

Expressive Acts As Indicators of Identity Shift in Family Switch (2023)

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini meneliti bagaimana karakter mengekspresikan perjuangan emosional dan adaptasi melalui bahasa melalui identity shift dalam film Family Switch (2023), yang menampilkan peristiwa peralihan tubuh yang melibatkan lima anggota keluarga dan hewan peliharaan anjing. Dengan menggunakan teori tindakan ekspresif dari Yule (1996), penelitian ini menganalisis lima jenis ekspresi emosional, yaitu berterima kasih, meminta maaf, berharap, memuji, dan mengeluh, sebagai indikator pengalaman internal karakter. Sebanyak 10 pasang ujaran, yang diambil sebelum dan sesudah peralihan tubuh, dieksplorasi untuk memahami bagaimana bahasa emosional mencerminkan kebingungan, perlawanan, dan penyesuaian bertahap. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ucapan ekspresif berubah sesuai dengan peran baru karakter, menyoroti bagaimana ekspresi verbal mencerminkan ketegangan emosional dan mekanisme penanganan. Daripada menafsirkan perkembangan psikologis yang lebih dalam, penelitian ini menekankan fungsi bahasa dalam mengungkapkan bagaimana karakter mengelola perubahan emosional terkait identitas. Wawasan ini berkontribusi pada analisis film linguistik dengan mengilustrasikan bagaimana tindakan ekspresif membantu menceritakan transisi emosional dalam situasi peralihan tubuh.

Kata Kunci: Tindak Tutur Ekspresif, Perpindahan Identitas, Pertukaran Tubuh.

ABSTRACT

This study examines how characters express emotional struggle and adaptation through language with identity shift in the film Family Switch (2023), which features a body-switching event involving five family members and a pet dog. Utilizing Yule's (1996) theory of expressive acts, the research analyzes five types of emotional expressions thanking, apologizing, wishing, praising, and complaining as indicators of characters' internal experiences. A total of 10 pairs of utterances, taken before and after the body-switch, are explored to understand how emotional language reflects confusion, resistance, and gradual adjustment. The results show that expressive speech changes according to the character's new roles, highlighting how verbal expressions mirror emotional tension and coping mechanisms. Rather than interpreting deeper psychological development, the study emphasizes the function of language in revealing how characters manage identity-related emotional shifts. These insights contribute to linguistic film analysis by illustrating how expressive acts help narrate emotional transitions in body-switch situations.

Keywords: Expressive Act, Identity Shift, Body Switching.

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INTRODUCTION

Language serves as more than a communication tool; it carries hidden meanings and emotional and emotional boundinga. Language functions as more than a medium for sharing factual information, it also plays a critical role in expressing emotions and fostering human connection. Sakti (2022) emphasizes that language enables individuals to communicate inner thoughts and feelings, which can be conveyed through spoken expressions, vocabulary, sentence construction, and vocal intonation. These elements help articulate emotional states such as happiness, anger, sadness, or concern.

In everyday utterances such as “sorry,” or “I’m disappointed” reflect more than just literal meanings; they signal emotional depth, responsibility, and the nature of interpersonal relationships. In this context, Yule (1996) identifies expressive acts as a core element of language used to reveal the speaker’s psychological and emotional condition. These acts are evident in word selection, tone, and sentence form often serving as emotional indicators. Yule further categorizes expressive acts into thanking, apologizing, praising, wishing, and complaining. Compared to other illocutionary types like assertive, directive, commissive, and declarative (Searle, 1979), expressive acts are more suited to uncover emotional layers and are particularly impactful in situations involving identity shifts, such as body-switching experiences. In that case, body-switching experiences, which the speaker’s internal identity inhabits a new external body, resulting in conflict between how one feels and how one is perceived. According to Heritage (2020), this switch creates psychological tension, especially in characters who experience sudden changes in age, role, or gender. Raheem (2009) explains that such internal conflict is often revealed through modified expressive acts for instance, through awkward apologies, adjusted forms of gratitude, or exaggerated praise. These changes provide linguistic evidence of the characters’ emotional adaptation and inner turmoil as they attempt to reconcile their true selves with the unfamiliar roles they must perform.

The movie *Family Switch* (2023), directed by McG, offers a vivid portrayal of this phenomenon. In the film, five family members and a pet dog suddenly swap bodies, creating a series of identity mismatches. Jess, the mother, takes on her daughter CC’s body, while CC occupies Jess’s. Likewise, Bill and Wyatt switch roles as father and son, and even the baby and the dog experience a swap. These character transitions result in verbal expressions that reflect emotional confusion and adjustment. Analyzing these utterances through Yule’s (1996) expressive act framework allows researchers to uncover how language adapts to these mixed-character identities and signals their emotional struggle during such extreme transformations.

Although many films explore emotional expression, *Family Switch* uniquely portrays not only the characters’ outward behavior but also their emotional adaptation during body-switching. The shift in expressive acts such as Jess moving from an authoritative parental tone to expressing teenage frustration when inhabiting CC’s body illustrates how language reflects internal emotional shifts. Unlike other body-switch films, *Family Switch* emphasizes realistic family dynamics, where characters must not only act like each other but also emotionally embody new roles. These verbal adjustments become evidence of emotional internalization, offering insight into how identity is negotiated through language in family contexts.

Several previous studies have examined expressive acts in film, yet none have centered on body-switch narratives within a familial context. Virginia and Mubarak (2021) investigated expressive behaviors in *I Care a Lot*, revealing manipulative tendencies through complaints and criticisms.

Sihombing et al. (2021) analyzed speech acts in *The Incredibles 2*, finding expressive utterances like apologizing and encouraging within family bonds but without a focus on identity transitions. Padi, Suastini, and Pratiwi (2023) studied expressive illocutionary acts in romantic-family settings, showing how utterances shape relationship dynamics. However, none of these works focused specifically on expressive language as a reflection of emotional struggle during identity shifts like those seen in *Family Switch*.

This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing expressive acts performed by mixed-characters undergoing body-switching in *Family Switch* (2023) using Yule's (1996) expressive act theory, this research focuses on how characters' utterances reveal emotional struggle and adaptation as they attempt to adjust to new bodies and unfamiliar roles. Rather than examining personality development directly, the study highlights how expressive language functions as a marker of internal conflict and identity adjustment. The findings are expected to contribute to character analysis and pragmatic studies in narrative media, particularly in understanding how emotional shifts are reflected linguistically in extreme identity-altering situations.

METHOD

This study applies a qualitative method to examine the variety and function of expressive speech acts expressed by mixed characters in the movie *Family Switch* (2023). This method is considered relevant in answering the research question of how language expressions are used to represent inner conflict and self-adjustment in the context of body exchange between characters. The theoretical foundation used in classifying expressive acts refers to Yule's (1996) theory, which includes five main types, namely saying thank you, apologizing, conveying praise, hope, and complaint. The focus of this research object is the expressive acts in the movie that are used as verbal indicators to express the emotional and psychological state of the characters. Based on the guidelines of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), the validity and credibility of data sources are important components in qualitative analysis. The data collected is in the form of verbal utterances from characters in the movie that have been transcribed from official broadcasts through Netflix. The data collection technique was conducted through document analysis, and the main tool used was a coding sheet to categorize the types of expressive acts and their emotional contexts. The analysis process was carried out using the Miles and Huberman (2014) model, which includes the data reduction stage, data presentation in tabular form, and conclusion drawing and verification used to understand how expressive language becomes a reflection of the emotional process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study has found 10 pairs of utterances of expressive acts, there are 1 expressive for thanking, 3 apologizing, 2 wishing, 2 praising, and 2 complaining used by mixed-characters. The researcher analyzed the film based on the theory of Expressive Act by Yule (1996). The data shows that the most frequently expressed act that is found used by mixed-characters in Family Switch is apologizing, showing that as a repairment of conflict to repair the family relationship in body-switching experienced which influence identity shift in before and after the switch.

Thanking

Data 1

(01) Jess (Mom): "*Thank you.*"

(02) Jess in CC's body: "*Thank you for saving my baby, I mean my dog.*"

Family Switch (2023), 00:10:49 & 00:25:32

Before the switch (01), Jess says "Thank you" briefly and neutrally, reflecting a formal relationship. After switching into CC's body (02), she says "Thank you for saving my baby, I mean my dog," showing emotional expansion and identity confusion. The word "baby" reveals her maternal instinct, while the correction shows her struggle adapting to a new role. This shift from stable thanking to adaptive thanking reflects emotional adjustment, show the identity shift from mother before switch and after switch in CC's body. It is categorized by Yule (1996) as a thanking expressive act tied to identity adaptation.

Apologizing

Data 2

(03) Bill (Father): "*Oh, Sorry*"

(04) Bill in Wyatt's body: "*Oh.. i'm really sorry, I have to go*"

Family Switch (2023), 0:02:23 & 00:59:31

In data (03) before switch, Bill says "Oh, sorry" briefly and without emotional depth, reflecting casual, effortless apologizing. The interjection "Oh" shows light social awareness, with no sign of inner conflict. In (04), while in Wyatt's body, he says "Oh... I'm really sorry, I have to go," adding emphasis ("really") and justification. This shift marks a move from effortless to role-driven apologizing, reflecting his struggle to adapt to a new identity. Based on Yule's (1996) expressive act theory, both are categorized as apologizing,

Data 3

(05) Jess (Mother): "*Hmm.. Sorry*"

(06) Jess in CC's body: "*I'm the one who's sorry*"

Family Switch (2023), 00:02:19 - 01:11:18

In (05), Jess says “Hmm, sorry” with hesitation and minimal emotion, reflecting effortless apologizing as a polite form. In (06), while in CC’s body, she says “I’m the one who’s sorry,” emphasizing personal responsibility. The phrase “the one” highlights identity struggle and the need to assert emotional ownership in a new role. This shift illustrates a move from effortless to role-driven apologizing, categorized by Yule (1996) as an expressive act reveal

Data 4

(07) Wyatt (Son): "*Guys, Sorry i gotta go.*"

(08) Wyatt in Bill's body: "*I'm not like you Dad, I'm sorry.*"

Family Switch (2023), 00:04:22& 01:14:11

In utterance (11), Wyatt casually says, “Sorry, I gotta go,” reflecting a light, social apology with no emotional weight. The phrase signals urgency, but not deep regret. In contrast, (12) “I’m not like you, Dad. I’m sorry” shows a shift to Role-Driven Apologizing, where “I’m not like you” expresses identity conflict and emotional struggle. The apology carries guilt and pressure, as Wyatt, now in his father’s body, faces expectations he feels unable to meet. This shift reflects a deeper self-awareness and emotional adaptation tied to the body-switch.

Wishing

Data 5

(09) Wyatt (Son): "*I would love for you to know* what it's like to be me."

(10) Wyatt in Bill's body: "*I really wish* I could."

Family Switch (2023), 00:18:50 & 01:14:10

Before switch in data (09), “I would love for you to know...” uses strong modal “would love” to express hope and imperative “to know,” showing the struggle in projective wishing and emotional distance. In (10), “I really wish I could” shifts to softer modals “really wish” and “could,” signaling hesitation and personal reflection, and hope. This change from projective to reflective wishing marks an identity shift as Wyatt, now in Bill’s body, adapts emotionally to a new social role. According to Yule (1996), both are expressive acts of wishing, showing emotional repositioning through language.

Data 6

(11) CC (Daughter): "*I wish* you could be me"

(12) CC in Jess's body: "*I'd love to be you*"

Family Switch (2023), 0:18:42 & 00:24:03

In data (11), CC says “I wish you could be me” with a confrontational tone, expressing emotional distance and frustration. After the switch, (12) “I’d love to be you” shows a reversal using softer, appreciative language. The shift from “wish you could” to “love to be” reflects not only lexical

softening but also CC's internal struggle to adapt emotionally to her new role. As Yule (1996) explains, expressive acts mirror situational shifts, and this change marks identity adjustment through language.

Praising

Data 7

(13) Bill (Father): "There's a fearless performer in there. I know it right?"

(14) Bill in Wyatt's body: "I'm proud of you son. You did it! Good job!"

Family Switch (2023), 00:17:18 & 01:19:35

In data (13), "There's a fearless performer in there" shows Bill's motivational praise, framed as hopeful encouragement. In (14), "I'm proud of you, son" shifts to emotional praise direct, fulfilled, and celebratory. The word "proud" reveals deeper emotional involvement, reflecting an identity shift as Bill, now in Wyatt's body, connects more personally. This aligns with Yule's (1996) expressive act theory, showing a shift from reinforcing to heartfelt praise.

Data 8

(15) Wyatt (Son): "Spock, your work was *impeccable as always*."

(16) Wyatt in Bill's body: "You are *freakishly good* at that"

Family Switch (2023), 00:03:57 & 00:43:25

In (15), Wyatt says, "Spock, your work was impeccable as always," using formal, structured praise that reflects habitual admiration. After the switch, in Bill's body in data (16), he says, "You are freakishly good at that," shifting to casual and emotionally heightened language. The word "freakishly" conveys a deeper feeling of openness and connection. This shift from "impeccable" to "freakishly good" marks a move from routine praise to expressive admiration, showing emotional adaptation in the body-switch context.

Complaining

Data 9

(17) CC (*Daughter*): "I hate when you say apply myself."

(18) CC in Jess's body: "Stop calling me Mom. I'm not Mom."

Family Switch (2023), 00:16:45 & 00:21:37

In (17), "I hate when you say apply myself," CC expresses rebellious complaining, rejecting authority through "I hate" and resisting the expectation in "apply myself." After switching bodies, in (18) "Stop calling me Mom. I'm not Mom," her complaint becomes identity-driven. The repetition of "Mom" and assertion "I'm not" reflects deeper emotional struggle, shifting from resisting rules to rejecting an unwanted identity. This marks a transition from behavioral rejection to identity dissonance in body-switching.

(19) Wyatt (Son): "I'm also in the middle of a lot of prep for my Yale interview...*I really can't slack off.*"

(20) Wyatt in Bill's body: "Ah. You're *so not prepared for this* Dad."

Family Switch (2023), 00:04:38 & 00:42:29

In (19) before Wyatt shift to Bill's body, Wyatt's complain "I'm also in the middle of a lot of prep for my Yale interview... I really can't slack off" shows a structured, goal-oriented expressive act. Phrases like "Yale interview" and "can't slack off" reflect academic pressure and personal discipline. After switching bodies, in (20) "Ah. You're so not prepared for this, Dad," Wyatt shifts to sarcastic complaint. The informal tone ("Ah," "so not prepared") marks a release of pressure and role reversal, expressing frustration from a new adult perspective. This change highlights a transition from disciplined self-complaining to emotionally externalized critique, signaling identity adjustment.

Discussion

In the movie Family Switch, the characters experience a body swap that makes them have to adjust to a new identity. This affects the way they speak-especially when saying thank you, apologizing, complaining, giving praise, and expressing hope. Result show that in this movie there are Thanking (stable thanking to adaptive thanking), apologizing (effortless apologizing, role-driven apologizing), wishing (projective wishing to reflective wishing), praising (confident reinforcing to identity affirming), complaining (rebellion complaining to empathetic complaining, identity rejection complaining, also role-composed complaining to sarcastic complaining). For example, when Jess is still herself, she just says "Thank you," but after entering her son's body, she says "Thank you for saving my baby-I mean my dog." This is called Stable vs Adaptive Thanking, because what was once a simple statement becomes emotional as her identity shifts. Another example, when Bill initially just said "Oh, sorry," without any burden, but after becoming his son, he said "I'm really sorry, I have to go." This shows Effortless vs Role-Driven Apologizing, the form of apology becomes heavier because he has to adjust to new responsibilities. For the wish, Wyatt initially says "I would love for you to know what it's like to be me," then changes to "I really wish I could." Here we see a shift from wishing for someone else to wishing for yourself. This is called Projective vs Reflective Wishing. In praise, Bill goes from "There's a fearless performer in there" to "I'm proud of you, son." This is an example of Motivational vs Emotional Praise, from encouraging to sincere praise. Whereas in complaining, CC changes from "I hate when you say apply myself" to "I'm not Mom," which shows severe identity conflict, called Rebellious vs Identity-Refusing Complaining. All of this is in line with Yule's (1996) theory, which says that emotional speech describes the speaker's feelings and identity - and in this movie, it is very evident. Different from previous research. Virginia & Mubarak (2021) focused on manipulative

expressions, not identity adjustment. Sihombing et al. (2021) discussed illocutionary acts in *Incredible 2*, but did not delve into role conflict. While Pادمي et al. (2023) discuss praise and hope in the context of love, not identity upheaval. So, this research shows that expressions are not just about manners or emotions, but can be a reflection of deep self-change.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that expressive acts in the film *Family Switch* (2023) reflect how characters struggle and emotionally adapt after experiencing a body-switch. Using Yule's (1996) theory, the research found that five types of expressive acts thanking, apologizing, wishing, praising, and complaining shift in form and meaning as characters assume new roles. For instance, a simple "thank you" becomes more emotional, and a casual apology turns into a deeper, more responsible one. These changes are categorized as Stable–Adaptive Thanking, Effortless–Role-Driven Apologizing, Projective–Reflective Wishing, Reinforcing–Heartfelt Praising, and Rebellious–Identity-Based Complaining. Each shift shows how language is used by the characters to manage identity confusion. Unlike previous studies that focused only on emotion or politeness, this research reveals how expressive language can uncover deeper emotional and identity transformations during body-switching experiences.

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