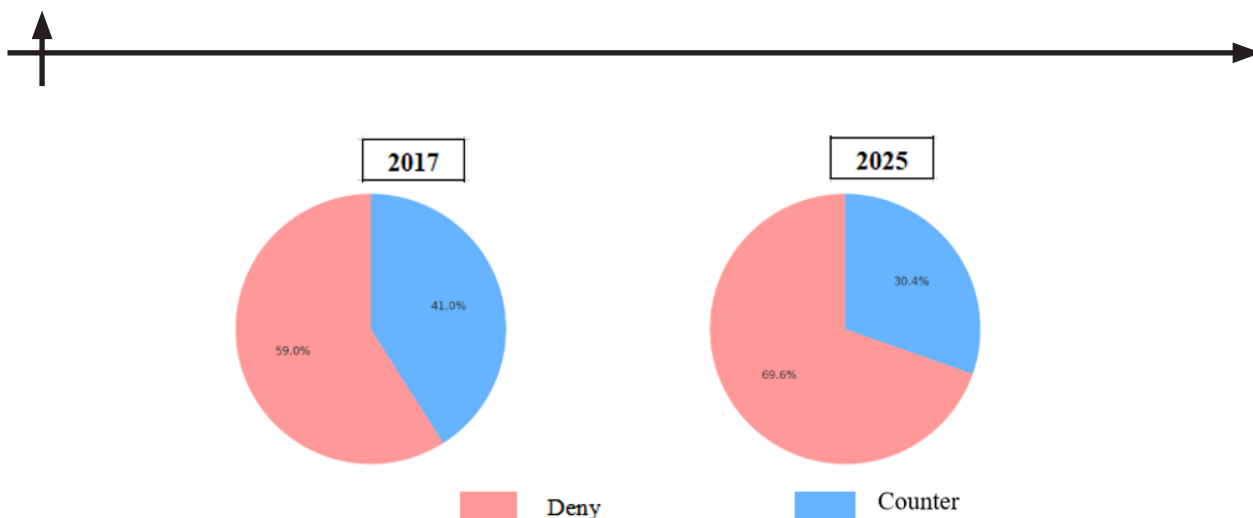


Fig. 2. The Distribution of Disclaim Resources in Donald Trump's 2017 and 2025 Inaugural Speeches

### *Rhetorical Functions of Disclaim Resources*

The rhetorical functions of Disclaim resources in Donald Trump's inaugural addresses reveal strategic choices in managing intersubjective positioning. Deny resources, such as “not”, “no” and “never” serve to explicitly reject propositions to assert ideological certainty and close down Dialogic alternatives. Their increased use in the 2025 speech suggests a deliberate rhetorical effort to reinforce Trump's authority and portray a clear separation from prior policies or opposing viewpoints. In contrast, Counter resources like “but”, “however” and “even” function to introduce contrastive meanings to allow for a limited acknowledgment of other perspectives before presenting an alternative stance. The reduced frequency of Counter expressions in 2025 implies a rhetorical shift away from accommodating multiple viewpoints toward a more unilateral and confrontational style. Together, these patterns demonstrate how Disclaim resources are employed not only to manage stance but also to construct a persuasive narrative that aligns with the speaker's ideological and communicative goals.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of Disclaim resources in Donald Trump's 2017 and 2025 inaugural speeches reveals a consistent rhetorical strategy grounded in Dialogic Contraction and political identity construction. Central to this strategy is the Deny subsystem, through which Trump rejects alternative viewpoints, delegitimizes prior administrations, and emphasizes a clear break from the past. This is achieved through frequent use of lexical markers such as “not”, “never”, and “no”, which convey categorical certainty and resolve. Although the 2025 speech illustrates a greater variety and higher raw frequency of Deny resources, a proportional decline in their density suggests a shift toward a broader and possibly more nuanced discursive approach. The emergence of expressions such as “nothing”, “nobody”, and “no one” reflects an expanded rhetorical repertoire, while the absence of phrases like “failed to” may indicate a move from retrospective criticism to a more forward-looking narrative. These Disclaim resources, particularly Deny, function not merely as grammatical constructs but as strategic tools for managing Dialogic opposition, guiding audience alignment, and reinforcing Trump's distinctive and polarizing political persona. More broadly, the study highlights the critical role of Disclaim in political discourse as a means of regulating ideological meaning, asserting authority, and shaping public perception. Its findings contribute to the fields of discourse analysis, political communication, and English education, while also offering insights relevant to political psychology, media literacy, and English language teaching. Furthermore, the corpus-based methodology demonstrates the value of integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in discourse studies. Nevertheless, the research is limited in scope, focusing exclusively on two inaugural speeches by a single political figure and examining only the Deny subsystem. This restricts the generalizability of the findings and overlooks the complexity of Engagement strategies



in political discourse. Future research should therefore expand the corpus to include multiple political actors, diverse speech genres, and other Engagement subsystems, enabling richer cross-cultural and diachronic comparisons that can further illuminate the rhetorical dynamics of political language.

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## СВЕДЕНИЯ ОБ АВТОРАХ / INFORMATION ABOUT AUTHORS

Нгуен Тхи Бич Джианг

Nguyen Thi Bich Giang

E-mail: [nguyentbichgiang@dtu.edu.vn](mailto:nguyentbichgiang@dtu.edu.vn)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7171-2307>



**Чан Суан Хиеп**

**Tran Xuan Hiep**

E-mail: txhiep@ued.udn.vn

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5236-993X>

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