



## **Women's Language Features Used by Alexandra Cooper and Laverne Cox in The Podcast Call Her Daddy**

**Ni Luh Putri Widiantari<sup>1\*</sup>, Novita Mulyana<sup>2</sup>, Ni Luh Putu Krisnawati<sup>3</sup>**  
<sup>1,2,3</sup>English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Udayana University, Indonesia

e-mail: [putriwidiantari123@gmail.com](mailto:putriwidiantari123@gmail.com); [novitamulyana@unud.ac.id](mailto:novitamulyana@unud.ac.id); [putu\\_krisnawati@unud.ac.id](mailto:putu_krisnawati@unud.ac.id)

### **Abstract**

This study aimed to identify and analyze the features of women's language used by Alexandra Cooper and Laverne Cox in the Call Her Daddy podcast, episode "Laverne Cox : Stop Taking Crumbs from Men" by applying the theory of women's language features from Jennifer Coates (2013) to analyze the data. The method used in collecting data was documentation method and to analyzing the data was descriptive qualitative method. The results of the analysis were presented using an informal method, which was explained in the form of a description that was described in words. The results of the study showed that six features of women's language are used by both speakers, such as minimal responses, hedges, tag questions, questions, swearing and taboo language, and compliments, while commands and directives are not found.

Keywords: *podcast, women's language features, women's language function.*

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis fitur bahasa wanita yang digunakan oleh Alexandra Cooper dan Laverne Cox dalam podcast Call Her Daddy episode "Laverne Cox: Stop Taking Crumbs from Men" dengan menerapkan teori fitur bahasa wanita dari Jennifer Coates (2013) untuk menganalisis data. Metode yang digunakan dalam pengumpulan data adalah metode dokumentasi dan untuk menganalisis data adalah metode kualitatif deskriptif. Hasil analisis disajikan dengan menggunakan metode informal, yang dijelaskan dalam bentuk deskripsi yang diuraikan dengan kata-kata. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa enam ciri bahasa perempuan digunakan oleh kedua pembicara, seperti respons singkat, ungkapan penghindaran, pertanyaan penutup, pertanyaan, kata-kata kasar dan bahasa tabu, serta pujian, sedangkan perintah dan arahan tidak ditemukan.

Kata kunci: *Podcast, Fitur Bahasa Wanita, Fungsi Bahasa Wanita*

### **1. Introduction**

Language is not only seen as a means of communication, but it also plays an important role in shaping and expressing identity, especially in the context of gender. In sociolinguistics, the relationship between language and gender has been widely discussed, particularly in understanding how social expectations and cultural norms influence the way individuals use language in different contexts. Holmes (2013) emphasizes that gender differences in language are often only one aspect of broader linguistic differences in society that reflect social status or power differences. This highlights how language expresses and reinforces gender identities within social structures.

According to Holmes (2013), men and women tend to express language use patterns that differ across various communities. Women tend to use more polite and respectful language, while men more often use direct language and simple expressions. Women typically use conversation to build rapport and form emotional bonds, while men tend to focus on sharing information or asserting status. These differences in language use and purpose shape the characteristics of each speaker, which are distinguished based on their gender. Early work on language and gender was

introduced by Lakoff (1975), who identified several features associated with women's language, such as lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, hypercorrect grammar, rising intonation on declarative, empty adjectives, precise color terms, intensifiers, super polite forms, avoidance of strong swear words, and emphatic stress. Expanding this perspective, Coates (2013) highlights how these features function in interaction, particularly in both same-gender and mixed gender conversations. She suggests that women are more likely to use features such as minimal response, hedges, tag questions, questions, and compliments, while men more frequently employ directives and more assertive forms of expression. Men often use commands and directives, swearing and taboo language. These perspectives indicate that language use is closely connected to gender identity and social interaction.

With the development of digital media, new forms of communication have emerged, offering different contexts for examining gendered language. One of these is podcast, which provide a space for informal and spontaneous spoken interaction. Several previous studies have explored women's language features in different contexts. Suhesty and Sriyono (2023) examined women's language in the podcast *Stories of the Soul*, while Prasetya *et al.* (2023) analyzed women's language features in the romantic movie *6 Years*, and Haibah (2022) investigated similar features in the movie *Paradise Hills*. These studies demonstrate that women's language features appear across various media and communicative settings.

However, previous studies generally apply Lakoff's theory, which mainly focuses on identifying the types of women's language features. While these studies successfully categorize linguistic features, they provide limited explanation of how these features are used in interaction. In contrast, Coates (2013) theory offers a more interaction-oriented perspective by emphasizing how language features function within conversation. Therefore, there is a need for research that not only identifies women's language features but also describes how these features are used in real communicative situations.

One relevant context for this study is the podcast *Call Her Daddy*, which represents contemporary digital communication characterized by informal and interactive discourse. This podcast provides conversational data where speakers express ideas and respond to each other in a relatively natural setting. The interaction between Alexandra Cooper and Laverne Cox also offers an interesting perspective for observing how language is used between speakers in a podcast conversation. Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze women's language features used by Alexandra Cooper and Laverne Cox in the podcast *Call Her Daddy* by applying Coates (2013) theory. In addition, this study seeks to describe how these features are used in the interaction between the speakers. This research is expected to provide insight into the use of women's language features in a podcast context, as well as to contribute to the study of language and gender in contemporary digital communication.

## 2. Method

The data in this study was collected from an episode of the podcast *Call Her Daddy*, featuring Laverne Cox and hosted by Alexandra Cooper. The one-hour episode, titled "Laverne Cox: Stop Taking Crumbs from Men," was released on Spotify in 2024. The podcast discusses various topics such as gender, identity, personal experiences, and relationships. This data source was selected because it provides natural conversational data within the context of digital communication, allowing researchers to observe how women's language features are used in interactions between speakers.

To ensure a focused and in-depth analysis, the data was limited to the first 30 minutes of the podcast episode. This limitation was applied to maintain the flow of the qualitative analysis while allowing for a detailed examination of the interactions among the speakers. The selected duration was considered sufficient to represent conversational patterns and the use of women's linguistic features, as this segment already demonstrated a variety of relevant linguistic characteristics.

Furthermore, the data within this duration had reached a saturation point, beyond which no significant new features were found. A total of 100 utterances were selected as data for this study.

This study used documentation methods, employing note-taking techniques for data collection. According to Ary (2010), documentation refers to various types of written, physical, and visual materials that can support research. Data was collected through several steps. First, the researcher listened to the podcast episodes repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the context. Second, the researcher compared the audio recordings with the available transcripts to ensure accuracy. Third, the researcher selects utterances based on specific criteria, including those containing characteristics of language features theory that purposed by Coates (2013), relevant to the research objectives, and clearly illustrating interactions among the speakers. Finally, the selected utterances are recorded and systematically organized.

A descriptive qualitative method was used to analyze the data. According to John W. Creswell (2014), qualitative research presents data in the form of words, not numbers. The selected utterances were coded based on the characteristics of language features proposed by Coates (2013), then classified into categories, and finally interpreted to explain how these characteristics function in interactions between speakers. The data were presented using an informal method. The informal method presents the analysis in the form of textual explanations using sentences. In this study, the results are described narratively by elaborating on each linguistic feature and its function in interaction, supported by selected excerpts from the podcast.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Results

In the Call Her Daddy podcast, both Alexandra Cooper and Laverne Cox used six types of women's language features, including minimal responses, hedges, tag questions, questions, swearing and taboo language, and compliments. However, neither speaker used commands and directives.

Table 1. Distribution of Women's Language Features

Features	Alexandra Cooper	Laverne Cox
Minimal Responses	6	8
Hedges	19	35
Tag Questions	2	3
Questions	8	1
Commands and Directives	0	0
Swearing and Taboo Language	13	4
Compliments	1	0

As shown in Table 1, hedges appear as the most dominant feature used by the speakers, followed by minimal responses and questions. Tag questions, swearing and taboo language, and compliments are found in smaller frequencies. Meanwhile, commands and directives are not found in the data. These results indicate that the interaction between Alexandra Cooper and Laverne Cox tends to emphasize a cooperative and supportive communication style rather than a controlling one.

### Minimal Response

Data (1)

Laverne Cox: I was bullied because I talked proper. Thought I was white. And just everything. Honestly, just wanting to sort of be more. I don't know. I think because the circumstances in the world around me were so not it.

Alex Cooper: **Yeah.**

*(Call Her Daddy, 11:26)*

Data (2)

Alex Cooper: When you understand more of the backstory because again each generation does get a little bit better ....

Laverne Cox: **Yeah.**

*(Call Her Daddy, 09:40)*

The utterances “Yeah” used by Alexandra Cooper and Laverne Cox represent minimal responses based on Jennifer Coates (2013) theory of language features. According to Coates, minimal responses function to signal active listening and support during interaction. In the first context, Alexandra Cooper uses “Yeah” while Laverne Cox is sharing her past experiences of being bullied, which functions to show empathy and emotional support without interrupting the narrative. In the second context, Laverne Cox responds with “Yeah” to Alexandra Cooper’s explanation about generational improvement, indicating agreement and understanding of the point being made. In both cases, the use of minimal responses helps maintain the flow of conversation and creates a cooperative interaction where speakers support each other’s contributions. This also reflects an effort to build rapport and sustain a comfortable conversational atmosphere, aligning with Holmes (2013), who argues that women’s language tends to emphasize solidarity and interpersonal connection. Therefore, these utterances illustrate how minimal responses are used not only to acknowledge information but also to reinforce emotional engagement and mutual understanding in conversation.

### Hedges

Data (3)

Laverne Cox: It was the first time, **like**, i **um**... it was. I have been called something, **like**, racialized and it just, **like**, it was so dehumanizing **um**... It was so **um**... and it was someone i thought I could trust and so it was **like**, the betrayal of it. It was **um**... I still haven't like and that's, i get really. i get really, really angry when i see things, I remember **um**..., it was humiliating. It was degrading and dehumanizing.

*(Call Her Daddy, 16:57)*

Data (4)

Alex Cooper: **Like**, there's just no you can't in that moment do anything other than, **like**, **like** you said, **like** go to a different world in your head, watch television, find ways to escape.

*(Call Her Daddy, 13:53)*

The utterances produced by Laverne Cox and Alexandra Cooper contain several hedging expressions such as “like” and “um,” which are categorized as hedges based on Jennifer Coates (2013). According to Coates, hedges function to reduce the force of an utterance and express uncertainty or emotional sensitivity. In Data 3, Laverne Cox uses multiple hedges while recounting a painful and dehumanizing experience, which functions to soften the intensity of her statement and reflect hesitation when expressing traumatic memories. The use of “like” and “um” also indicates that the speaker is processing emotions while speaking. In Data 4, Alexandra Cooper repeatedly uses “like” when responding to Laverne’s story, which functions to align with the speaker’s

experience and maintain a supportive tone rather than making a direct or authoritative statement. In this context, hedges help create a safe conversational space and allow both speakers to express vulnerability. This reflects a cooperative interaction style and supports Holmes (2013), who states that women's language tends to emphasize empathy and rapport. Therefore, the use of hedges in these utterances not only reduces assertiveness but also serves to manage emotional expression and strengthen interpersonal connection.

### Tag Question

Data (5)

Laverne Cox: It's taking time. I needed years, particularly when i was like, when i really got into therapy, late 20s, into my 30s....

Alex Cooper: I think that's normal, **right?**

*(Call Her Daddy, 08:20)*

Data (6)

Laverne Cox: So, the best thing about having a twin brother at this point is that there was someone else who was there who can confirm that I'm not crazy and that I'm not misremembering. **right?**

*(Call Her Daddy, 05:45)*

The utterances “I think that’s normal, right?” produced by Alexandra Cooper and “I’m not misremembering, right?” produced by Laverne Cox contain tag questions, which are categorized as a feature of women’s language based on Jennifer Coates (2013). According to Coates, tag questions function to seek confirmation and involve the listener in the interaction. In Data 1, Alexandra Cooper uses “right?” to validate Laverne Cox’s emotional experience, functioning to show empathy and soften her statement so it does not sound too assertive. In contrast, in Data 2, Laverne Cox uses the tag question “right?” not only to seek agreement but also to reinforce and validate her own experience regarding her memories. By doing so, she emphasizes that her perception is real and justified, especially in the context of recalling past experiences. This indicates that the tag question functions as a strategy for self-assurance while still inviting listener support. In both cases, the use of tag questions helps maintain a cooperative interaction and encourages shared understanding. This finding aligns with Holmes (2013), who states that women’s language tends to emphasize solidarity and interpersonal connection. Therefore, tag questions in these utterances function not only to seek confirmation but also to build emotional alignment and validate personal experiences.

### Question

Data (7)

Alex Cooper: **So, you grew up in the deep south in Alabama?**

Laverne cox: Mobile Alabama.

*(Call Her Daddy, 03:27)*

Data (8)

Alex Cooper: Listen to everyone listening. Like if you have cheated in the past, I don't believe in the once a cheater, always a cheat. It's just such an immature statement. People grow; people can change. And again, you need more information.

Laverne cox: **So, have they grown and have they changed?**

*(Call Her Daddy, 23:40)*

The utterances “So, you grew up in the deep south in Alabama?” produced by Alexandra Cooper and “So have they grown and have they changed?” produced by Laverne Cox are

categorized as questions, which are included as a feature of women's language based on Jennifer Coates (2013). According to Coates, questions function not only to request information but also to maintain interaction and encourage participation. In Data 7, Alexandra Cooper uses a question to confirm background information about Laverne Cox, which functions to guide the conversation and ensure clarity while allowing the speaker to elaborate further. In contrast, in Data 8, Laverne Cox uses a reflective question to challenge and extend the previous statement about change, encouraging deeper consideration of whether individuals truly grow and improve. In this context, the question functions not merely as a request for information but to stimulate critical reflection and sustain the discussion. In both cases, the use of questions supports an interactive and cooperative conversational style, where speakers actively engage with each other's ideas. This aligns with Holmes (2013), who states that women's language tends to facilitate interaction and build rapport. Therefore, these questions function not only to exchange information but also to maintain engagement and develop the flow of conversation.

### Command and Directives

The feature of commands and directives, as proposed by Jennifer Coates (2013), was not found in the data. According to Coates, commands and directives are typically used to express authority or control over the interaction. However, in the context of the conversation between Alexandra Cooper and Laverne Cox, the interaction is characterized by a cooperative and supportive style rather than a controlling one. The absence of directives indicates that both speakers tend to avoid imposing statements and instead prioritize mutual understanding and emotional engagement. This finding aligns with Holmes (2013), who states that women's language often emphasizes politeness and rapport rather than authority. Therefore, the lack of commands and directives in this study reflects the conversational nature of the podcast, which focuses on sharing experiences and building interpersonal connection rather than giving instructions or asserting dominance.

### Swearing and Taboo Languages

Data (9)

Laverne Cox: I still, at 51, love to play dress up. And I've been collecting vintage Mugler for the past five years....

Alex Cooper: **What the Fuck.**

(*Call Her Daddy*, 00:48)

Data (10)

Laverne Cox: But insanely superficial it is. I think it's really superficial. And it's like, that's some immature **shit**.

(*Call Her Daddy*, 25:52)

The utterances "What the fuck" produced by Alexandra Cooper and "that's some immature shit" produced by Laverne Cox are categorized as swearing and taboo language based on Jennifer Coates (2013). According to Coates, swearing and taboo language can function to express strong emotions and emphasize the speaker's attitude. In Data 9, Alexandra Cooper uses "what the fuck" as a spontaneous reaction to Laverne Cox's statement, which functions to convey surprise and strong emotional engagement in an informal and expressive way. In Data 10, Laverne Cox uses the expression "immature shit" to evaluate and criticize certain attitudes, which functions to intensify her judgment and make her opinion more emphatic. In both contexts, the use of taboo language reflects a relaxed and informal conversational setting, where speakers feel comfortable expressing themselves openly without strict social constraints. This finding shows that women's language is not always associated with politeness but can also include strong and expressive forms depending on the context. This supports Holmes (2013), who states that language use is influenced by social

context and interactional goals. Therefore, the use of swearing and taboo language in these utterances functions to express emotional intensity and reinforce the speakers' stance within the conversation.

### Compliments

Data (11)

Alex Cooper: Okay I have to ask because **I'm obsessed**. Hey daddy. **I'm obsessed** with your outfit and every single time ....

Laverne Cox: Thank you.

(*Call Her Daddy*, 00:20)

The utterance "I'm obsessed with your outfit" used by Alexandra Cooper is categorized as a compliment based on Coates (2013) theory of language function. According to Coates, compliments function to express admiration and create positive interaction between speakers. In this context, Alexandra Cooper uses the compliment to express her appreciation for Laverne Cox's appearance, which functions to establish a friendly and supportive atmosphere at the beginning of the interaction. The enthusiastic expression "I'm obsessed" also intensifies the compliment, making it more expressive and engaging. Laverne Cox responds with "Thank you," indicating acceptance of the compliment and maintaining the flow of polite interaction. This exchange reflects a cooperative conversational style where the speaker builds rapport through positive evaluation. This finding aligns with Holmes (2013), who states that women's language often emphasizes solidarity and interpersonal connection. Therefore, the use of compliments in this utterance functions not only to express admiration but also to strengthen social bonding between speakers.

### 3.2 Discussion

The findings show that both speakers use six features of language features proposed by Coates (2013), such as minimal responses, hedges, tag questions, questions, swearing and taboo language, and compliments, while commands and directives were not found. This pattern reflects a cooperative and interactional conversational style rather than a dominant one.

The frequent use of minimal responses indicates active listening and support, which helps maintain the flow of conversation. This aligns with Holmes (2013), who states that women's language emphasizes solidarity and interpersonal connection. Similarly, hedges function to soften statements and express emotional sensitivity, especially when discussing personal experiences, showing an effort to maintain a supportive atmosphere.

The use of tag questions and questions further highlights the interactive nature of the conversation. Tag questions are used both to seek confirmation and to validate experiences, while questions function to guide and develop the discussion. These features support Coates' (2013) view that women's language promotes involvement and cooperation, as well as Holmes' (2013) claim that it facilitates engagement and rapport.

The presence of swearing and taboo language shows that women's language is not always polite but can be expressive depending on context. In this podcast, such expressions function to convey strong emotions and reflect the informal setting. Meanwhile, compliments contribute to building a positive and friendly interaction, reinforcing social bonding between speakers.

In contrast, the absence of commands and directives indicates that the interaction avoids authority and control. Instead, the speakers prioritize mutual understanding and emotional connection. This supports Holmes (2013), who argues that women's language tends to minimize imposition and emphasize rapport.

These findings suggest that women's language in this podcast functions to maintain interaction, express emotion, and build interpersonal connection within a collaborative conversational context.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that in the Call Her Daddy podcast, both Alexandra Cooper and Laverne Cox used six types of women's language features proposed by Jennifer Coates (2013). These features include minimal responses, hedges, tag questions, questions, swearing and taboo language, and compliments. From a total of 100 utterances analyzed, hedges appear as the most frequently used feature, followed by minimal responses, questions, tag questions, swearing and taboo language, and compliments. However, commands and directives were not found in any of the utterances produced by both speakers.

The analysis indicates that both speakers regularly use linguistic features that highlight interaction, emotional expression, and mutual support. This tendency aligns with Holmes' (2013) explanation of women's language, in which communication is oriented toward building rapport and sustaining interpersonal relationships. The lack of direct commands or authoritative directives suggests that the interaction does not emphasize dominance but instead fosters a cooperative and supportive dialogue. Moreover, the use of these linguistic features is shaped by contextual influences such as the informal nature of the podcast, the personal and emotional themes being discussed, and the equal status between the participants. Overall, the findings demonstrate that women's language features in digital conversational settings function to maintain interaction, express identity, and reinforce social connections.

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