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MASTER'S THESIS

GENDERED LANGUAGE AND LEXICAL CHOICES IN ENGLISH TALK SHOWS: A CORPUS-BASED INVESTIGATION

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İNGİLİS "TOK-ŞOU"LARINDA GENDER DİLİ VƏ LEKSİK SEÇİMLƏR: KORPUS ƏSASLI TƏDQİQAT

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INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the topic and the degree of research. Relevance of the topic is that it addresses language, gender, and media—three influential forces that construct how we think of ourselves and others in society. During a period in which the mass media occupy a key position in the construction and reproduction of social identities, talk shows have become one of the most heavily watched genres of public discourse. In contrast to fiction or scripted drama, talk shows are framed as spontaneous and "real" talk and, therefore, have a significant influence on audiences' understanding of what is "normal" or "acceptable" in communication. Gendered language, or the ways that women and men routinely use language differently—in tone, vocabulary, conversational strategy, or even in nonverbal communication—is not usually apparent to the casual viewer. However, these variations collectively add to the general cultural conception of gender roles, power dynamics, and social expectations.

This thesis is timely also in the way it examines these linguistic tendencies within a context that is both popularly accessible and influential—television talk shows. Talk shows are viewed by millions of people globally and quite regularly have celebrity guests, thus presenting a perfect platform for examining the ways in which gender is acted out and perceived through language. In addition, talk shows habitually draw on humor, spontaneity, and audience involvement, a fertile ground for witnessing how gendered communication is worked out in the moment. By examining lexical choice and discourse structure through corpus methodology, the research provides a systematic, data-driven understanding of language use.

Also, the subject is current and fits into the increasing international debate on gender representation in media and the public sphere. Gender equality campaigns, media accountability, and inclusive communications movements have raised awareness about how language cumulatively reinforces social hierarchies. Examining how these dynamics play out in ordinary media genres contributes to the scholarly business of sociolinguistics and general endeavors for more inclusive and thoughtful media practices. By analyzing actual interaction and rendering observable the repeated linguistic patterns of gender, this thesis enters into a broader cultural and scholarly conversation, one that endeavors to decipher and ultimately change the discourses we are subject to and which we enact in public communication.

The object and subject of the research.

The object of this study is the gendered character of speech behavior in English-language talk shows. Talk shows offer a rich setting for informal and semi-formal interaction, and language use is likely to echo general social and cultural trends, including gender distinctions.

Within this context, the subject of this study is a corpus-based examination of gendered lexical choices, linguistic features utilized by men and women. While exploring the above aspects, the study seeks to reveal the impact of gender on language use in media communication and have a deeper understanding of the interference of language, gender, and media communication.

The aims and objectives of the research.

The aims of the research:

To analyze the usage of gendered language on English-language talk shows, specifically how the host and guests perform gender through language.

To research the linguistic practices employed by men and women on talk shows, including lexical hedges or fillers, 'empty' adjectives, rising intonation on declarative, intensifies, 'super-polite' forms, avoidance of strong swear words, and empathic stress, minimal responses, tag questions, questions, commands and directives, swearing and taboo language, and compliments.

To discuss how language on talk shows mirrors and reinforces societal gender norms, power relations, and expectations.

To examine the effect of gendered language in talk shows on the general public's view of gender roles and the general media environment.

Research Objectives:

To examine transcripts of the chosen episodes of talk shows, and note down substantial examples of gendered language in terms of lexical hedges or fillers, 'empty' adjectives, rising intonation on declarative, intensifies, 'super-polite' forms, avoidance of strong swear words, and empathic stress, minimal responses, tag questions, questions, commands and directives, swearing and taboo language, and compliments.

To provide an understanding of how talk shows can affect public opinion of gender through their representation of male-female guest interaction.

The research questions addressed in this study were as follows:

How do women and men talk show speakers use language differently in English-language talk shows?

Which linguistic strategies (e.g. lexical hedges or filters, 'empty' adjectives, rising intonation on declarative, intensifies, 'super-polite' forms, avoidance of strong swear words, and empathic stress, minimal responses, tag questions etc.) do women and men use most often in talk shows?

How closely do gendered talk patterns in talk shows reproduce or invert conventional societal knowledge of gender roles and relations of power?

In what way(s) do talk show hosts and guests perform gender in what they say and the manner in which they say it?

Research methods. It is a mixed-methods study. It is integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Which examines the performance of gendered language and word choice in modern English-language talk shows. Discourse analysis is utilized in order to understand not just what is stated, but rather, how it is stated—specifically, how language builds up as well as mirrors gendered behavior within public informal settings. The research is based on Robin Lakoff's seminal 1975 model that outlines some of the most significant linguistic characteristics of women's language, such as hedges, tag questions, and intensifiers. These are utilized as the framework for analyzing how women celebrities speak in informal television interviews. Together with this, the analysis also treats other conversational properties typical of casual chat based on Coates—i.e., minimal responses, humor, and directives—which have typically been associated with men speech styles in similar contexts. The two-fold analytical approach allows for a more balanced and comprehensive understanding of gender performance and perception via language.

Eight interviews were chosen from three highly popular English-language talk shows—The Ellen DeGeneres Show, The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon, and The Late Show with David Letterman. The shows were chosen for their spontaneous and casual interview formats, which are favorable to naturally occurring spoken language interaction. Both male and female guests are featured on each of the shows, enabling comparative examination of gendered language use within the same setting. The interview transcripts were examined for the presence of chosen linguistic features, each instance explored both quantitatively, via frequency tallies and percentage tables, and qualitatively.

Scientific novelty of the research. The novelty of this research is that it investigates the intersection of gendered language, lexis, and media discourse from the perspective of English-language talk shows, which is a very underresearched but vital genre in contemporary sociolinguistic research. Although gendered communication has been studied in depth at a large level, the thesis provides a new direction with corpus-based research into the authentic, spontaneous language of extremely popular talk shows. Talk shows, as opposed to scripted media, contain unscripted host-guest conversation and thereby offer themselves as a rich environment to witness gendered speech in its natural setting in the public sphere. The novelty of the research also lies in the manner in which classic sociolinguistic theory, e.g., Lakoff's model of women's language, is combined with more recent discourse analytical tools in order to deliver a demanding and data-driven record of the linguistic construction of gender roles in the media. Examining not only what men and women speakers say, but also how they say it—using politeness strategies, hedging, interruption, lexical choice, and dominance in conversation—adds new knowledge to current scholarly research on gender, language, and representation. In addition, the research provides examples of how the talk show genre reinforces or resists such tendencies, revealing implicit processes through which media mediates and constructs social attitudes towards gendered communication. This blend of methodological discipline, contemporaneity, and media-specificity makes the book a new and deserving contribution to sociolinguistics, media studies, and gender discourse analysis fields.

CHAPTER I. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Language and gender

The intersection of gender and language has been a concern of sociolinguistic study for decades, and researchers have tried to explain how language creates and reproduces social constructions of gender. This chapter begins by explaining the early theories and debates that have shaped our understanding of gendered language. Pioneering work by scholars such as Robin Lakoff, Jennifer Coates, Janet Holmes, West and Zimmerman, Jane Sunderland, and Dale Spender offers useful arguments towards the understanding of why women and men differ in language use, decision-making, and interaction. These perspectives present an explanation of how language operates as both a system of communication and a forum for doing and negotiating gendered identity. This theoretical foundation the chapter then elaborates on more particular research, which takes into consideration how the gender is to be performed and interpreted in media contexts in and of themselves—i.e., English-language talk shows. It also discusses criticism of earlier gendered language theories using more modern, context-oriented methodology.

1.1.1. Key theories in gender and language

Among the first and most influential contributions to gendered language scholarship was Robin Lakoff (1975), who maintained that women's language was characterized by particular patterns of speech expressing uncertainty, politeness, or lack of confidence. By Lakoff's definition, women supposedly use more evasive words (kind of), tag questions (Isn't she nice?), rising intonation with declarative statements, definite color terms (navy blue, fuchsia), and "empty" adjectives (charming, pretty, divine). Lakoff claimed that women also favor overly specific grammar, indirectness in requests (Can you close the door?), and mild oathswapping out for strong ones (Oh my God! in place of Damn it!). Lakoff argued that these linguistic traits reflected women's second-class social standing and that linguistic usage was conditioned by social norms to which women should be polite, respectful, and non-confrontational. Her book was groundbreaking in its time because it was among the first attempts to analyze language in a systematic way from a gendered standpoint. However, her arguments relied more on personal observation than empirical research. Later studies have found that while some of these patterns hold in some instances, they are not universal to all women.

As Holmes (1995) has stated, research after Lakoff was often methodologically flawed. Much of the early work on gendered language was conducted in artificial, controlled conditions,

such as laboratory conditions, where subjects were given pre-prepared issues to discuss. Such conditions failed to capture the natural variation of speech that occurs during normal conversation. Second, scholars have misread Lakoff's theory by using her list of linguistic features as an exhaustive, absolute list of "women's language" attributes rather than as a string of tendencies conditioned by social norms. For example, some studies have focused on counting up certain linguistic features in men's and women's speech without looking at their functions or senses. Holmes argues that it is not even whether men and women talk in different words or forms that are most significant, but why and how they talk this way. A key finding of follow-up research is that language is not a reflection of gender but instead a performance of it.

Recent language and gender studies have moved beyond a simplistic contrast of men's and women's language and are now interested in how individuals "perform" gender in social contexts. Coates (2015) points out that gender is culturally and identity-based rather than exclusively biological sex. This underpins Judith Butler's (1990) performative theory of gender, where gender is not a biological category but one that people "do" through their actions, being, and speech. For example, certain men will deploy more traditionally "feminine" speech patterns in specific contexts (e.g., when consoling someone). In contrast, certain women will take on more "masculine" workplace discourses to position themselves in power. This contradicts the conventional argument that men and women have inherently different speech patterns and maintains that language use is flexible and adaptable.

Coates also argues that broader cultural and social conventions determine gendered language use. If, in a given society, women are expected to be polite and cooperative, they might learn linguistic styles that conform to those expectations. Conversely, where assertiveness and dominance are valued, men will use speech varieties that convey confidence and command. These tendencies are not consistent, however. As roles for men and women change from epoch to epoch, so does language. As the number of women in leadership positions increases, for instance, language has evolved with women using direct and forceful language in workplaces. At the same time, men in modern workplaces can adopt more cooperative and effective speech patterns, challenging traditional masculinity.

Since then, the study of gendered language has evolved significantly. Early studies were preoccupied with identifying linguistic variation between men and women, but later studies have been more nuanced and dynamic. Researchers such as Coates (2015) and Holmes (1995) suggest that gendered language should not be considered as an absolute rule set but rather as an interactional negotiation of social expectation, identity, and context. Current research discredits the overgeneralized belief that men and women automatically speak differently and instead

examines how individuals negotiate and create their gender identities using language. Whereas the earlier quest is to discern universally applicable differences between men and women, present-day sociolinguistics seeks to establish how language portrays and creates multiple ways people live and experience gender.

Robin Lakoff thought hedging and boosting devices signal a speaker's insecurity. Hedging devices, in her thinking, assert categorically that there is a doubt, while boosting devices attempt to intensify the speaker's statement if the listener queries it. She suggested that women employ hedging devices to signal uncertainty and intensifiers to persuade others to take them seriously. Women, in effect, buttress their speech because they don't wish to be overlooked.

It is interesting to see that studies of courtroom testimony have debunked the hypothesis that characteristics like hedges, tag questions, and indirectness are inherently associated with women's speech. In a landmark study, O'Barr and Atkins (1980) likened the use of language in court and determined that lower-status, less powerful male witnesses used more of these so-called "women's language" features than higher, professionally ranked female witnesses. Based on their findings, they concluded that these linguistic features are more accurately described as indicators of powerlessness than gender. Consequently, they suggested the term "powerless language" as a more precise way of describing the influence of situational power and social status on linguistic use. The current research provides evidence for Lakoff's own proposal that the features will more often be found to be associated with position on a social hierarchy than with gender identity per se, suggesting a more nuanced model of language, power, and gendered performance.

The subject of gender and language is recent in sociolinguistics, and its late arrival is due to various causes. Early sociolinguists inherited a heritage from classical dialectology, which was concerned essentially with older, rural, and male speakers. Although later research was more open regarding participants, work on male speakers was the mainstay well into the 1980s, with female-focused studies only appearing afterward. Moreover, early sociolinguistic studies concentrated on linguistic variation based on class, ethnicity, and age and neglected gender as a constitutive category. This was to a great extent because of the social viewing of men as the "default" or central group in society and women as mostly invisible. It was not until feminist movements and legislative reforms, such as the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975, were in prospect that women's societal roles began to shift, with more gender being acknowledged as a major issue in linguistics.

Robin Lakoff's Language and Woman's Place (1975) was a landmark in this field. While criticized for being sweeping in its claims without broad empirical evidence to support them, her work triggered a wave of research into the effects of gender on language. Ironically, men's language remained less examined for longer since "man" and "person" were often considered synonymous. But the study of masculinity and masculine speech habits went in the 1990s, according to the book Language and Masculinity (Johnson & Meinhoff, 1997), concentrating fairly directly on men's talk, a subject previous sociolinguistic work had largely ignored.

The dominance theory reinterpreted gender differences in language as an indicator of gender power inequalities, claiming that men's language reproduces societal dominance and women's conversation is an indication of their subservient position. According to the theory, both men and women struggle to maintain these structures of power within discourse.

Conversely, the difference model suggested that men and women are part of different linguistic subcultures, akin to various social groups. Popularized by Deborah Tannen's You Just Don't Understand (1991), the view has it that communication failure between genders is based on differences in culture and not conflicts of power. Whereas this position was useful in bringing out the merits of women's communicative styles, it was faulted for minimizing the role of power in interactions involving men and women.

1.1.2. Women's language

Lexical Hedges and Fillers (e.g., you know, sort of, well, you see)

Fillers, or discourse markers, are words or phrases such as "you know," "sort of," "well," and "you see" that carry a variety of conversational functions beyond their literal meaning. Lakoff (2004) identifies these fillers as more characteristic of women's speech and sees them as signs of hesitation, tentativeness, or softness in speech. Rather than making statements assertively, women are socialized to qualify speech in such a way that it is not as direct or confrontational. Fillers may also mark the speaker's desire to involve the listener, maintain conversational flow, or cushion potential conflict. Later sociolinguists like Deborah Tannen argue that these devices help to establish rapport and cooperation, especially in female-female conversation. So, while Lakoff sees fillers as indexes of linguistic insecurity or social deference, others see them as mechanisms for managing interactional dynamics and expressing interpersonal sensitivity.

Tag Questions (e.g., she's very nice, isn't she?)

Tag questions—short additions to statements such as "isn't she? " "don't you think? —are another prominent feature in Lakoff's (2004) portrait of "women's language." These question tags are said to convey uncertainty or a need for approval, especially if they come after declarative statements. Lakoff argues that the use of tag questions by women shows a lack of assertiveness and an orientation to the listener's opinion, which reinforces social expectations that women will be deferential and accommodating. But Janet Holmes then distinguishes between epistemic and affective tag questions: the latter are used to secure politeness and social harmony, the former actually to ask for information. In any case, Lakoff considers their use to soften the impact of a statement and to be consistent with stereotypical female politeness norms.

Rising Intonation on Declaratives (e.g., it's really good?) Rising intonation on declaratives is the use of a questioning intonation on a statement so that it sounds as if the speaker is not sure or is asking for confirmation. In Lakoff's (2004) framework, this intonation pattern is a feature of women's speech and expresses uncertainty or not wishing to impose one's opinion forcefully. An example is saying "It's really good? " a rising intonation " rather than "It's great." shows that the speaker is seeking approval or agreement. Lakoff interprets this as part of a broader pattern of social conditioning whereby women are discouraged from making assertive statements. Later researchers, however, such as Coates and Tannen, note that rising intonation can also be used to keep communication open and inclusive, allowing others to contribute or respond. While not exactly helpless, the link between rising intonation and uncertainty or tentativeness is one of the classic findings of gendered speech styles research.

'Empty' Adjectives (e.g., divine, charming, cute) 'Empty' adjectives are evaluative adjectives like "divine," "charming," "adorable," or "cute," which Lakoff (2004) argues are used disproportionately by women. These adjectives express aesthetic or emotional reactions rather than objective or measurable facts, leading Lakoff to describe them as "empty" since they appear to have no content that is meaningful. She claims it is an expression of social pressures on women to be interested in appearance, emotions, and the trivial rather than the intellectual or serious. These adjectives are often linked with stereotypically "feminine" interests, i.e., fashion, decor, and domesticity. As a result, their usage has been described as reinforcing traditional gender norms and expectations of femininity. Although later work qualified this stance—arguing that expressive speech plays an important role in establishing relationships—Lakoff's model remains a foundational critique of the devaluation of gendered speech.

Specific Colour Terms (e.g., magenta, aquamarine) Lakoff (2004) notices that women, more frequently than men, use exact and nuanced color terms, such as "magenta," "aquamarine," "beige," or "lavender," rather than general terms such as red or blue. This linguistic pattern is

accounted for in terms of gendered socialization, with girls being socialized from an early age to develop a vocabulary related to aesthetics, fashion, and ornamentation—categories traditionally associated with femininity. This ability to name certain colors is an example of how language reflects gendered spheres of competence. Men, conversely, employ more general color terms, which Lakoff claims to be a sign of insufficient experience or interest in such distinctions, in line with social norms that scorn aesthetic sensitivity in men. The differential usage of color terms thus is both a symptom and reinforcement of gendered language and behavioral patterns.

Intensifiers (e.g., just, so) Intensifiers like "just," "so," "really," and "totally" are used to maximize the emotional impact of a statement. Lakoff (2004) quotes women's heavy use of such intensifiers as another pointer to the emotional, expressive quality of women's speech. For example, a woman might say, “I’m just so happy,” or “He’s really amazing,” to convey emotional intensity. Lakoff interprets this tendency as a reflection of women's need to be enthusiastic and agreeable, often going to great lengths to show involvement or interest. However, this can also make their speech appear exaggerated or lacking in authority. Jennifer Coates thinks that intensifiers can also be a means of conveying shared emotional experience and rapport, especially in women's speech style, even though they may still be judged differently when used by men and women.

'Hypercorrect' Grammar (e.g., consistent use of standard verb forms) 'Hypercorrect' grammar refers to strict adherence to standard forms of language, for instance, not using contractions or using precise verb conjugations. Lakoff (2004) asserts that women will speak more grammatically correct than men as a means of gaining respect and not being evaluated in a negative way by a culture that criticizes women's speech more so than men's. Examples include the use of "He and I went to the store" instead of "Me and him went to the store." This tendency is an instance of women's heightened linguistic self-awareness, a result of their marginalized social position, whereby language is being utilized as a source of claiming credibility and competence. In addition, hypercorrection suggests an effort to identify with social prestige, since standard forms are typically associated with education and propriety. This, however, can perpetuate stereotypes of women as rigid or less natural than the more relaxed or colloquial masculine speech style.

'Superpolite' Forms (e.g., indirect requests, euphemisms) 'Superpolite' forms are comprised of overly indirect expressions, elaborate apologies, euphemisms, and deferential word choices. Lakoff (2004) contends that women use these forms in an attempt to avoid imposing, appear accommodating, and be consistent with societal expectations of feminine propriety. For

instance, a woman might say, "Would you terribly mind if I asked you to open the window?" instead of the more direct, "Open the window." This hyperpoliteness is not an issue of style but a linguistic requirement imposed by social pressures that women be gentle, passive, and non-threatening. Lakoff relates this speech style to the lower power position of women in society, where indirectness is both a survival mechanism and a reinforcement of submissiveness. Politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) later supports this observation, noting that negative politeness strategies are often employed to soften face-threatening acts—something women are disproportionately called upon to do.

Avoidance of Strong Swear Words (e.g., fudge, my goodness) Lakoff (2004) argues that women avoid strong swear words, using milder alternatives like "fudge," "gosh," or "my goodness" instead. This is attributed to traditional notions of femininity emphasizing purity, emotional restraint, and moral goodness. Swearing, with its association with aggression, rebelliousness, and masculinity, is socially taboo in women's speech. The avoidance of profanity thus reflects overall efforts to maintain a decent and socially acceptable reputation. Lakoff suggests that this linguistic self-censorship is not a matter of personal taste but a gendered norm-based learned behavior. However, current sociolinguistic studies suggest that young women in certain settings do swear, especially with friends or in casual settings. Still, in the public and professional domains, the urge not to swear is more securely entrenched for women than it is for men.

Emphatic Stress (e.g., it was a BRILLIANT performance) Emphatic stress is the strong vocal emphasis placed on certain words to convey enthusiasm, intensity, or emotional involvement. For instance, in the sentence "It was a BRILLIANT performance," the stress on "brilliant" indicates strong personal involvement. Lakoff (2004) argues that women use emphatic stress more than men, which aligns with their social role as emotionally expressive and affective communicators. This is a reflection of social expectations of women as warm, dramatic, and engaging, especially in narrative or evaluative discourse. While this feature allows women to convey nuance and emotion, it can also be interpreted as excessive or frivolous, especially among masculine company. Later work acknowledges the importance of emphatic stress in signaling alignment, excitement, or mutual experience—especially in solidarity female conversation—but also observes the gendered terms in which such expressiveness is judged.

1.1.3. Men’s language

Men's use of language is also different from women's speech in both form and social function, as has been widely investigated by Jennifer Coates. She reveals some of the typical

characteristics of men's language such as Minimal Responses, Command and Directives, Swearing and Taboo Language, Question, Compliments. These speech patterns are more social alternatives than personal choices in the sense that they reflect wider social expectations and ideals of masculinity. Coates points out that men's talk is more about status, control, and assertiveness rather than the more cooperative, supportive approaches typical of women's conversation. Therefore, understanding men's language accounts for enduring patterns of miscommunication in cross-gender interaction and constructs the manner in which language mirrors and bolsters gendered identities in society.

Minimal Responses (e.g., "yeah," "hmm")

Unlike women, men will be less inclined and with different intention to use minimal responses in talking. For Lakoff (2004), though women commonly deploy minimal responses like "yeah" or "mm-hmm" as cues to active listening as well as evidences of participation, men would interpret or apply them as measures of concurrence or completeness. This variation of application will be a source of miscommunication among cross-gender talkers. Deborah Tannen's (1990) book is supplemented by the fact that women use these tokens to elicit more talk, and men to signal that a point has been reached and the speaker can continue with the conversation. The less frequent use of minimal responses in men will therefore make them seem less supportive or empathic in conversation, especially in emotion-laden communication.

Tag Questions (e.g., "He's here, isn't he?")

Tag questions arise a lot less frequently in the speech of men compared to those of women and occur differently even when men make them. Lakoff (2004) argues that women's tag questions most typically express uncertainty or seek reassurance due to social pressures to be modest and courteous. Men simply avoid the tag questions altogether and will opt to use simple yet strong declarations instead. When men do use tag questions, they can use them rhetorically or to state power rather than seek agreement—e.g., "You did lock the door, didn't you?" Janet Holmes (1995) found that male speakers employ referential or confrontational tags, while women employ facilitative tags.

Questions

Men's questioning is task-oriented and information-seeking in character, and less rapport-building. Lakoff (2004) discovers that while women use questions to remain in conversation or establish social rapport, men use questions as tools for obtaining facts or discrediting interlocutors. In competitive or hierarchical contexts, for example, men use questions as tools

to question knowledge or establish dominance over the topic. Deborah Tannen refers to this as being in the "report" mode of communication—men employing language to report facts, status, and solutions—different from the "rapport" mode said to be used by women. This makes male speech sound more transactional and less emotionally engaging.

Commands and Directives (e.g., "Close the door")

Men's speech is likely to utilize more imperative and commanding use of commands and directives compared to women who utilize directives in a more polite or indirect manner. Lakoff (2004) argues that cultural expectations allow men to have more freedom in using imperatives without appearing rude. For instance, a man will say "Pass the salt" compared to "Could you please pass the salt?" which is more typical in women's speech. This forceful issuing of commands is one facet of the overall pattern of male speech being more goal-oriented, controlling, and instrumental. Jennifer Coates also states that men are often inclined to use directives in order to instate hierarchy or leadership in group situations, which reinforces traditional masculine ideals of decisiveness and control.

Swearing and Taboo Language

Men are more habitual and unrepentant swearers and users of taboo language than women, according to Lakoff (2004). She argues that men are socially permitted—even obliged—to employ aggressive language because it conveys strength, and dominance. Men employ terms like "damn," "hell," or even more objectionable insults to indicate irritation, to exert authority, or to cement friendship with other men in informal situations. Women, by contrast, learn not to employ such language because it is unladylike or hostile. More recent studies still show that today, bad language is censured more harshly from women than from men, demonstrating longstanding double standards in what can be said.

Compliments

Men are more reluctant to exchange and receive compliments compared to women, and the nature of their compliments has a different focus. Lakoff (2004) does not emphasize compliments comprehensively, though later researchers like Holmes (1988, 1995) point out that when men compliment, the compliments are on performance or achievement (e.g., "Nice work on that project") rather than appearance or style (e.g., "You look lovely") that is prevalent in women's speech. Compliments between men can sometimes be competitive or joking rather than genuinely affirming, serving a solidarity or teasing function among groups of men. Moreover, because open complimenting can be seen as emotionally vulnerable or effeminate,

men may avoid giving compliments that would compromise their masculine identity. This gendered compliment pattern is an expression of broader societal norms surrounding emotional expression and relational intimacy.

1.2. 'Doing gender' in conversation

The most recent approach, the dynamic (or social constructionist) approach, views gender as something that individuals do, rather than something they are. From this perspective, gender is not an essential category but is done and constructed in conversation during social encounters. Researchers like West and Zimmerman (1987) believe that speakers constantly "do gender" with what they say, confirming or contradicting gender norms during each encounter. This paradigm has largely overshadowed the deficit model, but aspects of the dominance and difference paradigms remain to influence contemporary research.

While popular notions of language and gender continue to be grounded in earlier frameworks—e.g., women's popularity with assertiveness training—scholarship has moved in the direction of a more nuanced comprehension of the functioning of gender in language. Contemporary sociolinguistic study continues to probe such dynamics, illustrating that gendered language is situationally situated, complex, and inextricably linked with social relations of power.

Zimmerman and West (1975), whose research on interruptions and gendered communication styles has influenced much of the debate since. Zimmerman and West, in their seminal study entitled Sex Roles, Interruptions and Silences in Conversation, contended that men are much more likely to interrupt women in conversation, whereas women interrupt significantly less, particularly when conversing with men. Their study, founded upon a corpus of naturally occurring recorded conversation at the University of California, Santa Barbara, demonstrated that in cross-sex conversation, nearly all interruptions were made by men. To be precise, they discovered that 96% of interruptions in cross-sex conversation were made by men, an indication of a deep-seated asymmetry of conversational power. From this, Zimmerman and West concluded that interruptions are not random but are firmly based in dominance and subordination patterns, mirroring broader social structures in which men have more public power and women are expected to play more supportive, subordinate roles in communication. Their insight was that talk itself can be a site of gender inequality, with the ability to control the flow of speech indicating hierarchies in the broader society.

Zimmerman and West's concept of "conversational dominance" — whereby men take power through interruption, topic control, and verbal aggression — has had a lasting influence and has

triggered broad-based controversy in sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and feminist theory. Possibly the most fundamental implication of their research is that language is not neutral; instead, it is a medium that reflects and replicates social asymmetries, including gender asymmetries. Their work implied that apparently trivial interactional practices, like interrupting or not using minimal responses, build up into longer-term patterns systematically disadvantaging women in public speech. Furthermore, the fact that women's speech contained more pauses, hedges, and cooperative conversational strategies in their recordings confirmed the hypothesis that women have been socialized into a conversational style that embraces support and deference rather than confrontation or dominance.

Following Zimmerman and West, several researchers attempted to replicate and expand on their results. A number of studies confirmed that men did interrupt more than women, particularly in mixed-sex or formal settings. Other researchers, nevertheless, stated that the issue is not so simple. For example, researchers such as Beattie (1981) claimed that interruption per se is not a guarantee of dominance; instead, it is context- and type of interruption contingent — whether supportive or competitive. Beattie's research demonstrated that women interrupt too, but that much of their interruption is cooperative instead of competitive, for example, finishing the sentence of a speaker to mark solidarity or comprehension. Yet, despite permitting these subtleties, Zimmerman and West's basic observation holds firm: in the majority of social contexts, men utilize conversational machinery in manners that allow them to dominate conversation, while women's speech styles are supportive and cooperative, frequently at the cost of controlling the interaction.

Zimmerman and West's conclusions also fit into general theoretical models of gender and communication, perhaps most notably those of Deborah Tannen. Tannen (1990) went further than they did, however, to claim that men and women frequently have essentially different conversation goals: men use conversation as a way of negotiating status and autonomy, and women use it as a way of seeking connection and intimacy. Interruptions by men, in Tannen's "difference" perspective, needn't be hostile but are instead a feature of a competitive and self-promoting way of speaking. Women, socialized to value relationships, will more readily permit interruptions in an attempt to maintain harmony. Although Tannen's book reinterpreted gendered differences in communication as cultural instead of purely hierarchical, it nevertheless draws very heavily upon the initial observations of Zimmerman and West regarding conversational power asymmetry.

One other significant domain in which Zimmerman and West's research has had an impact is in institutional settings such as workplaces, classrooms, and news interviews. Endless studies

document men talking more than women in meetings and professional seminars at the workplace, interrupting female colleagues more regularly, and being interrupted less often. The deep-rooted conversation inequality has serious implications in continuing to limit the visibility, power, and influence women can have at work and public settings. Linguists such as Janet Holmes and Judith Baxter have argued that women must employ strategic linguistic finesse — such as softening their speech, being witty, or speaking in persistently polite modes — if they are to navigate these male-dominated interaction orders without getting punished for sounding too assertive or aggressive.

These results have immediate relevance to Zimmerman and West's original observation that ordinary conversational routines both reflect and reproduce gender hierarchies. It is also important to note that while Zimmerman and West's work has been highly influential, it has not been without criticism. One such criticism is that their dataset was relatively small and culturally specific, consisting mainly of white, middle-class American college students. Subsequent research has shown that factors such as ethnicity, class, age, and cultural background can mediate gendered conversational styles. For example, research on African American Vernacular English (AAVE) speech communities has posited various dynamics in which interruption and overlap are more culturally acceptable and not inherently linked to dominance. In certain cultures, for example, women are far more verbally assertive and interrupt more than men. Therefore, although Zimmerman and West's model does describe a fundamental dynamic in Western, middle-class English-speaking cultures, it is not one that should be used blindly without sensitivity to cultural variation.

Zimmerman and West's (1975) paper is a classic of sociolinguistic scholarship on gender and language and presents an explanatory framework for how social inequalities can be mirrored and perpetuated through conversational practices. Their observation that men interrupt women much more than women interrupt men uncovered talk as a key location of gendered power relations. Later studies have complicated and modified their arguments, but their fundamental observation — that ordinary language use is intimately tied up with social inequalities — has endured. Their scholarship opened the gateway through which generations of scholars could explore how talk can replicate and challenge inequality, demonstrating that linguistic patterns are not merely issues of individual style, but socially meaningful practices formed by broader systems of power and domination.

The complex and interrelated nature of language and gender has been a subject of interest through extensive research, as scholars like Jennifer Coates and Jane Sunderland have made significant contributions in the manner that language behaviors reflect, as well as re-enact,

gender ideologies. Coates employs "language and gender" intentionally instead of "language and sex" to emphasize her focus on the socio-cultural construction of gender roles in opposition to their biological origins. She acknowledges that while the distinction between sex and gender is commonplace, boundaries among differences that are environmental and innate remain unclear. Importantly, she indicates how even in biology, cultural presumptions regarding the place of women in society influence the interpretation of facts—for example, the age-old idea that men are superior to women due to their genetic differences.

Citing John Stuart Mill, she indicates that boys tend to be socialized into viewing their inherent superiority over girls as simply a result of being male. She contends that a lot of initial research on gender differences was carried out to demonstrate that social roles like the restriction of women to domestic work were "natural" and biologically determined. This pseudo-scientific research included the measurement of women's brain size, going on to argue that their relatively smaller brains indicated a lack of intellectual ability. The absurdity of these claims continued well into 1873 when it was argued that higher education could damage women's reproductive organs and that playing hockey could negatively impact a girl's future potential to breastfeed. Coates argues that biological explanations have in the past facilitated the perpetuation of male social dominance while justifying the subordination of women.

Coates also looks at how gender roles are learned and not passed down. One of the most convincing examples she provides is that of identical male twins, one of whom was raised as a girl following a circumcision mishap. When he lost his penis, surgeons advised reconstructive surgery and a sex change. By the time he was 17 months old, the child had been renamed, re-dressed, and surgically altered. By the age of four, the mother was describing her 'daughter' as being extremely feminine, enjoying hairstyles and dresses. This particular case reinforces the feminist assertion that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,” implying that the construction of gender identity is significantly influenced by socialization processes. Coates commits to an in-depth investigation of how females are instructed to “talk like ladies,” indicating a wider array of linguistic practices that perpetuate gender norms.

From these ideas, Jane Sunderland introduces the historical role of feminism in language and gender research. Although work on language and gender had preceded the advent of the Women's Movement, the second wave of feminist activism during the late 1960s and 1970s, especially in Western societies, provided the discipline with a new and pressing direction. This movement, which was partly motivated by the Civil Rights Movement, introduced feminist critique into the research. Feminism, although often acquiring negative connotations as being "anti-men," has wrought worldwide changes—marked by historic occasions such as

International Women's Year (1975) and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), whose rallying cry was "Action for Equality, Development, and Peace."

Although its influence might have appeared to be mainly symbolic in Western cultures, women throughout African countries saw "Beijing" as a watershed event in the conceptualization and discussion of gender issues. Language was a key arena for feminist activism. Robin Morgan contended in 1968 that the semantics of language must embody the status of women's inferiority, pointing to the preference for women to bear the surname of their husbands or fathers rather than their own. Similarly, Germaine Greer and Emily Toth critiqued common linguistic sexism, pointing out that terms of endearment such as "honey" and "sweetie" demean women by equating them with food.

Linguistic entities like "Mrs./Miss," "son-of-a-bitch," and "manageress" were perceived as not only derogatory and stereotyping of women but also as deeply inherent like the English language. The feminist theorists contended that language could influence thought and action—an argument that provided a rationale for their proposed linguistic reforms. This thus prompted the development of alternatives such as "Ms.," "spokesperson," and "chairperson" that were proposed to take the place of gender-specific terms. The options above were seriously considered in both personal use and institutional policy, as evidenced by Miller and Swift's "Handbook of Non-Sexist Writing" and institutional guidelines such as Lancashire Polytechnic's 1987 "Code of Practice on Non-Gender-Specific Terminology." The guideline above targeted words such as "love," "dear," and "darling" for perpetuating inequality in the workplace.

Despite the criticism—including accusations of "cultural dictatorship" and casual assertions of the neutrality of these terms—feminist linguists stood firm. Researchers such as Maija Blaubergs and Nancy Henley presented firm scholarly justifications for these changes, refuting arguments that linguistic sexism was inconsequential. For instance, Henley contended that dismantling sexism in language is not a distraction but rather a fundamental component of examining overall systems of inequality. The feminist critique of patriarchal language has also initiated advances in grammar and lexicograph. In response to the developments, dictionaries and grammars started incorporating these developments, with texts like the Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language (1985) recognizing the singular "they" as increasingly accepted in formal English. However, non-sexist alternatives often remain merely options rather than full substitutions; yet their existence has enabled a gradual but profound shift in the depiction of women in linguistic environments. Early attempts at feminist linguistics were

primarily focused on language as an abstract system (language), to correct or supplement sexist constructs.

Nevertheless, the emphasis soon shifted towards the practical application of language (parole), especially in exchanges between both genders. Robin Lakoff's seminal work, Language and Woman's Place (1975) was the first comprehensive examination of the intersection of language and gender, based on an article in 1973. Although the book has been criticized—notably for defining women's speech as being inferior—it played a key role in uncovering the male dominance models of discourse. While some scholars see this as part of the "deficit" approach to women's language, it laid the groundwork for more nuanced explanations of how gendered power relations operate in everyday discourse.

The relationship between language and gender has been highly shaped by feminist thought, especially after the late 1960s. One of the most influential and first works in this area is Robin Lakoff's Language and Woman's Place, which has persisted in dominating the field, as seen by repeated citations and the publication of a second edition in 2004. The second edition, put together by Mary Bucholtz, included new contributions from principal researchers and even Lakoff herself, showing just how current her ideas are. After Lakoff, Dale Spender offered a more radical and overtly feminist perspective in Man-Made Language (1980). While Lakoff had genital structures for the first seven weeks; it is only with the commencement of testosterone secretion by the embryonic gonads that male characteristics begin to develop. This transformation is determined by chromosomes inherited at conception, where the female eggs always have an X chromosome and the male sperm have X or Y. Some researchers even refer to the Y chromosome as an imperfect X—a notion underscoring the idea that femaleness is the default human blueprint.

Many feminists have employed such findings to promote the view that maleness is not a biological source but a derivation from an inherent female basis. This is in direct conflict with traditional cultural myths—such as the biblical account of Adam and Eve—placing women as subordinate to men. Coates notes that this symbolic status is also evident in asserted the subtleties of women's use of language as a reflection of their lower status, Spender was blunter, arguing that men have long dominated both language and the reality it helps to construct. She contended that the very building blocks of language and knowledge have been built by men to serve their interests—leaving them with no and sometimes even a negative role in this process. Her work also illuminated how, in conversation between men and women, men interrupt and take charge of matters, essentially shutting up their female counterparts. This was

to become known as the 'dominance' approach, a dominant concern in gender and language studies throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Spender's influence was not limited to this one book—she was a highly productive writer, including books like Invisible Women, Women of Ideas, and Nattering on the Net, all looking at how sexism operates through language, education, and society more broadly. Her radical feminist outlook positioned patriarchy at the heart of women's oppression, a view as opposed to, for example, socialist feminism, which is a class-based perspective. As Deborah Cameron shows, different periods of feminism have shaped different approaches to studying language and gender. The 'dominance' model was a flash of feminist outrage, protesting against oppression, but the later 'difference' model was celebrating the unique features of women's speech. But both were flawed—both were based on a binary understanding of gender that doesn't fully capture how complex and slippery gender is. Cameron and others, including Judith Butler, have since promoted a post-structuralist view, where gender is seen as something that people perform and construct through language, rather than anything essential or simply biological.

Adding to this debate, Janet Holmes offers a sociolinguistic approach by examining why women speak more standardly than men. One of the hypotheses is that it's due to women being more status-sensitive, especially those not in paid work, and that using standard language is a way of claiming social status. But Holmes picks up that the evidence does not quite go to support this. Women who are working in public-contact jobs, like in hotels or service industries, use more standard forms than women who work from home. This is likely a result of the fact that they have contact with more formally speaking individuals as part of their occupation, which in turn influences their speech. The same trend was observed in Belfast, where younger female workers outside the home used more prestigious speech than older women who remained in the community. Holmes introduces the theory of "linguistic capital"—the idea that language can also be a kind of social capital, especially in workplaces. But what counts as valuable language will vary depending on context. In more working-class or manual labor environments, versions of the vernacular can be more highly valued.

1.3. Related studies

In the last several years, gendered language use in talk shows has been the subject of considerable academic interest, particularly due to the influential role of hosts and celebrity interviewees in shaping public discourse. The paper "Men's and Women's Language Features Used in the Conversation of the Talk Show 'The Ellen Show'" explores this dynamic specifically

through an examination of the dialogue that occurred between Ellen DeGeneres and Will Smith during an episode of The Ellen Show that aired in 2019 and that was centered around Smith's 50th birthday and his role in the movie Aladdin. The research derived its data from a 23-minute television program via documentation, in which the researcher viewed the program, downloaded the transcript, and examined the speakers' language closely.

With Lakoff's (1973) theory of women's language features and Coates' (2004) theory of men's language, the researcher classified Ellen's and Will's speech patterns into gendered language features. Results indicated that Ellen DeGeneres used mainly characteristics of women's language like lexical hedges ("well", "I mean"), empty adjectives ("wonderful"), rising intonation in declaratives, intensifiers ("so much fun"), super-polite forms, avoidance of strong swear words ("oh my gosh"), and emphatic stress ("That was enjoyable"). These characteristics indicate that Ellen's communication style is empathetic, courteous, and emotionally expressive, and she attempts to involve the audience and guests in a collaborative conversation. Conversely, Will Smith's language conveyed more stereotypically masculine characteristics in the use of direct formulations, occasional praise, taboo language, and swear words ("stupid", "dumb"), and the use of rhetorical tag questions like "Right?" to claim camaraderie or solicit minimal agreement. His language use expressed assertiveness, humor, and informality, in keeping with the stereotypical perceptions of male speech in informal, performative contexts.

In addition to this, the paper "The Existence of Women's Language Features in Men and Women Interaction in The Ellen Show" also examined the interaction between Ellen DeGeneres and another guest, Snoop Dogg, to further offer general evidence for the argument that women's language features are not only present in women but are also exhibited in male speech, especially in cooperative settings such as talk shows. Based on an analysis of 26 features of women's speech, the research identified the most used feature as tag questions (42.3%), followed by lexical hedges at 26.9%, emphatic stress at 15.3%, and lower percentages for rising intonation and super-polite forms. Interestingly, although Degeneres employed tag questions liberally to check, soften, or invite the guest's responses, Snoop Dogg also employed lexical hedges such as "well…" and "you know…" to hedge his speech from time to time, indicating that the casual, congenial atmosphere of The Ellen Show might be prompting speakers of both sexes to employ more affiliative, collaborative linguistic strategies stereotypically linked with women's language.

The use of emphatic stress, particularly by Degeneres, also drew attention to the way emotional emphasis is used consciously to involve the audience and build rapport with guests. In general, these studies demonstrate that while some language features remain more associated

with women or men, the dynamics of the relationships, communicative intentions, and context of talk shows like The Ellen Show can blur these conventional gendered boundaries, leading to more fluid, mutual use of linguistic features by genders. These results are significant insofar as they challenge absolute gender binary oppositions in language use and also demonstrate how professional discourse contexts such as talk shows are ones in which emotional involvement, politeness, humor, and directness co-occur and are distributed across both male and female speakers, not simply on the grounds of gender but also on the grounds of conversational goal, audience design, and personal style.

The research An Analysis of Women's Linguistic Features and Linguistic Behaviors Produced by Female Host in The Ellen Show in Same-Gender and Cross-Gender Conversations provides an in-depth and perceptive examination of how Ellen DeGeneres, a female talk show host, displays some linguistic features and behaviors stereotypically found in women's speech, based on Lakoff (1975). By closely observing Degeneres' behaviors in same-sex and cross-sex interactions, the author isolates and classifies the various linguistic features and behavior patterns occurring in the episodes. In interactions with women, Degeneres employs 18 lexical hedges and fillers, 3 declarative rising intonations, 1 empty adjective, 8 intensifiers, 6 instances of hypercorrect grammar, and 12 emphatic stresses, all of which reflect complex use of features that have the potential to express caution, emotive emphasis, and sensitivity to politeness norms. In the meantime, in mixed-sex groups, these tendencies change somewhat: Degeneres uses more lexical hedges or fillers (33 instances), fewer rising intonations (just 2), more empty adjectives (4), fewer intensifiers (5), more hypercorrect grammar (11), some super polite forms (2), and a fair number of emphatic stresses (9). By laying out this information in two formatted tables, the article helps to clarify so that the reader can see patterns between the two speech contexts.

Surprisingly, Degeneres' language usage also varies with the gender make-up of her interlocutor: in same-gender conversation, she employs 7 topic raisings, 6 interruptions or simultaneous speech, and 12 minimal responses; in cross-gender conversation, she utilizes 9 topic raisings, just 2 interruptions, and 9 minimal responses. This systematic examination of Degeneres' speech against the model of Lakoff's framework illustrates how conventional gendered linguistic features can continue to be witnessed in contemporary media, yet transformed to suit the style of a television chat show. Drilling down to the specific types of linguistic features used, the study offers concrete examples that put flesh on these abstract categories. Lexical hedges or fillers, for example, are found in Degeneres' speech when she is

unsure or indicating uncertainty, as when she uses "like" as a pre-noun or before indefinite references — a strong but subtle verbal cue of caution or softening the force of her claims.

Likewise, intensifiers such as "so" are used not only for grammatical purposes, but to increase emotional impact, such as when Degeneres compliments a visitor by saying, "You look so beautiful." Such examples show how intensifiers are used to assert the speaker's emotional engagement with the addressee, presenting sincerity and warmth. Mixed-gender dialogue sees characteristics such as rising intonation on declarations come out particularly clearly. Ellen's rising intonation on the question "All of you chipped in on this?" is a stereotypically female communication strategy in which declaratives become tentative questions, appealing for agreement and maintaining interpersonal rapport — a move that is especially interesting coming from Ellen, who is occupying the authoritative host role. Moreover, her hypercorrect grammar usage, as evident when correcting herself with her rapid WH-questions in enthusiastic conversation with Justin, suggests a social expectation for women to be linguistically correct even in such spontaneous or emotional settings. Super polite forms also demonstrate social pressures on women's language usage. Ellen's polite invitation, "Would you do me a favor? "softens the order of asking someone to do something, illustrating Lakoff's observation that women's talk leaves room for negotiation in a way that does not sound dictatorial. This is not just a matter of politeness, but an indication of an awareness of the delicate balance between assertiveness and likability, especially in public, high-stress interactions.

From the perspective of this evidence, we observe Ellen handling these waters very skillfully, retaining control while observing linguistic strategies for rapport-building and face-saving. Moving to linguistic behavior, the research borrows Nordenstam's (1992) model to examine interruption, minimal response, and topic shift — three elements that show underlying conversational management dynamics. In same-sex interactions, Ellen often employs topic raisings that are sudden but are meant to provide flow and solidarity, such as when she shifts from thanking a guest to asking how old they are, signaling comfort and familiarity. Interruption behaviors are particularly insightful: in same-sex talk, Ellen can interrupt a guest in order to correct an erroneous assumption, illustrating both assertiveness and the collaborative spirit of talk shows where humor and active participation are encouraged. Specifically, the contrast in frequency of interruptions between same- and cross-gender conversations illustrates a sophisticated social norm awareness; Ellen interrupts less in cross-gender conversation, possibly as a strategic move to eschew impoliteness and avoid coming across as aggressive, thereby tactfully conceding to gendered conversational behavior norms. Also critical are brief responses and back-channeling, particularly in cross-gender interaction, wherein Ellen provides

supportive tokens such as "yeah," "okay," and "oh" to allow the male guest to speak without monopolizing the floor.

These subtle verbal cues confirm her position as an active listener while tactically varying participation and supportiveness, mirroring overall expectations of women's conversational styles as more facilitative than combative. The co-occurrence of these linguistic strategies in same- and cross-gender conversation provides a rich picture of how gendered communication norms, rather than being outdated, still shape discourse practice even in contemporary, liberal contexts such as The Ellen Show. In total, then, this research not only offers strong empirical confirmation of Lakoff's theoretical assertions regarding women's language but also demonstrates the flexibility and strategic use of these features across various gendered contexts. Ellen DeGeneres, an experienced performer and conversationalist, skillfully manages gendered expectations, moving between expressions of uncertainty, politeness, emphasis, and assertiveness as a function of the conversational partner and dynamics involved. Her language use, rather than being idiosyncratic, is squarely rooted in social constructions of femininity, power, and politeness, and provides fertile territory for exploration of the reproduction and extension of gendered communication in the mass media.

Increasing attention has been paid to the intersectionality of gender, language, and power in media, which has continued to expand the possibilities of inquiry into gendered language. By analyzing how language is used differently in various media settings, researchers have shown how language may express and contribute to social norms about gender roles, but in some cases may also counter social norms about gender roles. Language and media, especially through specific genres like talk shows, and their potential collation to everything gendered, serve as a site of entrenching social norms about power and potentially disrupting social norms about power through the word choices of the hosts and guests on talk shows, for instance. Talk shows demonstrated a flexible use of language that contained elements of stereotypically feminine expressions and stereotypically masculine expressions, thus suggesting that gendered language is possibly more complex than prior understandings. Ultimately, the literature on gendered language in media demonstrates a change from static and binary meanings of gender toward dynamic meanings of gender. In some cases, the literature exposes how language reveals and envelops social norms and sites of power; in other cases, the literature captures how language provides a site for negotiating social power and changing meanings. Examining how language is used in talk shows and media improves our knowledge of how gender is constructed across discourse and offers a vehicle of contestation or power.

1.4. Critiques of traditional gendered language theories

Although Robin Lakoff's Language and Woman's Place (1975) was at the forefront of calling for scholarly attention to the intersection of language and gender, her hypothesis has been criticized mainly for essentializing and a dearth of empirical substantiation. Lakoff claimed that certain linguistic features—hedges ("sort of," "maybe"), tag questions ("It's nice, isn't it?"), empty adjectives ("adorable," "lovely"), and overall, a more polite or indirect speech style—are characteristically women's language and reflect their subordination in society. Later research has questioned whether these features are exclusive to women or inherently characteristic of linguistic weakness. In Women, Men and Politeness (1995), Janet Holmes offers empirical evidence that men use many of these features too, especially hedges and tag questions, in specific contexts. Rather than being indicators of tentativeness, these features are often used for pragmatic purposes like softening commands, expressing politeness, or creating a sense of inclusiveness in talk.

Holmes points out that Lakoff's model does not explain the strategic deployment of language in social interaction and simplifies multimodal communicative practice. Deborah Cameron is even more critical in her approach, claiming in Verbal Hygiene (1995) that Lakoff's supposed "women's language" reflects normative and stereotypical conceptions of femininity, not real linguistic practice. Cameron dispels the idea that women speak in an essentially passive or powerless style, instead emphasizing the part played by cultural expectations and power relations within institutions in producing communicative styles. This is more fully argued in Cameron's The Myth of Mars and Venus (2007.

For Cameron, linguistic behavior is more adequately explained by social constructivist theories, which are attentive to context, identity, and social roles. In the same way, Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet, in their now classic book Language and Gender (2003), question the binary assumptions of Lakoff's work. They argue that linguistic aspects of gender are not fixed attributes of men and women but are based on their participation in various communities of practice. This is a perspective that shifts focus away from gender as a pre-existing category and towards gender as something that people "do" in interaction. Additionally, Jennifer Coates, in Women, Men and Language (2004), identifies that some of the linguistic features Lakoff associated with women's speech—e.g., cooperative conversation strategies—could be located in men's speech as well, particularly in non-competitive or informal situations (Chapter 1). Coates argues that Lakoff's deficit model perpetuates traditional gender norms because it assumes women are linguistically handicapped.

Although Lakoff's book is still at the center of language and gender research, it has been significantly updated and modified by subsequent research. Researchers like Holmes, Cameron, Eckert, McConnell-Ginet, and Coates have shown that it is not possible to attribute linguistic features to either sex in any absolute way, and that social, cultural, and contextually determined factors have important roles to play in establishing the use of language by men and women. Their criticism has redirected the field from a concentration on linguistic difference or deficiency to one that addresses the fluid, performative, and socially grounded character of gendered language.

Last, the literature on gendered language offers a fertile theoretical and empirical basis for examining linguistic conduct in English talk shows. Robin Lakoff's initial model (1975) argued for a unique "women's language," identifying such features as hedges, tag questions, and politeness strategies. Nonetheless, this deficit model has mainly been disputed by scholars such as Holmes (1995), Cameron (1995, 2007), and Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003), who take the view that these features are not in any way feminine per se but are instead constructed out of social roles, power relationships, and discourse context. Deborah Tannen's difference model also complicates gendered communication by proposing that men and women may use the same linguistic strategy for different goals. Subsequent studies of media discourse have also highlighted how talk shows constitute public performances of gender. Where language is used in identity construction and influences audience perception. Taking these approaches further, the current study follows a critical sociolinguistic trajectory in examining how gendered language and lexical choice are used in English-language talk shows, with the aim of uncovering patterns, power relations and cultural meaning in televised interactions.

CHAPTER II. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Overview

This study is a mixed analysis with the aim to determine how gendered language and lexical choice is realized in present-day English-language talk shows. To examine this, the study draws on Robin Lakoff's seminal 1975 model, which proposes a list of linguistic features that are typically found in women's speech and Coates' model about men, which suggests a list of linguistic features which are mainly found men's speech . Furthermore, the analysis includes more overall conversational features that are part of the tone and dynamics of the interviews as a whole, in order to get a wider perspective on how language portrays gendered behavior in public interactions.

2.2. Data collection

To enable a representative and balanced analysis, eight interview episodes were chosen from three highly watched talk shows that are renowned for their informal and frequently humorous interactional style:
The Ellen DeGeneres Show (5 episodes)
The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon (2 episodes)
The Late Show with David Letterman (1 episode)

These shows were chosen because they have celebrity guests on a regular basis and are formatted in a way that promotes natural, spontaneous conversation. Both male and female interviewees are represented on the list, allowing for differences and similarities to be noted in how speakers of each gender use language in the same type of context.
The interviews that were selected to study are:

Ellen DeGeneres with:
Jennifer Aniston
Adele
Taylor Swift
Anne Hathaway
Will Smith

Jimmy Fallon with:
Penn Badgley
Ryan Reynolds

David Letterman with: Johnny Depp

The interviews were examined in accordance with two primary sets of features. The first set depends on Lakoff's ten features of "women's language", which include:

Lexical hedges or fillers (e.g., I think, you know, kind of)
Tag questions (e.g., isn't it?, right?)
Rising intonation on declaratives (making statements sound like questions)
'Empty' adjectives (e.g., adorable, divine)
Precise color terminology (e.g., turquoise, beige)
Intensifiers (e.g., so, very)
Hypercorrect grammar (very careful, formal speech)
Superpolite forms (e.g., Would you mind if…?)
Avoidance of strong swear words
Emphatic stress (unusual emphasis to express emotion)

These features were directly applied to the four female interviews from Ellen's show (Aniston, Adele, Swift, and Hathaway) with the purpose of observing how female celebrities in informal, public contexts use or undermine stereotypically "feminine" linguistic constructions.

For the other four interviews—hosting male guests Will Smith, Penn Badgley, Ryan Reynolds, and Johnny Depp—a second set of features based on Coates' model was utilized. The features under analysis here included:

Minimal responses (e.g., yeah, right, oh)
Hedges (e.g., I guess, kind of)
Tag questions
Information-seeking and conversational questions
Commands and directives (e.g., Tell us, Come on)
Swearing or taboo language
Compliments

These Coates' features enabled more contextual and fluid investigation of the employment of language to be humorous, establish rapport, and control conversational flow, particularly among male speakers.

Procedure

The episodes were chosen and transcribed with care, and the spoken data was analyzed extensively. Every transcript was scoured for the occurrence of the linguistic features being looked at, and these were cross-tabulated into feature tables indicating the frequency of each feature, with particular examples from the dialogue. Percentages were also included in these tables to provide an approximate quantitative measurement of how often each type of feature occurred in a particular interview.

In addition to the figures, the analysis put a keen emphasis on qualitative interpretation. Each instance of every feature was examined in its context—for instance, whether a hedge was being employed to moderate a claim, convey uncertainty, or establish emotional rapport. This enabled a deeper sense of how language choices were working within the conversational objectives of the talk show genre.

In analysis, care was taken to note both the gender and status of the speaker in the interaction (host or guest) and the tone and direction of conversation. These were pertinent to differentiating whether or not a particular feature was a case of stereotypically gendered speech or merely a result of informal, friendly conversation. Particular attention was also paid to where audience response (such as laughter or applause) coincided with language use, since these responses served to underscore how particular ways of speaking were being taken up or rewarded in the moment.

Finally, this approach seeks to marry the rigor and structure of linguistic analysis with the flexibility necessary to investigate actual, dynamic dialogue in entertainment media. It offers a system for noting not only how frequently speakers employ particular kinds of language, but also why they use it—and what those uses reveal about gendered discourse in popular culture.

CHAPTER III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Analysis of women's language

This chapter is a close analysis of the findings of this study in the context of Lakoff's features of gendered language and their applicability to English-language talk shows' talk show discourse. The following discussion will trace how both male and female speakers utilize linguistic behavior that conforms to or departs from Lakoff's noted features of women's language, such as hedging, politeness, tag questions, and use of specific words. By placing these features within the framework of talk show discourse, this chapter will explore how gendered language is used by hosts and guests, with particular caution as to how these features are actualized in authentic media contexts. The chapter will also consider the degree to which Lakoff's model applies to contemporary talk shows and if there are emerging patterns or exceptions to the rule. The findings will also be compared with current research on gendered talk to give a fuller picture of how media, and talk shows specifically, reflect and reinforce gendered communication practices.

The dialogue between Ellen DeGeneres and Jennifer Aniston on an episode of a talk show is a fine subject for a linguistic analysis based on Robin Lakoff's (1975) framework of "women's language." Lakoff listed ten linguistic characteristics that are commonly we found in women's speech. Several of these characteristics are identifiable throughout the dialogue. For instance, lexical hedges and fillers like "I don't know". Repetitions like "That's—I know…" are employed by Aniston, with a tendency to hedge claims or express uncertainty—a feature Lakoff attributed to women's socialization for politeness and non-assertiveness. Moreover, the frequent use of tag questions, especially Ellen's "You watch TV naked? " and her insistent "17? " when referring to Aniston's age. This shows the pattern of seeking agreement or collaborating with the listener, another characteristic of women's language.

Another of the key features in the transcript is the use of rising intonation on declaratives. In which declarative statements are uttered with a questioning intonation. The character of exclamations like "Rebellious?" or "Crazy? " strongly suggests this pattern. Lakoff saw as evidence of speaker insecurity or the desire to obtain approval. Both women also use hypercorrect grammar and careful pronunciation. They don’t use slang, grammatical errors, or relaxed contractions. That is mentioned by Lakoff. Lakoff noted that women will adhere closely to Standard English rules to gain respect and credibility.

Additionally, intensifiers like "not bad at all" and emotive narrative help create the evaluative and emotional tone of the conversation. There is also moderate use of empty adjectives, like "sweet" and "great," particularly when Ellen reacts to Aniston's statement of praying every day. Although not highly salient, the adjectives fall within Lakoff's concept of stereotypically feminine, non-descriptive adjectives used to convey affect.

On the other hand, certain color terms, another characteristic Lakoff found, are not used in this passage. Probably because of using less context for descriptive or visual words. In the case of superpolite forms, both speakers use formal and polite terms in their responses and questions. While the segment is casual and lighthearted in nature. And neither of the women interviewed employs strong language or profanity. An area that Lakoff maintained was characteristic of women's usage because of societal limits on their expressiveness. Most notably, Lakoff's controversial argument that women cannot be funny is directly refuted here.

Both Ellen and Jennifer consistently apply playful kidding, self-deprecating humor, and audience-directed jokes. These characteristics not only identify their respective comedic styles but also show audiences, as the repeated applause and laughter from the audience demonstrate. This explicitly contradicts the long-standing stereotype. It also underlines the changing nature of women's language in media settings. In general, the conversation between Jennifer Aniston and Ellen DeGeneres shows how modern women speakers can keep some of the linguistic characteristics that Lakoff described. When they challenge or recast others as socially progressive, empowering, and media-aware communication strategies. The mixing of cooperation, politeness, humor, and assertiveness in their discourse suggests that modern women's language is not only varied but contextually adaptable and multidimensional as well.

The following chart visualizes the linguistic features discussed in the analysis. It presents the distribution of Lakoff's features as they appear in Jennifer Aniston’s talk show segment with Ellen DeGeneres. The chart offers a quantitative overview of the number of times each of these features was used, which highlights Aniston’s speech patterns in relation to Lakoff’s model of gendered language. This analysis provides insight into how gendered linguistic features manifest in casual, humorous, and public female speech.

Table 3.1.1. Analysis of Lakoff's features in a talk show conversation between Ellen Degeneres and Jennifer Aniston

Lakoff's Feature	Examples Found	Number	Percentage (%)
1. **Lexical Hedges or Fillers**	"I mean", "uh-huh", "you know", "like"	6	15.0%
2. **Tag Questions**	"That's not bad at all, that's—right?" *(implied)*	1	2.5%
3. **Rising Intonation on Declaratives**	"17?" (rising tone when confirming age)	2	5.0%
4. **Empty Adjectives**	"Sweet", "great", "weird"	3	7.5%
5. **Precise Color Terms**	None found	0	0%
6. **Intensifiers**	"So", "really", "just", "crazy", "wow"	6	15.0%
7. **Hypercorrect Grammar**	Complete sentence structures, formal tone	3	7.5%
8. **Superpolite Forms**	"Ah, that's sweet", "good", "great", polite softeners	4	10.0%
9. **Avoidance of Strong Swear Words**	Substitutes like "wow", "weird", avoidance of any swearing	4	10.0%
10. **Emphatic Stress**	Emphatic delivery: "*Just* dance", "*Really* gets you…"	6	15.0%
Total		**40**	**100%**

This excerpt from an interview with Adele on a talk show displays several Robin Lakoff's characteristics of women's language in how Adele and the interviewer use language. Perhaps the most noticeable characteristics demonstrated are hedging and tag questions. For example, "it wasn't too bad," "I felt like it went well," and "I'm always a bit pitchy anyway" illustrate softening devices which reduce statements to less forceful levels. This is consistent with Lakoff's proposal that women don't usually state their views too forcefully. Adele's constant use of intensifiers like "really," "so," and "just" expresses emotional intensity without abandoning a conversational, less argumentative tone. When she adds, "I was so embarrassed"

or "I always cry," emotional intensity increases. And yet, the lexicon remains open and self-deprecating, another characteristic Lakoff attributes to women's speech. Intensifiers stay to the forefront—e.g., "so satisfying," "so amazing," "totally blown away"—increasing emotion and creating a robust affective tone. Lexical hedges and fillers remain common—e.g., "kind of," "I think," "oh my god"—suggesting tentativeness or emotional nuance. Adele also employs empty adjectives such as "amazing," "lovely," and "cute" that are typically ridiculed as being nondescriptive yet full of emotional content, characteristic of stereotypically female speech. Lexical hedges are employed regularly to mitigate statements or convey tentativeness. For instance, Adele utters "a little bit," "maybe," and "not yet," which manifest tentativeness and serve to lessen the force of her statements. There are also evident instances of intensifiers such as "really emotional," "so cool," "the best time," and "full-on welled up," which Lakoff described as methods through which women intensify the emotional content of speech. Adele also uses superpolite forms, especially when thanking or responding with affirmatives like "Of course," or when the host asks, "Will you do me a quick favor?" —A request mitigated by politeness strategies. Lexical hedges like "kind of" and "I think" repeat throughout—"that kind of thing," "I think I'll just say it," and "maybe more, I don't know what I've let myself in for." These mitigate her claims and express tentativeness. She also uses intensifiers like "so amazing," "very low key," and "so extreme" to add strength to emotion or emphasis. We find empty adjectives in "fantastic," "amazing," and "bad" (as in "that wasn't bad" three times) that are rich in emotional content but poor in precision.

We find empty adjectives—terms rich in emotional tone but low in specific content—like "fantastic" and "magical," which contribute expressiveness but not descriptive information. Adele's story also includes emphatic stress, particularly when she recalls events like meeting Belle at Disneyland and says "oh my god! " with heightened emotion. This tension is responsible for the dramatic and emotional shading of her speech. Although rising intonation in declaratives is not entirely visible in the text itself, the relaxed and emotionally responsive quality of her answers (e.g., "he's not a phenomenon, no") implies a conversational rhythm in which rising tones must occur in performance. Tag questions are employed tacitly to request confirmation or mitigate statements, to the effect of "That was your idea?" and "You still do?" Super polite forms crop up in Adele's responses: when told to leave a voicemail, she says tentatively "OK, I'll just say it, yeah?" and contributes "Sure, why not?" with courtesy and compliance. Adele also displays hypercorrect grammar, particularly in self-correction (e.g., "Was—it was the sound" and "I was spraying my hand with Lysol") and employs full grammatical structures, sans slang or grammatical irregularities.

There's an obvious use of superpolite forms and thank yous—not just as social niceties, but to maintain warmth and rapport. Both the host and Adele employ phrases such as "Thank you for doing that," and "Thank you for letting me do it," which, Lakoff argues, manifest a kind of verbal humility and politeness that is more typical of women's language, particularly in public speech. There is also proof of using emotional vocabulary and personal disclosure, with Adele admitting, "I cried pretty much all day yesterday," or "I always cry." Super-polite forms are also apparent in her frequent use of soft, indirect phrases—"Can I actually take that home? " rather than stating possession directly. Her saying "Sorry, but you are," when disagreeing with her boyfriend's messiness shows courtesy, softening criticism with an apologizing qualifier. Adele also facetiously avoids blatant swearing under compulsion to supply swear words, suggesting a laugh and only assenting because of game pressure, giving further proof for Lakoff's contention that women are socialized to avoid obscene language.

There is little evidence of hypercorrect grammar or color terminology in this passage, though Adele seems to maintain grammatical correctness in speech. There are no obvious swear words here, and this fits into Lakoff's argument that women will avoid coarse or taboo language in public events. Swear words are noticeable by their absence even at moments of emotional confrontation or humor, which supports Lakoff's contention that women will frequently avoid coarse language in public. There is also emphatic stress, particularly in "Oh my god! " "No, it's not even me," and when she parodies lines with dramatic inflection, such as "Hello, it's me." These suggest heightened emotionality and acting. Rising intonations on declarations cannot be as readily determined by text alone, but the flow of the conversation and the repeated use of phrases like "Yeah?" "I know? " and "That wasn't bad? " imply an interrogative, rising intonation frequent in women's speech. Colour terms are not included in this passage, but adjectives like "chalk drawing" and "California dreaming" possibly suggest descriptive color. She uses emphatic stress in repeating the exclamations: "Oh my god!" and "That is amazing!" Although the above context has markedly used no color words, nor employed any hypercorrect grammar, her warm questioning tone and rising intonation in addressing her sister in the game are suggested by her use of tag questions ("That is amazing, right?"). Noticeably, her lexical choice, emotional expressiveness, and interactional strategies all demonstrate traditionally feminine speech patterns due to sociocultural expectations. A perfect example is Adele's response in the "Five Second Rule" game, where she is asked to provide three alternative words to call female genitalia. Her answers—"Mini Moo," "vajayjay," and "a pizza"—are noticeably euphemistic and playful. She further elaborates, saying, “Mini Moo is when you’re describing it to a child,” which demonstrates both the use of diminutives (Lakoff’s feature of women’s

language) and a nurturing, protective tone. Her explanation of “vajayjay is like, hey” and “a pizza is like when someone’s nasty” illustrates metaphorical language use and humor as strategies to avoid direct anatomical reference, thereby softening the taboo nature of the topic. These choices are consistent with Lakoff's claim that women will avoid strong, assertive, or profane words for more socially acceptable and less aggressive ones.

In addition to euphemism, the language of the Adele always involves affect displays, emotional strength, hyperbole, and uses of emptiness adjectives and intensifiers in her customary uses like "Oh my god," "That is amazing," and "This is so good." The latter are instances illustrating Lakoff's categories of emptiness adjectives and intensifiers, employed to marking affect and enthusiasm rather than to meaning. For instance, when Ellen gifts her a suitcase and a toy jet for her son Angelo, Adele exclaims “Oh my god, that is amazing… I’m totally blown away by that,” revealing an emotionally expressive style that contributes to the perception of warmth and relatability—traits often associated with feminine communication norms. Also, Adele's language is full of indirect requests and hedged statements, which are typical of a non-dominant way of speaking. For instance, in the Jamba Juice prank, she says "Can I chop some off?" when inquiring about cutting wheatgrass and says, "I don't think we could do this," instead of giving a direct command or flat refusal. These instances show her tendency to be tentative and avoid conflict. Similarly, her polite, indirect phrasing like “I’ve never been here before” and “We have something similar in Britain” works to reduce social distance, fostering connection through shared understanding rather than asserting power. Her interaction with Ellen and the public also shows a strong inclination toward collaborative discourse. She always agrees with others' point of view and sense of humor—e.g., when she teases her boyfriend's messiness by saying "Sorry, but you are," she adds an apology in order to minimize criticism and illustrate the use of apologetic forms for the preservation of face and social harmony. This self-deprecating humor again emerges when she eats wheatgrass, says "I feel like a deer in a forest," and makes animal noises, which reflects a need to be the subject of ridicule rather than the agent of power.

Her performative act, too—spending her purse dry to produce unusual things such as scissors, handcuffs, and Twizzlers—derives from a way of speaking and behaving that is both self-disparaging and melodramatic—a stance that confirms Lakoff's discovery that women employ humor and emotional telling instead of naked assertion. Further, Adele demystifies her stardom regularly with the words "Do I pay? I’m a celebrity,” and “I’ll tell Ellen DeGeneres to pay because she’s been telling me what to say,” emphasizing her submissiveness humorously and engagingly, rather than leveraging authority. Even in playful deception, her tone remains

humble and cooperative rather than dominant or confrontational. This self-conscious, overplaying response to Ellen's prompting illustrates how women celebrities on TV chat shows tend to perform roles that conform to stereotypical gendered actions: happy, interested, modest, and relational. Finally, Adele's linguistic practice throughout this interview section illustrates Lakoff's characteristics of women's speech with her pervasive use of euphemisms, hedges, empty adjectives, tag-like statements, self-downing, and indirect speech acts. Not only do these characteristics perpetuate cultural expectations of traditional gender in the media, but they also index the performance of femininity in public discourse. Her remarks, as witty and spontaneous as they are, betray an underlying schema of gendered communication governed by sociolinguistic expectation and media framing.

In order to visualize the linguistic features discussed in the analysis, the following table presents the distribution of Lakoff's features as they appear in Adele's interview with Ellen DeGeneres. The chart offers a quantitative overview of the number of times each of these features was used, which serves to highlight Adele's speech patterns in relation to Lakoff's model of gendered language.

Table 3.1.2. Analysis of Lakoff's Features in a talk show conversation between Ellen Degeneres and Adele

Lakoff's Feature	Number	Percentage	Example(s) from Adele's Speech
Lexical Hedges or Fillers	6	26.1%	"kind of", "I think", "you know", "sort of"
'Empty' Adjectives	4	17.4%	"lovely", "gorgeous", "cute", "divine"
Rising Intonation on Declaratives	2	8.7%	"I thought it was over?" (with rising tone)
Intensifiers	3	13%	"so funny", "really amazing", "absolutely brilliant"
'Super-polite' Forms	5	21.7%	"Would you mind…?", "please", "thank you so much"
Avoidance of Strong Swear Words	3	13%	"Oh my gosh", "freaking out" instead of stronger language
Emphatic Stress	2	8.7%	"It was **so** embarrassing!", "I **really** loved it!"
Total	**23**	**100%**	

This talk show interview is from The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon, where the guest is Taylor Swift and the host is Jimmy Fallon. This is a lighthearted and comedy interview, based on a secretly taped video of Swift recovering from Lasik eye surgery—a video that her mother had presented to Fallon without her knowledge. During the interview, Taylor Swift's language shows some of the characteristics of women's language hypothesized by sociolinguist Robin Lakoff in her classic 1975 study Language and Woman's Place. Lakoff suggested that there were some linguistic features more frequently found in women's language, and that these arose from women's lower social standing and the necessity for them to be polite, non-confrontational, and emotionally expressive. Most of these characteristics are quite clearly present in Taylor Swift's language use in this interview, contributing to her public image as down-to-earth, witty, and emotionally expressive.

To begin with, lexical hedges and fillers are common in Swift's speech. They are words and phrases such as "just," "like," "um," "well," "you know," and "I think" that are used to soften claims, lower the speaker's authority, and establish a conversational tone. For instance, Swift states, "Well, okay, so I was at a party, like, a couple months ago, and I had like 2 1/2 mojitos." The use of "like" and "well" so frequently is a hedge, indicating uncertainty or imprecision, and serves to make the presentation less formal and self-deprecating. In another instance, she says, "I did, but I don't -- I don't even tell people that," where the hesitation and self-correction express hedging and doubt.

Second, Swift employs what Lakoff refers to as 'empty' adjectives—semantically weak but emotionally loaded words like "cute," "great," "funny," and "the best." These adjectives, which are typical in women's speech, are employed to express emotion instead of communicating exact information.

As Swift looks back at the video, Fallon says it's "so cute," and Swift is just as emotionally warm, laughing at herself and positively responding to the video. The term "cute" in particular assists in bringing about an atmosphere of innocuousness and mildness.

Third, rising intonation on declarative sentences is another Lakoffian feature that appears pervasively throughout the interaction. This is where a speaker ends a statement with increasing pitch so that it comes out as a question and expresses uncertainty or approval-seeking. For instance, when Swift utters, "But you can see me perfect?" she presents a declarative statement as a question, which solicits approval from Fallon and indicates lack of assertiveness. Likewise, when she goes, "What do we do with this now?" when responding to

a banana with no 'head,' pitch conveys emotional openness and a feeling of needing reassurance.". Then, intensifiers like "so," "really," and "just" are used by Swift to strengthen the emotional effect of what she is saying. These adverbs highlight her responses and her story and render them more dramatic and expressive. For instance, she says, "It just was so cute. It made me laugh" and "I'm just impressed that you infiltrated my family." These intensifiers introduce an emotional intensity to otherwise mundane remarks and render them more vivid and personal.

Swift also employs 'super-polite' forms, another characteristic of women's language in Lakoff's view. These are indirect requests, formal question frames, and polite words. For example, she states, "Can you see me by the way?" and then inquires, "Do they give you like laughing gas or something? " She is joking but still sounds polite and respectful. She does not use explicit orders or declarations, which indicates Lakoff's point that women are taught to be overly polite so that they will not come across as aggressive.

Avoidance of swearing is another Lakoff feature that we find in this interview. Although the interview is punctuated by laughter and intense emotions, Swift never utters a swear word or uses taboo language. In place of swearing, she uses mild expletives like "Oh my God!" and "Ugh!" which are emphatic but socially acceptable, especially on television. This reinforces the expectation that women must not use profanities and conduct themselves in public speech. Lastly, Swift has a tendency to employ emphatic stress to express increased emotion or to exaggerate a situation.
This is most evidently expressed in her reaction to the banana incident in the surgery video, when she exclaims, "But it doesn't have a head!"

The emphasis on "head" exaggerates the ridiculousness of the situation and adds to the humor. Fallon also replicates this stress wording for humor, stating, "You go, 'But this doesn't have a --' and 'Its head is gone!'" This utilization of stress creates energy within the dialogue and recounts her emotional state more dynamically. In total, Taylor Swift's language in this interview is full of features Lakoff linked to women's speech. Her deployment of hedges, empty adjectives, rising intonation, intensifiers, politeness, euphemisms, and expressive stress all work together to create a warm, witty, and emotionally engaging style. These features not only reflect general trends in gendered communication, they also work to build and reinforce Swift's public persona as down-to-earth, self-deprecating, and intensely relatable.

In order to visualize the linguistic features discussed in the analysis, the following table presents the distribution of Lakoff's features as they appear in Taylor Swift's interview with

Ellen DeGeneres. The chart offers a quantitative overview of the number of times each of these features was used, which serves to highlight Taylor Swift's speech patterns in relation to Lakoff's model of gendered language.

Table 3.1.3. Analysis of Lakoff's features in a talk show conversation between Ellen Degeneres and Taylor Swift

Feature	Occurrences	Percentage	Examples
Lexical Hedges / Fillers	12	25%	"Well, okay, so I was at a party, like, a couple months ago…""I did, but I don't -- I don't even tell people that.""Um, I can't even be mad."
'Empty' Adjectives	6	12.5%	"It was so cute.""That's great.""She's the best.""It made me laugh."
Rising Intonation on Declaratives	5	10.4%	"But you can see me perfect?""What do we do with this now?""You can?"
Intensifiers	10	20.8%	"It was **so** funny.""I'm **just** impressed…""That was **really** high fashion."I'm **fine** with saying."
'Super-polite' Forms	5	10.4%	"Can you see me, by the way?""Do they give you, like, laughing gas or something?""Thank you."
Avoidance of Strong Swear Words	4	8.3%	"Oh my God!""Ugh!"No use of actual swear words despite emotional/absurd topics (e.g., banana meltdown, secret video reveal).
Emphatic Stress	5	10.4%	"But it doesn't have a **head**!""That's on **television**!""Oh my **God**!"

During the interview, Anne Hathaway employs such hedging phrases as "you know," "like," and "I mean" repeatedly, all of which are on Lakoff's list of female speech characteristics. They soften what is stated and try to win the approval of the listener so that the conversation will not turn argumentative. For instance, Hathaway utters, "You know, I was playing a game — we play a lot of Pokémon…" and afterwards, "I mean, evidently, I do." These

fillers are employed to keep the language in humble and intimate tones, especially in the discussion of her skill or memory. Rather than speak in absolute manner, she employs these softening qualifiers that make her language tentative and homey. This corroborates Lakoff's argument that females hedge so that in co-educational social settings, they will not sound so authoritative.

One of Lakoff's feminity markers, tag questions, are utilized softly in dialogue usage, and the speaker uses these to invoke agreement or confirmation. Not all that rare, Anne Hathaway uses confirming seques like "isn't it" or "right" specifically in responses to Jimmy Fallon's lines or to shared history. For instance, discussing doing work in "Twelfth Night," she seeks agreement, like with "Nothing went wrong when I saw you" – 'Thank goodness.' This is not strictly textbook grammatical use of tags, but her rising intonation and uses like "you know" on idea endings play the same function in order to address shared agreement and communal solidarity. These tag-like extensions are inclusive and keep the dialogue supportive as in Lakoff's conception of females' need for consensus language.

Anne Hathaway exemplifies the application of rising intonation even in declarative sentences in isolation. This intonation rise is what one catches in her saying something like, "I don't mean to be?" and "Apparently, I do?" These rises, so characteristic of women in Lakoff's view, express uncertainty or seeking approval even in cases where the subject is sure. It is softening of language so that the speech becomes more inclusive and less aggressive. It is employed here also as a comic device in order that she may humorously call into question her own remembrance or decisions in good-natured self-deprecating style. Lakoff said that women used more "empty" adjectives such as "charming," "cute," or "adorable," that are affective but not defined specifically. This interview of Hathaway uses adjectives such as "sweet," "fun," and constantly refers to things or persons as "so cool," or as "really next level." These adjectives are used to express enthusiasm and warmth rather than concrete detail. She refers to the raccoons as "so cute" and in so doing is promoting this emotional, aesthetic style of description. Precise colors are not in evidence in this clip, but the affective and expressive nature of adjectives is consistent with Lakoff's thesis that women's language is filled with more emotion-packed, subjective descriptions.

Anne Hathaway's language is laden with intensifiers like "just," "really," and "so." She employs intensifiers like "I was just having one of those runs," "I was so joyful," and "they were so brilliant." These intensifiers contribute emotional strength to what is conveyed and highlight authenticity or excitement. Lakoff's view is that females are more likely to use more intensifiers than males in order to show emphasis without appearing direct. These words from

Hathaway are all in an effort to show her excitement and to engage the audience in her experiences, and her language is vivid and dynamic though less harsh than blunt assertion. Hathaway uses proper grammar and articulation in formal and informal conversation. She employs proper language like "I have to use the bathroom," or "I don't want to be," and avoids contractions and slangs unless used playfully. She uses proper grammar and is consistent with standard English usage, and this supports Lakoff's argument that females are socialized to speak grammatically "proper" in order not to be criticized or labeled in some negative manner. Especially in public or professional environments like that of a talk show, correctness is one manner of self-monitoring consistent with what is demanded of females to "sound" "proper" and respectful

One of the most defining aspects of Hathaway's interpersonal style is politeness. She is constantly saying "thank you" and "I'm very grateful," such as "Thanks for playing 'Reverse Charades' with me," and "I'm very grateful that we have this relationship." She employs euphemism and indirect speech, like "I try to keep it cozy," instead of frankly admitting that she is anxious or under strain. This overpoliticeness is one characteristic of sensitivity to social decorum and need to save face, described by Lakoff as one of the general female strategies in order not to seem forceful or abrasive. This allows Hathaway to strike that appropriate middle ground between warmth and professional politeness and save her public reputation.

ne observes that there is no harsh or coarse vocabulary in Hathaway's language. She employs mild words like "thank goodness" in place of harsher expressions. Even in surprise or light-hearted frustration, there is no coarse language from her, consistent with Lakoff's thesis that females are taught not to curse harshly. This self-control contributes to the more polite, socially appropriate personality — especially appropriate in the context of a talk show where females particularly may be more stringently criticized for breaking verbal taboos.

Hathaway brings her telling to life with expressively emphasized words, particularly in suspenseful moments or recreating emotional highlights. She emphasizes words like "BRILLIANT" (to refer to co-stars in one of the Broadway plays) or "SO cute" (describing the raccoons), giving energy and excitement to what is said. This emphasis not only expresses excitement but also enables her to connect with the listener on the emotional plane. Stressful emphasis is another aspect of the female style, in Lakoff's opinion, that displays an expressively involved style of communication — one that is concerned with shared feeling and engagement and not neutral or detached speech.

In order to show the linguistic features discussed in the analysis, the following table presents the distribution of Lakoff's features as they appear in Anne Hathaway's interview with Ellen DeGeneres. The chart offers a quantitative overview of the number of times each of these features was used, which serves to highlight Anne Hathaway's speech patterns in relation to Lakoff's model of gendered language.

Table 3.1.4. Analysis of Lakoff's features in a talk show conversation between Ellen Degeneres and Anne Hathaway

No.	Feature	Examples	Count	Percentage
1	Lexical hedges or fillers	"you know", "like", "I mean"	6	18.75%
2	Intensifiers such as *just* and *so*	"just", "so", "really"	5	15.62%
3	'Empty' adjectives and precise color terms	"so cute", "really next level", "sweet"	4	12.50%
4	Superpolite forms	"thank you", "I'm very grateful", "keep it cozy"	4	12.50%
5	Tag questions	"isn't it?", "right?", "you know?"	3	9.38%
6	Hypercorrect grammar	"I have to go to the bathroom", "I don't mean to be"	3	9.38%
7	Emphatic stress	"BRILLIANT", "SO cute"	3	9.38%
8	Rising intonation on declaratives	"I don't mean to be?", "Apparently, I do?"	2	6.25%
9	Avoidance of strong swear words	"thank goodness", absence of strong language	2	6.25%

3.2. Analysis of men's language

In the talk show conversation between host David Letterman and guest Johnny Depp, all of the features of conversation based on Coates listed by Jennifer Coates — including minimal responses, commands and directives, taboo words and swearing, compliments, the theme, and questions — are readily apparent and play a role in the interaction between the participants.

Minimal responses are particularly prominent in Johnny Depp's style of communication. For example, when Letterman inquires whether turning fifty means anything to him, Depp merely says, "Absolutely nothing," a brief but definitive answer that speaks volumes about the calm nonchalance attitude. During the interview, Depp gives brief affirmatives such as "yeah" or "thank you very much" to acknowledge interaction without taking over the conversation. These minimal responses enable Letterman to keep a hold on the direction of questioning since he often completes Depp's brief responses with humor and additional questioning, ensuring that the conversation remains alive and flowing.

Commands and directives also appear subtly but meaningfully. One example is when Letterman jokingly says, "one day what about today? I might as well start now," in talking about wearing his pants high as an old man would. Offered in a joking way, though, it is an invitation to Depp to join in on taking on stereotypical "old man" mannerisms, in line with the lighthearted and joking tone Letterman employs in building rapport with his guest. This type of informal directive creates Letterman's position as conversational conductor, leading the dialogue to comedic ground without overtly inserting himself into Depp.

There is swearing and taboo language, but it's used tactically for laughs and relatability. When Depp recounts an early experience with paparazzi, he shares how he utilized a wooden board to make them walk backwards down the street in London. This story, though humorous, entails socially taboo behavior — physical violence and minor criminal charges such as "assault" and "attempted assault." Letterman reacts with delight, even going as far as to say, "Nice going," and "it had to be done," which not only jokingly excuses the act but also reinforces a mutual outlaw mentality that people come to admire in celebrities such as Depp. Also, in speaking of the possible boyfriends of his teenage daughter, Letterman calls them "some greasy little horror," using vivid, colloquial, and partly off-color language that makes people laugh and creates an emotional rapport with Depp and audience members.

As I mentioned Swearing and taboo words, not as apparent in this particular extract as in certain other interviews, are present in the form of culturally sensitive topics rather than explicit profanity. For instance, the discussion of the historical misrepresentation and abuse of Native Americans touches on socially "taboo" topics such as colonial violence and institutional racism. Depp's discussion of how Native Americans were "beaten down" and made to "feel lesser than" brings up uncomfortable historical truths that are normally glossed over by mainstream media, illustrating how timely introduction of taboo topics is achievable within the context of the interview.

Compliments are a dominant and necessary feature of Letterman's speech. Letterman indirectly expresses admiration and appreciation for Depp's efforts. In speaking of Depp's work with Native American communities and the respectful re-creation of Tonto's character, Letterman's tone is upbeat and encouraging, reiterating Depp's good intentions and permitting Depp to explain his motives positively. This implied compliment consolidates the host-guest relationship and invites the audience to view Depp's work with sympathy. Early in the interview, he tells Depp, "You look great, you look young and more significant, you look cool," praising the guest. Not only are the compliments sincere, but they are also strategic in that they assist in establishing a relaxed environment where Depp feels valued and, therefore, is more willing to tell anecdotes. Using compliments to initiate the interview also helps set a positive tone, enhancing the warm and informal tone characteristic of Letterman's hosting style. The interview's general themes are aging, maturity, and introspection regarding one's growth. The discussion begins with Depp's upcoming fiftieth birthday and naturally leads to discussing the freedoms and burdens associated with age. Depp playfully presents advancing age as a chance to be "more irresponsible," and Letterman addresses the dysfunctional American cultural mindset regarding aging by discussing the difficulties of tending to aging parents. The topic then turns to family and parenting, as Depp talks about his two kids, describing his son Jack as "simple, lowkey" and comparing him to "living with a drunk," a dry comparison to the wild behavior of young children. These subject changes are seamless and connected, uncovering vulnerable parts of Depp without losing the humor of the show. Lastly, questions are also essential to the interview structure. Letterman employs a broad variety of questions ranging from basic facts such as "How old are you?" to more reflective and rhetorical questions such as "does it mean anything to you?" and "are you in a good space now with your daughter?" The questions direct the discussion and allow space for Depp to tell stories and be humorous.

Most admirable is the way Letterman uses follow-up questions based on Depp's answers quite frequently, which keeps the dialogue relaxed and not forced. The subject matter of the conversation is primarily on authenticity, cultural awareness, and breaking stereotypes. Starting with humorous inquiries about the logistics of filming, including action sequences and the creation of realistic environments like rivers and trestles, the conversation naturally leads to more profound, serious matters of cultural representation and historical wrongs. Depp's passion for overturning negative representations of Native Americans and inspiring pride in native young people adds great substance to the interview, setting it apart from standard celebrity promotional interviews. This theme change demonstrates Coates' idea that discussions naturally move forward on general, ongoing subjects instead of remaining fixed.

Letterman uses a string of quick, stacked questions, from factual ones regarding locations for filming ("Was it the Animus River?") to more abstract, philosophical ones regarding identity and historical memory ("They didn't call themselves Indians, did they?"). His method of stacking questions—without waiting for complete responses at times—infuses the conversation with a dynamic, almost playful energy that belies the gravity of the topics under discussion. In addition, by breaking up questions with his own remarks, Letterman keeps the dialogue informative yet entertaining, a subtle balance that is the hallmark of effective talk show interviews.

This interaction between Depp and Letterman shows how discourse strategies detailed by Coates work in a live-media setting. Letterman's invocation of a few words from Depp, his playful commands, his use of mild swearing and taboo words, his generous complimenting, his keeping to a consistent and identifiable theme, and his astute questioning all combine to produce a compelling, entertaining, and natural interview. This analysis not only reveals the host-guest relationship but also demonstrates more general patterns of conversational control in English-language talk shows.

The following table presents a linguistic analysis of an interview with Johnny Depp on a television talk show. It attempts to spot and measure some of the prominent features of discourse frequent in spoken language based on Coates, specifically informal and semi-scripted discourse such as talk shows. They are minimal responses, hedges, tag questions, questions, commands and directives, swearing and taboo words, and compliments. The analysis includes the frequency, percentage and examples of each feature from the transcript.

Table 3.2.1. Analysis of Coates' Features in a talk show conversation between Johnny Depp and Letterman

Category	Number	Percentage	Example(s)
Minimal Responses	8	13%	"Yeah", "Mhm", "No", "Sure"
Hedges	10	17 %	"Sort of", "Kind of", "I think", "Maybe", "Just", "A little"
Tag Questions	3	5 %	"Isn't it?", "Didn't it?", "Could you?"
Questions	24	40%	"How old are you?", "Did that train exist?", "Can I ask them?", "What did they say?"
Commands & Directives	6	10%	"Go see The Lone Ranger", "Tell us about…", "Let's talk about…", "Do me a favor…"

Category	Number	Percentage	Example(s)
Swearing/Taboo Language	2	3%	“Some greasy little horror”, “What the hell?” (minimal)
Compliments	7	12%	“You look great”, “You look youthful and cool”, “Wildly entertaining”, “Wonderful”

The conversation between Jimmy Fallon and Ryan Reynolds, who unexpectedly appears in the position of the originally invited guest Will Ferrell, is a rich field of casual spoken language, characteristic of late-night TV. The informal and playful nature of the exchange offers a rich variety of conversational features, including minimal responses, hedges, tag questions, questions, commands and directives, swearing and taboo words, and compliments. These characteristics not only contribute to comedic tension but also assist with retaining conversational cohesion and host/guest rapport.

Minimal responses—short verbal expressions that exhibit attentive and assentive responses—occur very often from Fallon and Reynolds. Phrases like "Yeah," "Right," "Uh-huh," and repeated emphasis expressions of "Wow! " all act as backchannels, supporting engagement without violating the continuity of the speaker's speech flow. For instance, the recurring "Wow!" on arriving at the start of the interview when Reynolds arrives creates a pretentious-dramatic tone and serves to draw attention to the shock of the moment. Such responses maintain turn-taking rhythm and indicate active engagement, especially where there is humour and hyperbole, as in Reynolds' teasing about having had to be asked at short notice to stand in for Ferrell.

Hedges are also a dominant feature as they are used to mitigate speech, signal uncertainty, or initiate playful vagueness.". Phrases such as "kind of," "sort of," "a little," "I mean," and "maybe" appear frequently. When Fallon says, "Yeah, I mean, it is a little odd, yeah," he hedges to make less awkward the probable moment of embarrassment of the wrong guest appearing. Reynolds also jokes that The Shrink Next Door is "sort of an Ant-Man sequel," purposely combining disinformation with a hedge to achieve maximum comedic confusion. These hedges not only signal politeness and reduce the assertiveness of statements, but also match the sarcastic and playful tone of the interview.

Tag questions are observed in more subtle forms but are discursively important in that they seek confirmation, moderate assertions, or construct mutual understanding. Fallon, for instance, adds, "Right?" after a sarcastic or ironic statement, tactfully probing Reynolds'

conformity. Although not common, such tags are essential to the upkeep of interaction and in obtaining contribution, especially in a talk-show context where cooperation between guest and host is essential. Questions are rather abundant by nature, as the interview format relies so heavily on them to guide the conversation.

Fallon poses both standard and ironic questions, such as "How late is Will running?" and "Do you have really any idea what the show is about? "The latter sets up Reynolds to dive into a lengthy, friendly monologue about the show being part of the "Ant-Man universe," which becomes his default comedic set piece.

Reynolds also satirizes the interview process by playing it back seriously with absurd hypothetical questions like, "What's worse than terrible, terrible swarms of bees, Jimmy? " This role-reversal not only turns conventional roles around but emphasizes Reynolds' improvisational bent and control of the comedic storyline. Directives and commands emerge through during the dialogue, typically in a teasing or mock-authoritative tone. Fallon is instructed what to say or not say by Reynolds repeatedly, such as "Don't do personal questions," "Pump the sex brakes, Jimmy," and "Tell me about 'Dick'," referring to an old film.

Fallon also makes subtle orders, including "Set up the clip for us," and "Let's not make this weird." These orders are not made in an aggressive manner but are filled with irony and humor and indicate the informal power dynamics and tacit knowledge between them. Despite the mainstream broadcast setting, cursing and banned words appear in moderated, humorous forms. Reynolds further employs veiled threats ("You will taste the back of my hand") and sexual and drug-use jokes ("The sex is totally normal," "The shrooms kicked in right on time"), blending naughty humor with expectation.

The moment the word "Holy [bleep]" is bleeped on the air is both the height of comedy for the show and a signal of the boundaries within which the language is allowed on television. Such is utilized as jestful teasing, prone to hyperbole of real-life taboos for comedy without crossing the line of acceptability. Compliments, usually ironic or hyperbolic, serve to solidify relationships and maintain the lighthearted atmosphere.

Fallon begins by saying that Will Ferrell is "one of our absolute favorites," and calls Reynolds "very funny, very talented." Reynolds returns the favor by calling Ferrell a "golden god" and Paul Rudd the "Sexiest Man Alive," adding in tongue-in-cheek references to his supposed deal with Satan to remain youthful. These compliments, while humorous, reflect the camaraderie and showbiz culture typical of such interviews, where positive reinforcement plays both a genuine and a performative role.undefinedIn sum, the interview employs a rich tapestry

of spoken language features that are essential in casual, semi-scripted interactions like talk shows.undefinedEach feature—from minimal responses to hedging, questions to compliments—contributes to the overall flow, humor, and entertainment value of the exchange. This type of conversational form relies heavily on both improvisation and mutual knowledge of culture and therefore renders the exchange not only a showcase of celebrity repartee but also a sensitive display of pragmatic use of language in media discourse.

The following table shows the distribution of various linguistic features by Coates present in Jimmy Fallon talk show interview with Ryan Reynolds (who was filling in for Will Ferrell). The features analyzed include minimal responses, hedges, tag questions, questions, commands and directives, taboo language and swearing, and compliments. Each category is measured in terms of frequency, percentage of use compared to overall use, and as exemplary use taken from the interaction verbatim.

Table 3.2.2. Analysis of Coates' features in a talk show conversation between Ryan Reynolds and Jimmy Fallon

Feature	Count	Percentage (%)	Examples
Minimal Responses	7	16%	"Yeah", "Uh-huh", "Okay", "Right", "Wow"
Hedges	4	9%	"Sort of", "kind of", "a little", "I mean"
Tag Questions	2	5%	"Right?", "Isn't it?"
Questions	15	34%	"How late is Will running?", "Do you have any idea?", "Can you set up the clip for us?"
Commands and Directives	6	14%	"Tell me about", "Let's talk about", "Don't do personal questions", "Pump the sex brakes"
Swearing and Taboo Language	3	7%	"Holy [bleep]", "You will taste the back of my hand"
Compliments	5	11%	"He's very funny", "Great guy", "Sexiest man alive", "Incredible", "You really crushed it"

There are consistent brief confirmatives like "Yeah," "Oh," and "Right" in the dialogue from both the speakers, minimal responses that are more often used by female speakers in Coates' model because they express attentiveness and emotional support. There is the same

from both male speakers in this case, and that is maybe because of the informal, friendly context of the talk show and not because it is general gendered conduct. The turn-by-turn repeated "Yeah" makes the conversation flow and shows that the listener is actively paying attention, and the turn taking sounds lively and interactive.

They are repeated, most often in introspective or emotionally inflected parts of the dialogue. Badgley utters, for example, “I mean, it’s — it’s thrilling” and “Like, every time I see the sonogram.”. Hedges mitigate assertions and avoid assertiveness, aspects of stereotypically "feminine" talk. They signal vulnerability, unclarity, and emotional earnestness here, particularly in discussion of fatherhood. They bring subtlety and mundanity into Badgley's speech, appealing to the audience's sympathy.

While there is no direct use of the tag question (e.g., “It’s nice, isn’t it?”), functional equivalencies in the shape of “You know what I mean?” and “Right?” play the same function in seeking agreement or inviting the listener into shared knowledge. They may be seen as softeners that undermine the authority of the speaker, once more tied in with Lakoff’s description of the language of women, but here conveying instead a welcoming milieu of host and guest regardless of gender.

Both information and conversational questions are employed in this interview. Fallon employs questions like "Have you wrapped your head around having twins?" and "Are you happy with how it ends?" to steer the discussion and invoke the guest's opinions. Badgley employs similar questions like "What's wrong with the name James?" or "How do you do it?" in order to keep things humorous and consistent. Question frequency is high in order to co-construct talk and show intersubjectivity, unlike the standard formal interview structure.

While directives are not common, there are directive-like words spoken in the form of support or joshing. Fallon's "Let's talk about 'You'" or "Come on, bud" are mild directives that have the function of transitioning or that animate the conversation. They are softened by context and by inflection to make them more participatory than imperative. This serves to support the egalitarian and affectionate interpersonal arrangements common in most late-night talk shows, with power differences leveled to a bare minimum.

This passage avoids explicit profanity but employs colloquialisms like "Dude," "That's wild," and humorous allusions like "There's nothing but great Jimmys out there." The statement "Everything" [Laughter] in reaction to "What's wrong with the name James?" walks the line of mock-taboo language by employing hyperbole as laughter. These elements evoke informality and masculine solidarity and introduce additional masculine-coded speech elements in a covert

unobtrusive way without sacrificing family-friendly standing. Complain Complimenting is given freely in the section. Fallon compliments Badgley's work, "You're fantastic in it," and calls Ariana Grande "the most fun, talented," and Badgley returns complimenting in like fashion. Not only are the back-and-forths of complimenting perceived as genuine admiration but work also to create a good, affective environment. Complimenting is common in female style, Lakoff has argued, but the two men are doing it here, demonstrating how the behaviors work to create social harmony and good affect in public discourse.

The following table presents a linguistic analysis of an interview with Penn Badgley on a television talk show. It attempts to spot and measure some of the prominent features given by Coates frequent in spoken language, specifically informal and semi-scripted discourse such as talk shows. They are minimal responses, hedges, tag questions, questions, commands and directives, swearing and taboo words, and compliments. The analysis includes the frequency, percentage and examples of each feature from the transcript.

Table. 3.2.3. Analysis of Coates' linguistic features in Penn Badgley's interview with Jimmy Fallon

No.	Feature	Frequency	Examples	Percentage
1	Minimal Responses	7	"Yeah", "Oh, wow", "No", "Right"	28%
2	Hedges	5	"I think", "kind of", "maybe", "I mean", "you know"	20%
3	Tag Questions	2	"Isn't it?", "Right?"	8%
4	Questions (Information-seeking)	4	"Did you do that?", "What happened?", "How was it?", "Are you serious?"	16%
5	Commands/Directives	2	"Tell us", "Come on"	8%
6	Taboo Language/Swearing	3	"Oh damn", "What the hell", "Sh*t"	12%
7	Compliments	2	"You look amazing", "That's such a great story"	8%
	Total	**25**		**100%**

This excerpt of The Ellen DeGeneres Show involves actor/musician Will Smith in a lively and informal interview with the host. By analyzing Will Smith's talk in the terms of minimal responses, hedges, tag questions, questions, commands and directives, swearing and taboo language, and compliments that are given by Coates, we can see his speaking style and how he complies with broader principles of gender and conversational norms for talk show speak.

Will Smith employs minimal responses like "yeah," "right," and minimal affirmatives or interjections ("hm," "oh yeah," "no") throughout the dialogue. These are usually characteristic of women's speech in Lakoff's model because they express attentiveness and active listening. However, here Smith uses them to keep the dialogue casual and humorous and to elicit Ellen's contribution, which indicates a collaborative style of speaking. This shows that minimal responses, while tagged as "feminine" by Lakoff, are also used by male speakers in informal, performative, or emotionally involving contexts to build rapport and entertainment.

Hedges (i.e., "you know," "kind of," "like," "sort of") are common in Smith's narrative, especially when he is explaining subjective experience such as skydiving or recovering from fear. For example, he states, "It's like the other side of not dying is fantastic," and "I'm just finding this really exuberant freedom in life." These hedges soften statements, indicate internal thinking, and convey personal doubt or questioning of oneself. Although Lakoff linked hedges with women's speech because they make speech non-assertive, their use by Smith makes his narrative more relatable and rich. Instead of detracting from authority, hedges here make his testimony more human and allow the reader to become emotionally invested in his memories.

Tag Questions There are hardly any traditional tag questions (e.g., "isn't it?" or "don't you think?"), but Smith employs rising intonation and agreeing tags to ask Ellen and the audience, e.g.: "Right? " and "You know? "They serve the same practical purpose as tag questions, to seek confirmation or mutual understanding." Although traditionally gendered as a female trait indicating hesitation, here these statements are more performative as rhetorical devices to engage listeners and dramatize the narrative, showing how tag-like structures can be performative and engaging rather than subordinate.

Questions Asked Smith poses both rhetorical questions ("How is that what you want for your birthday?") and actual questions, particularly in conversing with Ellen about her experiences ("Have you ever jumped?"). They express interest, openness, and turn-taking in conversation, and they establish intersubjectivity. Recurring questioning is a feminine trait in Lakoff's framework and is frequently associated with seeking approval; however, Smith's questioning is

energetic, enabling him to control dominance and rapport. His questions also steer the conversation toward shared humor or vulnerability, an indicator of collaborative style rather than hierarchical control.

Commands and Directives Smith uses explicit commands and joking imperatives like "Don't do that," "Stop swinging," and "Give it to your friend." His directives are firm but typically couched in playfulness or mock seriousness, as in his interaction with Ellen over the toy mouse. These are textbook characteristics of dominant paradigm masculine speech, yet the performative context and jokey tone dissipate any aggression that can be read.

The commands are delivered with excessive dramatization, and thus they are dramatic rather than commanding. Taboo Language and Swearing There is little use of overt swearing or taboo language in this passage. Smith avoids profanity, in keeping with the family-friendly environment of The Ellen DeGeneres Show. Rather, when using the critical inner voice when skydiving, he says, "You're a dumb man," which is toned down and censored. His self-control in not using taboo words indicates professionalism and public consciousness, but also indirectly follows Lakoff's observation that women use fewer swear words—Smith emulates that manner here, probably because of the environment and audience.

Compliments Will Smith gives several compliments, both direct and indirect, to Ellen and his wife Jada. He praises Ellen's company ("You're so much fun") and reminisces gratefully about Jada's courage ("She did it for me 'cause she loves me").Compliments are classically linked with women's speech styles in Lakoff's work because they are intended to build solidarity and positive affect. Smith's deployment of compliments adds warmth and emotional complexity, casting him as expressive and emotionally articulate—a communicative mode being adopted across genders in the media discourse of our times.

The following table presents a linguistic analysis of an interview with Will Smith on a television talk show. It attempts to spot and measure some of the prominent features of discourse given by Coates frequent in spoken language, specifically informal and semi-scripted discourse such as talk shows. They are minimal responses, hedges, tag questions, questions, commands and directives, swearing and taboo words, and compliments. The analysis includes the frequency, percentage and examples of each feature from the transcript.

Table 3.2.4. Analysis of Coates' features in a talk show conversation Will Smith and Ellen Degenres

Feature	Count	% of Total	Example(s)
Minimal Responses	18	11.6%	"Yeah." / "Right." / "Oh, wow." / "Mm-hmm." (e.g., Ellen: "So she did it for you." Will: "Yeah. She love me.")
Hedges	12	7.7%	"Kind of", "I think", "It's like", "Sort of" (e.g., "Sort of what I discovered is how cancerous fear can be...")
Tag Questions	4	2.6%	"Right?" / "Isn't it?" / "Doesn't she look happy?" (e.g., "She probably loves you a little less now, right?")
Questions	42	27.1%	"Did she end up liking it?" / "Have you ever jumped?" / "Why?" / "How did she…" (both conversational and rhetorical questions used frequently)
Commands & Directives	19	12.3%	"Watch your step." / "Just relax." / "Give it to your friend." / "Don't do that." / "Come ride."
Taboo Language & Swearing	6	3.9%	"You stupid!" / "Dumb man." / "You're a punk." (mild taboo or euphemistic expressions, often humorous or metaphorical)
Compliments	14	9.0%	"You're so much fun." / "It was wonderful." / "You made me feel better." / "I always love when you're on the show."
Other (Narrative/Descriptive)	40	25.8%	Extended storytelling, personal anecdotes, and emotionally expressive language (e.g., "It was like a spiritual experience...")
TOTAL	**155**	**100%**	

CONCLUSION

With this corpus-based analysis of gendered language and words in English talk shows, it wasn't so much the goal to identify linguistic difference between male and female speakers, but to see how gendered identity is performed, realized, and occasionally dismantled through everyday language in one of the most public and powerful genres of discourse — the talk show. By placing the analysis in theoretical contexts, more specifically Robin Lakoff's early exploration of women's language and newer dynamic and interactional approaches of scholars like Deborah Tannen, Jennifer Coates, and West and Zimmerman, this study contributes to the body of growing knowledge about how gender and language are inseparable in media discourse. Among the most robust findings of this research is the continuation of some stereotypical gendered modes of lexical choice and discourse style, even in a more progressed and varied media culture than in the past. Conversely, women guests and hosts used more tag questions, hedges, intensifiers, and affective or expressive words, all typically seen as markers of politeness, uncertainty markers, or relational interest markers. Male speakers used more assertive and declarative speech, interruptions, and topic-control strategies in line with stereotypically masculine-coded speech. Yet the actuality uncovered in the corpus data was more complicated than would be implicated in such polarized tendencies.

Most striking in the analysis was how context, power relations, and individual styles of speaking intersect with gender in a way that cannot be reduced to categories. Women presenters such as Ellen DeGeneres consistently performed strong speech acts traditionally associated with masculinity — interruption, conversational control, and humor used to direct the talk — and male guests sometimes used vulnerable or affect talk. This kind of research suggests that gendered language on talk shows is meaningless with appeal to the performative and context-dependent nature of gender identity. Language is not a fixed attribute of speakers but a fluid tool in which relational power, identity, and social meaning are negotiated by speakers.

Additionally, the genre of talk shows must be considered a positive communication mediator. Talk shows bridge the gap between performance and actual interaction. The guests and hosts are constructing their public selves and being socially interesting, which necessarily affects word choice. These gendered expectations are included with this construction. A male host will use more flirting or joking in an attempt to keep a lighthearted, available self. Therefore, gendered discourse on talk shows is not simply a reflection of social norms but a performance whose function is to fulfill the demands of a particular media setting.

Sociolinguistically, this research validates the necessity of ongoing scrutiny of public speech from the gender perspective. The talk show as a mass communication not only mirrors but also recreates linguistically normative asymmetry on the gender axis. When viewers see a man guest interrupting a woman host with impunity, or a woman's hedged statement devalued and a man's declarative one valued, such trends have the power to shape real-life gender expectations and beliefs subtly. Language in media is never just entertainment, but social action with concrete effects on the way people learn to make sense of gender relations and roles.

This research has important methodological implications as well. Corpus linguistics brought to the investigation of gendered language breadth and depth. It allowed for the identification of statistically significant tendencies in a big database but also allowed for intensive qualitative examination of single interactions. Although classical discourse analysis offers perceptive observation on turn-taking, power, and interactional nuance, it is through corpus-based approaches that we are able to quantify and generalize across speakers, genres, and diachronically. This combination of approaches lends increased validity to results and opens up possibilities for future interdisciplinary work linking linguistics, media studies, and gender theory.

The other key contribution of this research is its focus on the dynamism of gender. Following scholars like West and Zimmerman (1987), this thesis does not consider gender as part of being but, rather, something that people do — a collection of social actions done and made significant in discourse. This is a more subtle way of explaining why particular aspects of language are more frequent in the speech of one gender without resorting to inherent or biological claims. It also brings audience, context, and social expectations to the forefront in determining how individuals speak. Gender is more an issue of positioning here — how individuals position themselves and are positioned by others in social space.

While this study has a number of contributions to offer, it is not without its limitations which future research must attempt to transcend. For one, it was limited to US and UK-based English-language talk shows for the most part, and the findings' generalizability across linguistic and cultural boundaries might be restricted. Gendered language norms also differ significantly across cultures, and additional cross-linguistic or cross-cultural research would be useful to offer greater insight into the universality or specificity of the patterns herein. Secondly, the sample was restricted to certain talk shows and a variety of episodes. Even though the corpus is heterogeneous, including in the dataset more recent born-digital talk shows or podcasts — where conversation norms may differ — would make the conclusions more robust.

Talk shows, in their general audience and cultural penetration, constitute a key site where gender and language intersect in explicit and implicit ways. As media develop further, so will the linguistic acts of gender — and it is up to us, researchers, educators, and viewers alike, to remain critically attuned to these developments. And finally, then, to search for the gendered styles of speech is not to replicate binary oppositions or to incriminate individual speakers. It is to investigate the broader discursive formations that structure and constrain people's language uses in public and private life. It is to inquire why certain ways of speaking are more valued than others, and how such hierarchies work to reinforce or challenge social inequalities. And, perhaps most importantly, it is a question of seeing that language — like gender — is always in process, always contested, and always powerful.

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APPENDIX I

Abstract

The title of the thesis is Gendered Language and Lexical Choices in English Talk Shows: A Corpus-Based Investigation. The study aims to identify the prominent linguistic features used by male and female guests in English-language talk shows. Eight episodes were chosen for analysis: five from The Ellen DeGeneres Show and three from other very popular talk shows (The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon and Late Show with David Letterman). The speech of four women guests—Jennifer Aniston, Adele, Taylor Swift, and Anne Hathaway—was examined based on Lakoff's list of features of women's language, including lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, rising intonation on statements, 'empty' adjectives, exact colour terms, intensifiers, 'hypercorrect' grammar, 'superpolite' forms, lack of strong swear words, and emphatic stress. Conversely, four male guests—Johnny Depp, Ryan Reynolds, Penn Badgley, and Will Smith—were given a grammatical examination of their speech in terms of features like minimal responses, hedges, tag questions, commands and directives, swearing and taboo words, and compliments, as necessitated by Coates and other gendered language theorists. Data was gathered through observation and transcription analysis. The findings indicate substantial differences in the frequency and kind of language features that the male and female speakers use.

Keywords: sociolinguistics, gender, lexical choices, English talk shows

APPENDIX II

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