



GENDER AND LANGUAGE IN “THE KELLY CLARKSON SHOW”

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the men’s and women’s language features used in The Kelly Clarkson Show and to describe the differences in their occurrence. The data source consisted of four episodes of the talk show re-aired on The Kelly Clarkson Show YouTube channel in October 2025, comprising two episodes featuring male guests and two featuring female guests, with Kelly Clarkson as the host. The data were collected through note-taking after the selected video dialogues were transcribed, including relevant vocal features, and were analysed qualitatively. The analysis applied Coates’s (2013, pp. 86–98) framework of men’s language features and Lakoff’s (2004, p. 48) framework of women’s language features. The findings show five types of men’s language features: minimal responses (37), questions (3), swearing and taboo language (2), compliments (5), and interruptions (2). Eight types of women’s language features were identified: lexical hedges or fillers (26), tag questions (1), empty adjectives (9), intensifiers (12), rising intonation on declaratives (2), hypercorrect grammar (4), emphatic stress (3), and avoidance of strong and swear words (8). Commands and directives, themes, super polite forms, and precise colour terms were not found in the selected data. These findings show that gender-related language features can be identified in talk-show interaction, although their occurrence is also shaped by topic and interactional context.

Keywords: *men’s language features; women’s language features; The Kelly Clarkson Show*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi ciri bahasa laki-laki dan perempuan yang digunakan dalam The Kelly Clarkson Show serta mendeskripsikan perbedaan kemunculannya. Sumber data terdiri atas empat episode acara yang ditayangkan kembali melalui kanal YouTube The Kelly Clarkson Show pada Oktober 2025, yaitu dua episode dengan tamu laki-laki dan dua episode dengan tamu perempuan, dengan Kelly Clarkson sebagai pembawa acara. Data dikumpulkan melalui teknik catat setelah dialog dalam video terpilih ditranskripsikan, termasuk fitur vokal yang relevan, kemudian dianalisis secara kualitatif. Analisis menggunakan kerangka ciri bahasa laki-laki Coates (2013, pp. 86–98) dan kerangka ciri bahasa perempuan Lakoff (2004, p. 48). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan lima jenis ciri bahasa laki-laki, yaitu minimal responses (37), questions (3), swearing and taboo language (2), compliments (5), dan interruptions (2). Delapan jenis ciri bahasa perempuan ditemukan, yaitu lexical hedges or fillers (26), tag questions (1), empty adjectives (9), intensifiers (12), rising intonation on declaratives (2), hypercorrect grammar (4), emphatic stress (3), dan avoidance of strong and swear words (8). Commands and directives, themes, super polite forms, dan precise colour terms tidak ditemukan dalam data yang dipilih. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa ciri bahasa yang dikaitkan dengan gender dapat diidentifikasi dalam interaksi talk show, meskipun kemunculannya juga dipengaruhi oleh topik dan konteks interaksi.

Kata kunci: *ciri bahasa laki-laki; ciri bahasa perempuan; The Kelly Clarkson Show*

1. INTRODUCTION

Research on language and gender has documented recurring differences in conversational practices, including response patterns, questioning, interruptions, swearing, compliments, hedging, and politeness. Coates (2013, pp. 86–98) discusses several features associated with men's conversational practices, while Lakoff (2004, p. 48) identifies ten features traditionally associated with women's language. These frameworks provide a basis for examining how gender-related language features are realised in particular interactional settings. However, such features should not be treated as fixed properties of all men or all women; their occurrence may also vary according to topic, relationship, social context, and communicative purpose.

The distinction is therefore scientifically relevant because gender is one of the sociolinguistic variables that may pattern with language use, while actual linguistic behaviour is shaped by the interaction between gender and context. Examining both men's and women's language features in the same interactional setting can provide a more balanced account than studies focusing on only one gender. This study consequently examines a contemporary television talk show, where a female host interacts with male and female guests in relatively informal, spontaneous conversation.

Research on gender and language has been conducted using a variety of data sources, including films. Erayani (2024) examined women's language features in three films from different periods and found seven features in the first film, eight in the second, and six in the third. Aryanti (2024) examined men's and women's language features in *Red*, *White*, and *Royal Blue* and identified seven women's features, four men's features, and five women's language functions. Sapitri et al. (2023) compared men's and women's language features in two Disney films, while Priska et al. (2022) examined women's language features in *The Fault in Our Stars*. Wiprayanti et al. (2022) also analysed women's language features in *Music and Lyric*, and Arya (2025) examined women's language features and functions in *Elemental*.

Television series have also been used as sources of gender-and-language data. Agustina and Simatupang (2024) identified five men's language features in *Sex Education*, while Nugraha et al. (2024) found three men's language features in *The Boys*. Widyasari et al. (2023) examined women's language features in *Anne with an E*, and Angelia (2023) investigated women's language features in *Bridgerton*. These studies demonstrate that audiovisual data can reveal gender-related linguistic patterns across different genres and interactional contexts.

Gender and language have additionally been examined in webtoons and novels. Anggreni (2023) found nine women's language features and five language functions in *The Four of Them* webtoon. Kadir et al. (2022) compared women's language features in *Big Little Lies* and *The Age of Innocence* and found differences between the two novels.

Social media and podcasts provide further sources of data. Anggraeni and Damanhuri (2017) examined women's language features in comments on Justin Bieber's Instagram posts, while Suhesty and Sriyono (2023) analysed women's language features in the *Stories of the Soul* podcast. Asya et al. (2023) examined men's

and women’s language features in the RANS Entertainment Podcast and reported different frequently occurring features for male and female speakers. Kasni et al. (2024) investigated men’s and women’s language in indigenous villages and found differences in the use and functions of rising intonation on tag questions. Hotimah et al. (2024) examined women’s language in seller–buyer bargaining interactions and reported the use of super-polite forms, rising intonation, lexical hedges, intensifiers, and tag questions.

Despite these studies, fewer studies have examined both men’s and women’s language features in a contemporary television talk show. The present study addresses this gap by using The Kelly Clarkson Show as its data source. A talk show is a television or radio programme in which a host invites guests to answer questions and discuss particular topics. The Kelly Clarkson Show, produced by NBCUniversal Syndication Studios, provides interaction between a female host and guests in a conversational setting. Examining the same programme across male- and female-guest episodes allows the study to compare the occurrence of features within a relatively similar communicative environment.

This study has three aims: (1) to identify men’s and women’s language features in the selected episodes of The Kelly Clarkson Show; (2) to describe the occurrence of the identified features; and (3) to discuss the differences in the features found in the interactions between Kelly Clarkson and male and female guests.

The study is important because language features associated with gender may change across time and communicative settings. Investigating contemporary talk-show interaction can therefore contribute to an updated understanding of how the features proposed in earlier gender-and-language frameworks are realised in present-day media discourse.

Based on this background, The Kelly Clarkson Show was selected because it provides conversational exchanges between a female host and guests. The study focuses on the language features identified by Coates (2013) and Lakoff (2004), while interpreting their occurrence in relation to the immediate conversational context rather than assuming that a feature is exclusively determined by gender.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Qualitative research is appropriate for analysing spoken data because it allows the researcher to describe linguistic forms and interpret their meanings in context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The analysis focused on utterances produced by Kelly Clarkson and the selected guests, with attention to the linguistic and vocal features relevant to the two theoretical frameworks.

2.2 Data Source

The data source consisted of four episodes of The Kelly Clarkson Show re-aired on the programme’s YouTube channel in October 2025. Two episodes featured male guests and two featured female guests. The selected videos were chosen because they provided conversational exchanges relevant to the study of gender-related language

features. The details are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Data Sources

Title	Duration	Views	Date
Ethan Hawke & Kelly Clarkson Hilariously Disagree On ‘Before Sunrise’	13:39	46.120	23 rd Oct 25
Zachary Quinto & Brittany Snow Talk Halloween & Escape Rooms with Kelly Clarkson	21:33	14.470	21 st Oct 25
Renée Elise Goldberry Jokes It Was REALLY HARD To Play Idris Elba’s First Lady	07:01	16.300	23 rd Oct 25
Leslie Jones’ Kelly Clarkson Interview Goes Off The RAILS!	11:11	46.120	22 nd Oct 25

2.3 Data Collection

The data were collected through a note-taking technique. First, the four selected videos were watched repeatedly. Second, the relevant dialogues were transcribed. The transcription included the speakers’ utterances and, where relevant to the analysis, vocal features such as intonation and emphasis. Third, the utterances were identified and classified according to the men’s and women’s language features proposed by Coates (2013) and Lakoff (2004). The scene or time code was recorded for each datum to facilitate verification.

2.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed qualitatively in three stages. First, the transcripts were read and the utterances containing potential gender-related language features were identified. Second, each datum was classified according to Coates’s (2013, pp. 86–98) categories of men’s language features or Lakoff’s (2004, p. 48) categories of women’s language features. Third, the classified data were interpreted by considering the immediate conversational context, the speakers’ turns, and the topic of interaction. The frequency of each identified feature was then counted to support the description of the findings. The analysis does not assume that a feature is exclusively used by one gender; rather, the categories are treated as analytical features proposed by the selected theories.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The study applies two theoretical frameworks. Coates (2013, pp. 86–98) provides categories used in analysing men’s language features, including minimal responses, questions, commands and directives, swearing and taboo language, compliments, themes, and interruptions. Lakoff (2004, p. 48) identifies ten women’s language

features: lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, rising intonation on declaratives, empty adjectives, precise colour terms, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, super-polite forms, avoidance of strong and swear words, and emphatic stress. These frameworks were applied to the same four episodes so that the identified features could be described systematically.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the four selected episodes identified five men’s language features and eight women’s language features. The findings are presented according to the categories in the theoretical frameworks. The discussion combines the frequency of occurrence with the conversational context of each datum.

3.1 Men’s Language Features

Coates (2013, pp. 86–98) discusses several conversational features associated with men’s language, including minimal responses, questions, commands and directives, swearing and taboo language, compliments, themes, and interruptions. In the present data, five of these features were identified: minimal responses, questions, swearing and taboo language, compliments, and interruptions. Commands and directives and themes were not identified in the four selected episodes.

3.1.1 Minimal Responses

According to Coates (2013, p. 87), minimal responses, also called backchannels, are short responses such as “yeah,” “right,” and “mm-hmm.” In the present data, this feature occurs when a speaker gives a brief response that supports or acknowledges the preceding turn. The following example illustrates the feature:

- (a). Ethan Hawke (*Scene 00:00:11 – 00:00:23*)

Kelly: I was going to say, I knew you were Texan, but I didn’t know we both grew up in Fort Worth.

Ethan: Well, I was born in Austin. My mother and father are both from Fort Worth. They met at Richland Hills High School. And so **yeah**, we’re meant to be together, yeah.

During the conversation, Ethan Hawke responds to Kelly Clarkson’s statement about their shared connection to Fort Worth. After explaining that he was born in Austin and that his parents were from Fort Worth, Ethan ends his turn with “yeah.” The short response functions as an acknowledgement and signals alignment with the preceding conversation. It is therefore classified as a minimal response.

3.1.2 Questions

Questions are an important part of conversational sequencing. Coates (2013, p. 93) discusses questions as devices that elicit a response and may be used to obtain information. In the present data, the male guests use questions to invite the host to respond directly to the topic under discussion.

- (a). Zachary Quinto (*Scene 00:03:33– 00:03:39*)

Zac: Hmm... but I used to love Halloween. I mean, I really, I haven’t. **Are you a big Halloween?**

Kelly: I used to be really into it.

Zac: Yeah, I did to.

Kelly: I used to go parties

The question occurs while Zachary Quinto and Kelly Clarkson are discussing Halloween. Zachary asks whether Kelly is a person who enjoys Halloween, thereby requesting information about her experience and preferences. The question directly advances the topic and invites Kelly to provide an answer.

3.1.3 Swearing and Taboo Language

Coates (2013) discusses swearing and taboo language as a feature associated with men's conversational practices. Such expressions may serve different functions depending on context, including emotional reaction or emphasis. The following example contains a swear word:

- (a). Zachary Quinto (*Scene 00:02:26 – 00:02:35*)

Kelly: Are you allowed to take this?

Zac: I don't know.

Kelly: Oh, okay.

Zac: But I did. I took it back to my hotel and I put it in the bathtub and I like cleaned it off. **Fuck!** Am I going to get arrested?

Zachary Quinto recounts taking a crystal from a mountain in Morocco. After acknowledging that he took it back to his hotel, he suddenly says "Fuck! Am I going to get arrested?" In this context, the swear word functions as a spontaneous emotional reaction to the possibility that his action may have been unlawful. It is therefore classified as swearing and taboo language.

3.1.4 Compliments

Coates (2013) notes that compliments occur in men's talk and that men may compliment skills, achievements, or possessions. In the following example, Ethan Hawke evaluates Richard Rodgers positively while discussing the film *Blue Moon*:

- (a). Ethan Hawke (*Scene 00:03:42 – 00:04:04*)

Kelly: No.

Ethan: It's an incredible story, cause you know **Richard Rodgers is one of the greatest musicians of the 20th century and he had this unbelievable 25-year period with Rodgers and Hart and they did all these Broadway shows with sings that turned into jazz standards, but Hart was the lyricist.** The character I play in that clip that you just saw.

Ethan Hawke praises Richard Rodgers while explaining the historical background of the film *Blue Moon*. The expressions "one of the greatest musicians" and "unbelievable 25-year period" evaluate Rodgers's professional achievements positively. Because the compliment focuses on musical ability and achievement, the datum is classified as a compliment in the analytical framework.

3.1.5 Interruptions

Coates (2013) discusses interruption as a turn-taking phenomenon in which one speaker begins speaking before another speaker has completed a turn. In the present data, the interruption is brief and functions to complete or confirm the host's point rather than to take extended control of the conversation.

- (a). Ethan Hawke (*Scene 00:03:37 – 00:03:42*)

Kelly: You play a very famous songwriter in this, but I actually had not, I knew his catalogue [but I didn’t know his name–

Ethan: [**Right, but you didn’t know Rodgers and Hart, yeah.**

Kelly: No.

Ethan Hawke begins speaking before Kelly Clarkson has completed her utterance. His statement, “Right, but you didn’t know Rodgers and Hart, yeah,” confirms and reformulates the point Kelly is making. The overlap therefore constitutes an interruption in terms of turn-taking, although its immediate conversational function is confirmation rather than prolonged topic control.

3.2 Women’s Language Features

Lakoff (2004, p. 48) identifies ten features traditionally associated with women’s language: lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, rising intonation on declaratives, empty adjectives, precise colour terms, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, super-polite forms, avoidance of strong and swear words, and emphatic stress. Eight of these features were identified in the selected data; precise colour terms and super-polite forms were not found.

3.2.1 Lexical Hedges or Fillers

Lakoff (2004, p. 53) discusses lexical hedges and fillers as forms that can signal uncertainty or provide speakers with time to formulate an utterance. In the selected data, fillers such as “umm” occur during spontaneous speech. The following example illustrates the feature:

- (a). Renée Elise Goldsberry (*Scene 00:00:29 – 00:00:39*)

Renée: And one day I was driving down the street and my daughter said to me, **umm**, ‘mommy, what’s an album?’

Kelly: Oh, oh my God. The day music died.

Renée Elise Goldsberry uses the filler “umm” while reproducing her daughter’s question. The filler creates a brief pause while she formulates the next part of her utterance. In the context of spontaneous talk, the form is therefore classified as a lexical filler.

3.2.2 Tag Questions

Lakoff (2004, p. 48) describes tag questions as structures positioned between an assertion and a yes-no question. They may seek confirmation or agreement from the interlocutor. The following example illustrates the use of a tag question:

- (a). Renée Elise Goldsberry (*Scene 00:02:31- 00:02:37*)

Kelly: Yeah. They’re down for the ride.

Renée: They’re just down for the ride, **isn’t that wonderful?** And, and the beauty of right now is that we have direct access to them.

Renée Elise Goldsberry responds to Kelly Clarkson’s comment about friends and fans participating in music. The expression “isn’t that wonderful?” seeks confirmation or agreement concerning the positive evaluation of this situation. The utterance is therefore classified as a tag question.

3.2.3 Empty Adjectives

Lakoff (2004, p. 25) identifies “empty” adjectives as evaluative expressions such

as “adorable,” “charming,” “sweet,” “lovely,” and “divine.” Such adjectives primarily express the speaker’s evaluation or emotional reaction. The following example contains an evaluative adjective:

(a). Leslie Jones (*Scene 00:08:33 – 00:08:44*)

Kelly: How are you? You look **beautiful**. I love the brown.

Leslie: Thank you, baby.

Kelly Clarkson tells Leslie Jones, “You look beautiful.” The adjective “beautiful” expresses positive evaluation of Leslie’s appearance rather than providing a technical description. It is therefore classified as an empty adjective within Lakoff’s framework.

3.2.4 Intensifiers

Lakoff (2004) includes intensifiers among women’s language features and notes forms such as “so,” “really,” “very,” and “just.” Intensifiers strengthen the force of an utterance. The following example illustrates this feature:

(a). Leslie Jones (*Scene 00:06:58 – 00:07:14*)

Kelly: Do you know what’s so funny? So, I’m not afraid at all on stage either.

People are always like “Oh, you seem fearless.” I’m like, you know the one area I got so scared in is, this is weird, but dating. I get **really** uncomfortable. No, I become an idiot. Like, I’m so comfortable in my skin and then you go on a date and I’m like “What the hell did I just say?”.

Leslie: Yeah, especially now. Especially now.

Kelly Clarkson uses the intensifier “really” when describing how uncomfortable she becomes while dating. The intensifier strengthens the degree of discomfort being expressed and directs attention to the point she is making. The form is therefore classified as an intensifier.

3.2.5 Rising Intonation on Declaratives

Lakoff (2004, p. 48) includes rising intonation on declaratives among the features associated with women’s language. This pattern can make a declarative utterance function pragmatically like a question or request for confirmation. The interpretation must, however, be based on the speaker’s actual intonation in the recording. The following example is identified from the video:

(a). Renée Elise Goldsberry (*Scene 00:01:18 – 00:01:25*)

Kelly: That’s how it should be. And before our generation, like I’m older than you.

Renée: Let’s just stop right there. **Are you kidding me?**

Renée responds to Kelly’s statement with “Are you kidding me?” The utterance has a question form and expresses surprise and disbelief. Because the classification of rising intonation depends on the acoustic delivery, the feature was identified from the rising contour heard in the recording rather than from punctuation alone.

3.2.6 Hypercorrect Grammar

Lakoff (2004) associates hypercorrect grammar with the use of standard or formal grammatical forms. In this study, the category is applied only when the utterance

can reasonably be interpreted as an example of the feature in context; non-standard speech is not automatically treated as hypercorrect grammar.

- (a). Leslie Jones (*Scene 00:05:02 – 00:05:09*)

Leslie: Cause back in the day NBA, every team was good. **You used to be to go to Atlanta** because Olajuwon was there.

Kelly: Yeah.

The phrase “You used to be to go to Atlanta” contains an unusual combination of “be” and “to” that differs from the expected construction “You used to go to Atlanta.” The original analysis classified this form as hypercorrect grammar. However, because the utterance is also grammatically non-standard, the datum should be interpreted cautiously as a feature in the analytical framework rather than as evidence of consistently formal speech.

3.2.7 Emphatic Stress

Lakoff (2004) includes emphatic stress among women’s language features. Emphatic stress refers to the prosodic or lexical highlighting of information that the speaker wishes to make especially salient. The following example illustrates a self-repair and emphasis in the description of a film:

- (a). Renée Elise Goldsberry (*Scene 00:05:27 – 00:05:47*)

Kelly: Tell us about it.

Renée: It’s called, “A House of Dynamite,” and a missile, **an unattributed missile** is launched at the United States and we have to all of the different teams that stand on the fronts lines for us to defend this country, have to figure out how to actually do the thing that they practice all of the time that never happens.

Renée first says “a missile” and then reformulates it as “an unattributed missile.” The reformulation adds specificity to the description of the film. In the context of the spoken delivery, the highlighted wording is interpreted as emphatic clarification. The feature is therefore classified as emphatic stress.

3.2.8 Avoidance of Strong and Swear Words

Lakoff (2004) includes avoidance of strong and swear words among the features traditionally associated with women’s language. The relevant expressions may take the form of euphemisms or weaker alternatives to stronger swear words. The following example contains such an expression:

- (a). Leslie Jones (*Scene 00:04:38 – 00:04:51*)

Leslie: So, I think someone offered me to go to the Sparks game, and I sat there and I almost started balling because I was like “**Dang**, I remember how much I actually did love basketball and look at these girls.”

Kelly: And the teamwork.

Leslie Jones uses “dang” while describing her emotional response to watching a WNBA game. “Dang” functions as a milder alternative to “damn.” In this context, it expresses emotion without using the stronger swear form and is therefore classified as avoidance of strong and swear words.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of four episodes of The Kelly Clarkson Show, using Coates's (2013) and Lakoff's (2004) frameworks, identified five men's language features and eight women's language features. The men's features were minimal responses (37), questions (3), swearing and taboo language (2), compliments (5), and interruptions (2). The women's features were lexical hedges or fillers (26), tag questions (1), empty adjectives (9), intensifiers (12), rising intonation on declaratives (2), hypercorrect grammar (4), emphatic stress (3), and avoidance of strong and swear words (8). Commands and directives and themes were not identified in the selected male-guest episodes, while super-polite forms and precise colour terms were not identified in the selected female-guest episodes. The absence of a feature should be interpreted in relation to the limited corpus and the topics discussed in the four episodes rather than as evidence that the feature is not used by men or women in general. In particular, the selected conversations were informal talk-show interactions, so the occurrence of features such as commands, themes, super-polite forms, and precise colour terms depended partly on the communicative topics and purposes of the conversations. Overall, the findings show that the two theoretical frameworks can be applied to contemporary talk-show interaction, while the actual realisation of gender-related features remains context-dependent.

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