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Strategic Language Alternation in K-Pop Digital Discourse: A Study of NewJeans' Phoning Podcast

Nasyah Azalia Indria Putri [a.1], Risa Triarisanti [a.2*], & Ashanti Widyana[a.3]
[a)]Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia
[1)] azalianasyah@upi.edu; [2)]risatriarisanti@upi.edu; [3)] ashantiwdn@upi.edu
*Corresponding author: Risa Triarisanti

ABSTRACT

The globalization of K-pop has increasingly positioned multilingual communication as a central feature of idol-fan interaction, yet bilingual practices in digital fan platforms remain underexplored. NewJeans' Phoning podcast provides a rich site for observing such practices, where members alternate between Korean and English while addressing fellow members and a global fan audience. This study describes the forms of code-switching and code-mixing in the podcast and explores the communicative factors motivating these language choices. Drawing on Blom and Gumperz's framework (Hudson, 1996), Muysken's (2000) typology, and Bhatia and Ritchie's (2004) motivational categories, the study employs a qualitative descriptive design. Data were collected through repeated listening, verbatim transcription, and systematic coding of bilingual tokens from a single 48-minute episode. The analysis identified 58 instances of language alternation: 14 cases of code-switching and 44 cases of code-mixing. Within code-switching, conversational shifts were most dominant (8 instances), followed by metaphorical (5) and situational (1), indicating that language alternation occurs most naturally as part of habitual bilingual interaction. Within code-mixing, insertion was the most dominant pattern (23 instances), followed by alternation (21 instances), while congruent lexicalization was entirely absent, reflecting the distinct syntactic structures of Korean and English. Motivation analysis shows that message qualification is the most recurrent factor (16 instances), followed by topic comment (13) and reiteration (8), highlighting the strategic use of bilingual resources to clarify meaning, maintain conversational flow, and engage both domestic and international audiences. Overall, the findings illustrate how K-pop idols negotiate accessibility (English) and in-group intimacy (Korean) through bilingual discourse in a digitally mediated setting. These results contribute to research on multilingualism in digital media and the role of English as a lingua franca in transnational K-pop fan communities.

Keywords: *code-switching, code-mixing, K-Pop, NewJeans, podcast discourse*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Bilingual communication is the phenomenon of using two languages in a social interaction. This phenomenon is commonly found in multilingual societies, particularly in environments with cultural and linguistic differences. In bilingual communication, speakers often switch or mix languages depending on the situation, the conversation partner, the purpose of the communication, or the social identity they wish to project. The use of these two languages gives rise to the phenomena of *code-switching* and *code-mixing*, which are central to sociolinguistic

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studies. Sociolinguistic research generally indicates that the dynamics of language choice reflect the speaker's social background (Nordin, 2023). Additionally, the linguistic variations that emerge in multilingual interactions are significantly influenced by the level of familiarity among participants (Asdah & Safitri, 2025). With the development of digital media and global communication, bilingual practices are increasingly common in various forms of modern communication, such as social media, livestreams, and digital podcasts. The use of these new media significantly contributes to the expansion of language functions in cyberspace (Adawiyah et al., 2023). The flexibility of digital platforms has also spurred the emergence of new, more casual, and interactive language varieties (Wulandari et al., 2024). Consequently, the geographical boundaries of speakers are becoming increasingly blurred within the virtual communication ecosystem (Azyizah & Nuryanti, 2023).

In today's digital age, language serves not only as a tool for communication but also as a strategy for building identity, fostering a connection with audiences, and expanding global reach. The rise of digital media such as podcasts, livestreams, and fan communication platforms has created new spaces for multilingual interaction. This transformation has, in turn, influenced how modern messages are crafted and delivered globally (Picone, 2024). In such situations, speakers often use more than one language interchangeably depending on the conversation partner, the topic of discussion, and the purpose of communication. This phenomenon is known as code-switching and code-mixing.

According to Blom and Gumperz in Hudson (1996), code-switching is a shift in language use that occurs due to changes in the social situation or the communicative purpose within a conversation. Blom and Gumperz classify code-switching into two types: *situational code-switching* and *metaphorical code-switching*. *Situational code-switching* occurs when a change in language is influenced by a change in the situation, such as a change in the conversation partner or the conversational context. Meanwhile, *metaphorical code-switching* occurs when a change in language is used to convey a specific meaning, such as closeness, emotion, or social identity, without a direct change in the situation. This theory is relevant to research on digital communication because language shifts in podcasts or livestreams are often influenced by the audience and the purpose of the interaction.

Meanwhile, according to Muysken (2000), code-mixing is the use of elements from another language within an utterance without switching entirely to that language. Muysken divides code-mixing into several forms: *insertion*, *alternation*, and *congruent lexicalization*. *Insertion* occurs when a word or phrase from another language is inserted into the structure of the main language. *Alternation* occurs when the speaker switches to using a larger unit of another language, such as a clause or a specific expression. Meanwhile, *congruent lexicalization* occurs when two languages are used simultaneously in nearly identical structures. In digital communication, code-mixing is often used to adapt communication styles, clarify meaning, or demonstrate a modern and global identity.

In addition to form, the use of code-switching and code-mixing is also influenced by various communication factors. Bhatia and Ritchie (2004) explain that code-switching and code-mixing can occur due to several factors, such as the bilingual habits of speakers, social identity, the relationship with the interlocutor, the topic of conversation, and the desire to create a certain impression on the audience. In the context of digital media and the entertainment industry, bilingualism is also frequently employed to attract an international audience, strengthen

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interpersonal relationships, and foster more relaxed and natural communication. Therefore, code-switching and code-mixing are not merely viewed as linguistic phenomena but also as social communication strategies.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in conversational media such as podcasts, as the conversations take place spontaneously and interactively. Previous research has shown that podcasts are an interesting medium for studying bilingualism in digital communication. Recent studies on audiovisual platforms reinforce the argument that conversational media are highly susceptible to the infiltration of foreign terms (Daulay et al., 2025). Research by Qodriyati et al. examines code-switching in the podcast *Puella*, hosted by Cinta Laura and Prilly Latuconsina. The findings indicate that code-switching is employed as a communication strategy within bilingual digital media. Additionally, Wardana's study on the podcast featuring Deddy Corbuzier and Cinta Laura found that code-switching and code-mixing are used to adapt communication to the audience and create a more natural conversation. Other sociolinguistic studies of the same video content also confirm that these bilingual practices reflect the interactive dynamics of communication in digital media (Suratiningsih & Puspita, 2022). Another study by Gaori and Maharani also shows that the use of code-switching in YouTube podcasts serves to maintain the flow of interaction and provide specific emphasis in the conversation.

In the global entertainment industry, the bilingual phenomenon is also highly evident in K-pop. K-pop idols often use Korean and English simultaneously when interacting with fans through social media, interviews, livestreams, and other digital communication platforms. The prevalence of this phenomenon is driven by the wave of K-Pop popular culture that influences the language styles of the younger generation on social media (Sriautarawong et al., 2025). This phenomenon is not limited to public figures alone but is also widely adopted by the K-Pop fandom community on platforms like Twitter in their daily activities (Azzahrah et al., 2022). The use of English is typically aimed at reaching international fans and enhancing global communication accessibility, while Korean is retained to preserve cultural identity and foster emotional connection with fans. Beyond official idol accounts, this mixed-language communication pattern is also frequently observed in the behavior of content creators who actively utilize social media (Sakina & Haryanto, 2025).

One K-pop group that exemplifies this phenomenon is NewJeans. NewJeans is a fourth-generation K-pop group known for its global image and close communication with international fans. The members' backgrounds also support the emergence of bilingual practices in their conversations. Danielle Marsh is a Korean-Australian member who grew up speaking both English and Korean. Hanni is of Vietnamese-Australian descent and is fluent in both English and Korean in her daily communication. Meanwhile, other members such as Minji, Haerin, and Hyein are also accustomed to using English terms or expressions in their digital interactions. This multicultural background makes the use of code-switching and code-mixing appear naturally in communication among members as well as with fans.

This phenomenon of strategic language use is clearly evident on Phoning, NewJeans' fan communication platform featuring livestreams, voice messages, and casual conversations resembling podcasts. In conversations on Phoning, the members frequently switch between Korean and English when speaking with fellow members or international fans. This language switching indicates specific communication strategies, such as clarifying meaning, adding emotional emphasis, creating a friendly atmosphere, and adapting to a global audience. Because

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the conversations unfold spontaneously and naturally, Phoning serves as an intriguing medium for studying how code-switching and code-mixing are employed as linguistic strategies in K-pop idols' digital communication.

Previous research on NewJeans has generally focused more on the use of code-switching and code-mixing in song lyrics. Research by Margaretta and Rangkuti found that NewJeans' songs frequently employ Korean-English code-mixing and code-switching to support their global appeal. However, research on the strategic use of language in extended, spontaneous conversations such as podcasts or fan communication platforms remains limited. Yet, such interactions can demonstrate more natural functions of bilingual communication compared to pre-written song lyrics.

Therefore, this study is important for analyzing *strategic language discourse* in the Phoning NewJeans podcast. This study focuses on the forms of code-switching and code-mixing used, as well as the communicative factors underlying this bilingual use in building interactions with a global audience. Based on this background, the research questions in this study are, what forms of code-switching and code-mixing are used in the Phoning NewJeans podcast? And what factors influence the use of code-switching and code-mixing in the Phoning NewJeans podcast?

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to analyze bilingual discourse practices in the Phoning NewJeans podcast. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on how code-switching is produced and interpreted within the context of conversation, rather than on statistical generalizations. The descriptive method was chosen because this study aims to describe forms of code-switching and code-mixing as well as the communicative motivations underlying the use of bilingualism in digital communication.

The research data were collected from a single publicly available episode of the Phoning NewJeans podcast, which is 48 minutes long. This episode was selected through purposive sampling because it contains numerous instances of spontaneous bilingual interaction between Korean and English in the members' conversations. Additionally, the episode was chosen because the discussion focuses on Australian culture and life, as discussed by Hanni and Danielle Marsh, who have multicultural and bilingual backgrounds. Topics regarding Australian culture, food, customs, and personal experiences led the two members to use English more frequently in their conversation, resulting in code-switching and code-mixing phenomena that emerged more naturally and intensely. Therefore, this episode is considered relevant for analyzing *strategic language discourse* in digital communication.

The segments and conversations in the podcast were selected to capture interactions that demonstrate the simultaneous use of Korean and English, both in communication directed at the audience such as greetings and explanations and in interactions among participants, such as questions, comments, and evaluations. The unit of analysis in this study is *the bilingual token*, which is an utterance or clause containing a clear language shift or elements of another language inserted into the main utterance. Proper nouns, brand terms, or loanwords that are already in common use are not categorized as *bilingual tokens* unless they appear alongside code-switching or other code-mixing behaviors.

The analysis of code-switching in this study draws on the theory of Blom and Gumperz as presented in Hudson (1996), which distinguishes between *situational code-switching* and

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metaphorical code-switching. *Situational code-switching* occurs when a shift in language is influenced by a change in the interaction situation, such as a change in the conversation partner or a shift in the conversational function. Meanwhile, *metaphorical code-switching* occurs when a language shift is used as an expressive or stylistic strategy without any significant change in the situation. The analysis of code-mixing uses Muysken's (2000) theory, which categorizes code-mixing into *insertion*, *alternation*, and *congruent lexicalization*. To analyze the factors influencing bilingual usage, this study employs the theory of Bhatia and Ritchie (2004), which explains that the use of code-switching and code-mixing can be influenced by social identity, relationships among participants, communicative goals, conversation topics, and audience orientation.

The data collection process was conducted in several stages. First, the researcher watched and listened to the podcast episodes repeatedly to fully understand the context of the interactions. Second, the researcher created verbatim transcripts of the relevant conversation segments and added timestamps to each data point. Third, the researcher identified and extracted utterances containing code-switching and code-mixing. In some sections, Korean utterances were translated into English to aid in the interpretation of meaning and interactional function.

Data analysis was conducted in stages through an iterative *coding* process. First, each *bilingual token* was classified as code-switching or code-mixing based on operational definitions commonly used in research on digital discourse and bilingual podcasts (Daulay et al., 2025; Wulandari et al., 2024). Second, code-switching data were categorized as *situational* or *metaphorical code-switching* based on Blom and Gumperz's theory in Hudson (1996). Situational code-switching was identified when a language shift occurred due to a change in the interaction configuration, such as a shift from explanation to questioning or a transition from inter-participant communication to communication directed at the audience. Meanwhile, metaphorical code-switching is identified when a language shift serves as emotional emphasis, expression, or stylistic device without a clear change in the situation (Zatalini, 2024).

Next, the mixed-code data were classified based on Muysken's (2000) theory. *Insertion* is identified when a word or phrase from another language is inserted into the structure of the main language, whereas *alternation* is identified when a segment of another language appears as a larger unit and possesses its own syntactic structure (Sakina & Haryanto, 2025; Wulandari et al., 2024). *Congruent lexicalization,* on the other hand, is used when both languages appear in relatively similar grammatical structures within a single utterance.

The final step is to analyze the communicative motivation behind each *bilingual token*. In this study, the factors influencing code-switching and code-mixing were analyzed using the theory proposed by Bhatia and Ritchie (2004), which explains that bilingual practices are influenced by various social and communicative factors, such as speaker identity, relationships among participants, communicative goals, conversation topics, and audience orientation. To identify these communicative functions, this study employs the categories of bilingual functions previously applied in the research by Permana and Laila (2023) and Prirol and Masruddin (2019), namely *quotation*, which refers to the repetition of specific utterances or expressions, *reiteration*, meaning the repetition of information in another language to clarify meaning; *message* qualification, used to clarify or add explanation to a message; *topic-comment*, which serves to provide commentary on a specific topic; *interjection*, consisting of brief expressions to convey emotion or a spontaneous response; *hedging*, used to soften or reduce the assertiveness of a

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statement; and *idioms/cultural wisdom*, referring to the use of specific cultural expressions or idioms. These categories are used as a form of implementing bilingual functions and motivations based on the theory of Bhatia and Ritchie (2004) in the context of digital communication. Since a single bilingual utterance can have more than one function, the analysis focuses on the most dominant function based on the conversational context.

To ensure data validity, the researcher cross-checked the recordings, transcripts, and coding process by repeatedly listening to the podcasts. If any unclear or overlapping classifications were found, the researcher revisited the original audio context and compared it with the operational definitions and theories used in this study.

This study is limited to a single 48-minute episode of NewJeans' Phoning podcast. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all NewJeans' digital communication or to K-pop idol discourse as a whole. In addition, the analysis focuses mainly on verbal bilingual practices and does not examine multimodal cues such as gesture, gaze, facial expression, or on-screen interaction, which may also contribute to meaning-making in digital fan communication.

The analytical framework of this study begins with the identification of *bilingual tokens* in the Phoning NewJeans podcast conversations. Once the bilingual data were identified, they were classified into two main categories: code-switching and code-mixing. The code-switching data were then analyzed using Blom and Gumperz's theory in Hudson (1996) to determine whether it constituted *situational code-switching* or *metaphorical code-switching*. Meanwhile, the code-mixing data were analyzed using Muysken's (2000) theory to identify forms *of insertion*, *alternation*, or *congruent lexicalization*.

After the bilingual forms were classified, each data point was analyzed based on its communicative factors and functions using the theory proposed by Bhatia and Ritchie (2004), supported by the categories of bilingual functions outlined by Permana and Laila (2023) as well as Prirol and Masruddin (2019). This analysis was conducted to examine how Korean and English are used as communication strategies in the digital interactions of NewJeans members. The results of the analysis were then interpreted to understand the relationship between bilingual forms, communicative functions, and the context of interaction in the Phoning NewJeans podcast.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section reports the findings that address the two research questions: (1) the forms of code-switching and code-mixing used in NewJeans' Phoning podcast and (2) the communicative factors motivating these bilingual choices. Frequencies are presented descriptively to summarize patterns in the dataset before a closer qualitative interpretation of representative excerpts.

3.1 Results

Based on the analysis of the selected segment of the Phoning NewJeans podcast, 58 bilingual tokens were identified. Of these, 14 were categorized as code-switching and 44 as code-mixing. Data classification was based on the operational definitions used in research on digital discourse and bilingual podcasts (Daulay et al., 2025; Wulandari et al., 2024), as well as the classifications of situational and metaphorical code-switching used in research on contemporary bilingual interaction (Zatalini, 2024).

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To clarify the research results, Table 1 shows the classification of code-switching and code-mixing types along with their frequencies.

Table 1. Data Classification of Code Switching and Code Mixing

	Type	Amount
Code Switching	*Metaphorical*	**5**
	Conversational	**8**
	Situational	**1**
Code Mixing	*Insertion*	**23**
	Alternation	**21**
	Congruent Lexicalization	**0**

Based on the Table 1, it can be seen that the research data contains a total of 14 instances of code-switching, consisting of 5 instances of metaphorical code-switching, 8 instances of conversational code-switching, and 1 instance of situational code-switching. This indicates that the most dominant form of code-switching is conversational code-switching, suggesting that language shifts in Phoning podcast conversations occur more naturally and spontaneously in interactions among participants without significant changes in the situation. Meanwhile, metaphorical code-switching also appears but in smaller numbers, indicating that expressive and emotional functions remain present but do not constitute the primary pattern in the data.

Meanwhile, *metaphorical code-switching* occurs when participants use English to add emotional emphasis, convey specific expressions, or create a more intimate and expressive atmosphere without any change in the conversational context. The use of English in this context serves as a stylistic strategy and reflects the participants' bilingual identity. A specific study on language interaction on digital platforms reveals a similar phenomenon, where code-switching effectively supports specific expressions or stylistic strategies (Zatalini, 2024). Analysis of popular creative works also indicates that the insertion of foreign language codes serves a strategic purpose in enhancing the global appeal of such content (Margaretta & Rangkuti, 2024).

In the code-mixing category, 23 instances of *insertion* and 21 instances of *alternation* were identified, while *congruent lexicalization* was not found in this study. *Insertion* was the most dominant category. This indicates that participants more frequently inserted English words or phrases into Korean sentence structures than they did more complex structural shifts. This finding aligns with the research by Sakina and Haryanto (2025) and Wulandari et al. (2024), which states that *insertion* is the most common form of code-mixing found in bilingual digital communication.

Insertion is frequently observed when participants mention Australian cultural terms, food names, spontaneous expressions, or specific words that are considered more natural when spoken in English. This finding aligns with Muysken's (2000) theory, which explains that *insertion* is the most common form of code-mixing in bilingual communication because speakers tend to incorporate elements of another language without altering the main structure of the language being used.

In addition, the relatively high frequency of *alternation* indicates that NewJeans members also frequently use English phrases in the form of clauses or complete expressions with their own

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distinct structures. This occurs particularly when Hanni and Danielle describe their experiences with Australian culture or use idiomatic English expressions that are difficult to translate directly into Korean. The use of such *alternation* indicates that the members' bilingualism extends not only to the vocabulary level but also to the level of conversational structure.

The absence of *congruent lexicalization* indicates that the use of Korean and English in the Phoning NewJeans podcast still adheres to fairly distinct grammatical boundaries. The members tend to use one primary language in a single utterance, then insert words, phrases, or clauses from the other language without fully blending the two linguistic structures within a single sentence. Consequently, the most prevalent forms of bilingualism observed are *insertion* and *alternation*.

In addition, the absence of *congruent lexicalization* is also influenced by differences in syntactic structure between Korean and English. Korean uses the Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) pattern, whereas English uses the Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) pattern. This structural difference makes it difficult to use both languages simultaneously within a single, fully integrated grammatical structure. This aligns with Muysken's (2000) explanation, which states that *congruent lexicalization* generally occurs when two languages have relatively similar structures, allowing for more free language mixing.

This view is also supported by Lipski (2009), who explains that *congruent lexicalization* requires not only linguistic structural similarity but also a very high level of bilingual proficiency and the habit of using both languages simultaneously in daily life. In the Phoning NewJeans podcast, Korean remains the primary language of communication, while English is more frequently used to supplement communication, emphasize expressions, or insert specific terms. Therefore, the mixing of the two languages does not result in a fully integrated bilingual structure, as is characteristic *of congruent lexicalization*.

The spontaneous and casual nature of podcast communication is another factor contributing to the absence of *congruent lexicalization*. In natural conversation, bilingual speakers tend to choose bilingual forms that are easier and quicker to use, such as word *insertion* or clause *alternation*. Research on *bilingual speech* also indicates that *congruent lexicalization* is more frequently observed in bilingual communities with very high levels of language mixing and nearly equal use of both languages in daily interactions (Beatty-Martínez et al., 2023).

Overall, the results of the study indicate that code-mixing is more prevalent than code-switching in the Phoning NewJeans podcast. The prevalence of code-mixing, particularly in the form *of insertion*, suggests that English is used as a communicative supplement to clarify meaning, demonstrate a global identity, and create a more relaxed and natural style of communication in digital interactions.

To explain the factors of bilingual usage in the podcast, Table 2 presents a classification of communicative functions along with their frequencies. Based on the analysis in Table 2, several factors or communicative functions were identified that influence the use of code-switching and code-mixing in the Phoning NewJeans podcast. These factors were analyzed using the theory of Bhatia and Ritchie (2004) with the categories of bilingual functions from Permana and Laila (2023) as well as Prirol and Masruddin (2019).

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Table 2. Data Classification of Language Switching and Mixing Factors.

	Type	Amount
Language Switching and Mixing Factor	*Quotations*	**4**
	Reiteration	**8**
	Message Qualification	**16**
	Topic Comment	**13**
	Interjections	**4**
	Hedging	**2**
	Idioms and Cultural Wisdom	**1**

The research findings indicate that *message qualification* was the most dominant factor, with 16 instances. This suggests that Korean and English were most frequently used to clarify, add to, or elaborate on the meaning of the message being conveyed. In many conversations, NewJeans members used English to explain Australian cultural terms, local foods, and personal experiences that were considered easier to understand when described in their original language. After that, they often switch back to Korean to maintain the flow of the conversation with other members or Korean fans.

The second most dominant factor is *topic comments*, with 13 instances. This function occurs when participants offer comments or opinions on a specific topic using language deemed most appropriate for the context of the conversation. The use of bilingualism in *topic comments* indicates that language switching is employed to reinforce the expression of opinions and create a more natural conversational flow.

In addition, 8 instances of *reiteration* were identified. This function is used when a member repeats information in another language to clarify the meaning for a bilingual audience. Such repetition often occurs after the use of an English term to ensure that Korean fans continue to understand the context of the conversation. This indicates that the use of bilingualism in podcasts serves not only as a stylistic device but also as a communication strategy to ensure the message is understood by both international and domestic audiences (Permana & Laila, 2023; Prirol & Masruddin, 2019). Consistent with this, the use of varied languages has proven effective in fostering more inclusive communication for local audiences within audio-visual platforms.

Quotations and *interjections* were each found in four instances. *Quotations* were used when participants cited specific phrases, particularly cultural expressions or terms specific to the English language. Meanwhile, *interjections* appeared in the form of spontaneous expressions such as short exclamations, emotional responses, or reactions that sounded more natural when spoken in English.

Hedging was found in 2 instances. This function is used to soften speech or reduce the assertiveness of a statement so that the conversation sounds more relaxed and less direct. Meanwhile, *idioms and cultural wisdom* were the least frequently identified factors, appearing in only 1 instance. This is because the use of specific cultural idioms only appeared in certain parts of the conversation that discussed expressions unique to Australia. These findings indicate that the use of bilingualism in the podcast serves not only as a communication tool but also as a

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strategy to preserve specific cultural meanings that are difficult to translate directly (Permana & Laila, 2023).

Overall, the research findings indicate that the use of code-switching and code-mixing in the Phoning NewJeans podcast is not random but serves specific communicative functions. Bilingualism is employed as a strategy to clarify messages, build rapport with an international audience, maintain the members' bilingual identity, and create more natural and interactive digital communication. The discussion is organized by (a) code-switching types and (b) code-mixing types, followed by an interpretation of the dominant motivational functions reported in Table 1.

3.1.1 Code Switching

In this study, code-switching refers to the alternation between Korean and English across clauses or turns within a single interaction. In digital podcast discourse, such alternation often contributes to audience engagement and stance marking, for example by shifting between a globally accessible code (English) and an in-group code (Korean) to manage intimacy and emphasize a particular group' s (Daulay et al., 2025; Muhartoyo & Sharone, 2023).

1. Metaphorical code-switching

Metaphorical code-switching is used primarily for expressive or stylistic purposes without a clear change in addressee or external situation. In the dataset, this type typically appears when a member adds a Korean evaluative comment after an English audience-directed line, or vice versa, to intensify affect and project cultural affinity (Zatalini, 2024).

The AK-02 data at the 25:20 mark contains a statement by Danielle Marsh: "I, uh... I need my dessert, I need my treats!" which means "I, uh… I need my dessert, I need my treats!" This utterance constitutes *metaphorical code-switching* because it involves a shift from Korean to English without any change in the interlocutor, topic, or conversational context. The use of English in the phrase "I need my dessert, I need my treats!" serves to intensify emotional expression and create a more natural and relaxed conversational tone. This aligns with Blom and Gumperz's theory in Hudson (1996), which states that metaphorical code-switching is used to convey emotional expression, social meaning, or a specific identity without altering the interaction context. Furthermore, based on the factors of bilingual usage according to Bhatia and Ritchie (2004), this utterance falls under the interjection factor because the use of English appears as a spontaneous expression that demonstrates the speaker's emotions and enthusiasm. This finding is also supported by Permana and Laila (2023), who explain that interjections are used to express feelings or emotional responses in bilingual conversations.

Another example is found in AK-03 at 28:43, where Danielle Marsh says, *"호주에 살았을 때 제가 진짜 진짜 좋아했던 음식이 my grandmother's apple crumble. it's so good!"* which means "The food I really, really loved when I lived in Australia was my grandmother's apple crumble. It's so good!". After that, Hanni responds by saying *"apple crumble!"* This utterance constitutes *metaphorical code-switching* because the shift from Korean to English is not caused by a change in situation, interlocutor, or topic of conversation, but is used to emphasize emotion and create an expressive effect in the conversation. The use of English in the phrase *"my grandmother's apple crumble. it's so good!"* demonstrates Danielle's emotional connection to the food and her personal experiences in Australia. This aligns with Blom and Gumperz's theory in Hudson (1996),

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which states that *metaphorical code-switching* is used to express emotions, identity, and specific social meanings without a change in the interaction's context. Furthermore, based on the factors of bilingual usage according to Bhatia and Ritchie (2004), this utterance falls under the *"message qualification"* factor, as the use of English serves to clarify and reinforce information regarding the food being discussed. This finding is also supported by Permana and Laila (2023), who explain that *message qualification* is used to clarify or reinforce the message in bilingual conversations.

2. Conversational code-switching

Conversational code-switching occurs when language alternation happens naturally within an ongoing conversation without significant changes in the interactional situation, topic, or communicative setting. Speakers switch languages spontaneously as part of their bilingual communication style and everyday interactional habits. In the dataset, this type appears when the participants move flexibly between Korean and English while maintaining the same topic and conversational flow. This pattern suggests that the participants use bilingual resources naturally to sustain interaction and express themselves more comfortably in conversation (Zatalini, 2024).

The AK-06 data at 04:32 contains Hanni's utterance , which is "But usually, I just put it in the microwave while it's still frozen. Did you have a lot when you.. Have you had the party pie ones?" which means "But usually, that food is frozen and then eaten after being heated in the microwave. Do you eat that often? Have you tried party pie?" This utterance constitutes conversational code-switching because the shift from Korean to English occurs naturally within a bilingual conversation without any significant change in topic or communicative situation. Hanni uses Korean when explaining typical Australian food, then spontaneously switches to English when continuing the conversation with Danielle about her experience eating party pie. This aligns with Blom and Gumperz's theory in Hudson (1996), which states that conversational code-switching occurs when bilingual speakers switch languages naturally as part of their daily communication habits. Furthermore, based on the factors of bilingual usage according to Bhatia and Ritchie (2004), this utterance falls under the "topic comment" factor because the use of English serves to continue and reinforce the discussion about Australian specialty foods through interactive questions. This finding is also supported by Permana and Laila (2023), who explain that topic comments are used when speakers use another language to provide comments or responses to specific topics in bilingual conversations.

The AK-09 data at 18:52 minutes contains a statement by Danielle Marsh: "저는 항상 그리운 음료가 하나 있어요. I wonder if you can guess what it is," which means "There's one drink I always miss. I wonder if you can guess what it is." After that, Hanni responds by saying, "Is it kale juice?" This utterance constitutes conversational code-switching because the shift from Korean to English occurs naturally within a bilingual conversation without any significant change in topic or communicative situation. Danielle continues discussing the same topic the drink she misses from Australia and then spontaneously switches to English when continuing the conversation with Hanni through an interactive question. This aligns with Blom and Gumperz's theory in Hudson (1996), which explains that conversational code-switching occurs when bilingual speakers naturally switch languages in everyday conversation as part of their communication habits and bilingual identity. This statement is also supported by Zatalini (2024), who notes that conversational code-switching occurs when speakers use two languages flexibly

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to maintain the fluency of interaction and create a more natural conversation. Furthermore, based on the factors of bilingual usage according to Bhatia and Ritchie (2004), this utterance falls under the "topic comment" factor because the use of English serves to continue and reinforce the discussion regarding the beverage topic being discussed through an interactive question directed at Hanni. This finding is also supported by Permana and Laila (2023), who explain that topic comments are used when speakers use another language to provide comments, questions, or responses to a specific topic in a bilingual conversation.

3. Situational code-switching

An example of situational code-switching occurs in AK-14 at 43:50, spoken by Danielle Marsh: "지금까지, Aussie NiNis 없습니다! see you later!" followed by Hanni's "see you later mate!" which means "See you later, this is Aussie-NiNiz (their duo's nickname)!" This falls under *situational code-switching* because it involves a shift from Korean to English influenced by a change in communicative function and speech direction—specifically, from conveying information/concluding the segment in Korean to delivering a direct farewell greeting to a global audience in English. This shift indicates a change in the interaction context, particularly in the podcast's closing segment, which aims to wrap up the conversation and address listeners on a broader, international scale. Additionally, based on the factors of bilingual usage according to Bhatia and Ritchie (2004), this utterance falls under the *interjection* factor because the use of English appears as a spontaneous expression in the form of a closing greeting (*"see you later"*), which serves to express farewell and build emotional closeness with the audience. This is also supported by Permana and Laila (2023), who state that *interjections* in code-switching often appear in the form of short expressions such as greetings, exclamations, or emotional expressions that do not serve to convey information but rather as markers of social interaction.

3.1.2 Code Mixing

Code-mixing refers to the embedding of linguistic material from one language into an utterance that is otherwise organized by another language. In digital discourse, code-mixing is often realized as the insertion of single lexical items (e.g., nouns, evaluatives) or as alternation between larger chunks, depending on speakers' interactional needs and the salience of culturally specific terms (Sakina & Haryanto, 2025; Wulandari et al., 2024).

1. Insertion

Insertion occurs when a word or phrase from the other language is embedded into the grammatical structure of the ongoing utterance. This pattern allows speakers to maintain the matrix language while borrowing a salient term that is perceived as more precise, trendy, or culturally significant (Wulandari et al., 2024).

Data CK-03 is taken from the *NewJeans Phoning* podcast at 7:43. The utterance spoken by Danielle Marsh is *"제가할머니집에놀러갈때마다이렇게한번씩할머니가직접만들어음식 baked dinner 그런것도먹고했는데,"* which means "Every time I go to my grandmother's house, sometimes my grandmother cooks food herself, like *a baked dinner*, and we usually eat it." In the Australian cultural context, *"baked dinner"* refers to a traditional dish like a *Sunday roast*, consisting of roasted meat, roasted potatoes, and vegetables.

This sentence is categorized as an insertion because the English noun phrase "baked dinner" is embedded within an otherwise Korean syntactic structure. The surrounding particles, word

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order, and verb endings follow Korean patterns, while the English phrase functions as a nominal label for a culturally specific food item. In this way, Korean operates as the matrix language and English serves as an embedded resource to efficiently name the referent.

Motivation: This token is coded as idioms/cultural wisdom because the English label refers to a culturally situated concept and preserves its conventionalized meaning. Retaining the original expression helps avoid awkward paraphrasing and keeps the cultural association recognizable to a global audience.

Additional data can be found in CK.14 of the podcast at the 27:30 mark, which includes Hanni's statement *"그 초콜렛으로 coating 완전 된 거 아닌데.."* This is classified as *an insertion* because it involves the insertion of the English word *"coating"* into the Korean sentence structure without altering the language's main structure. The word *"coating"* functions as a technical term describing the chocolate coating process, so it serves merely as a lexical insertion within the sentence, not a full structural shift of the language. Therefore, this form aligns with the concept *of insertion* in Muysken's theory, where a foreign language element is inserted into the base language sentence without altering the primary syntax. Furthermore, based on the factors of bilingual usage according to Bhatia and Ritchie (2004), this utterance falls under the *"message qualification"* factor because the use of the word *"coating"* serves to clarify and specify the speaker's intent regarding the condition of the food being discussed. The use of this English term helps provide a more specific explanation than if only the Korean equivalent were used, thereby enhancing the clarity of the message in the conversation.

2. Alternation

Alternation involves a shift between language segments where the inserted part behaves like a larger unit (e.g., a clause or a fixed expression) with its own internal organization. In conversational digital discourse, alternation is commonly used when speakers reproduce set phrases, slogans, or culturally recognizable lines in their original form (Sakina & Haryanto, 2025).

In the CK-35 data, code-mixing is observed at the 22:07 mark of the podcast. Danielle Marsh's utterance *"When* I *went* to *Melbourne* with *my dad* and *my* older sister, *but I didn't drink coffee*; *I think it was like a chai tea or something"* constitutes an instance of alternation because the speaker shifts from a Korean sentence structure to a complete English clause, namely "I think it was *like* a chai tea *or* something." even though I didn't drink coffee, I think I had something like chai tea or something." This falls under *alternation* because the speaker shifts from a Korean sentence structure to a complete English clause, namely *"I think it was like a chai tea or something,"* which has its own syntactic structure and stands as a single utterance. This language shift is not merely the insertion of a word or phrase but takes the form of a complete clause in English. Furthermore, based on the factors of bilingual usage according to Bhatia and Ritchie (2004), this utterance falls under the *"topic comment"* factor because the use of English serves to continue a comment regarding the topic of the beverage being discussed in a casual conversation. This finding is also supported by Permana and Laila (2023), who explain that *topic comments* are used when speakers employ another language to provide commentary or continue a discussion on a topic within a bilingual conversation.

The CK-27 data were taken from the *NewJeans Phoning* podcast at the 6:56 mark. The statement made by Danielle Marsh is *"there's* a *saying… there's a saying that* goes *'let's throw another shrimp on the* Barbie'*,"* which means "There's a saying… there's a saying that goes 'let's

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throw another shrimp on the Barbie'." In the Australian cultural context, *"Barbie"* is a distinctive Australian slang term meaning *barbecue* or a BBQ grill.

The sentence is categorized as alternation because the English expression ("let's throw another shrimp on the Barbie") appears as a self-contained chunk that does not integrate morphosyntactically into the preceding Korean frame. Rather than inserting a single lexical item, the speaker momentarily "steps into" the other language to reproduce a conventionalized phrase. Motivation: This token is coded as a quotation because the English segment functions as a direct reproduction of a recognizable expression. Using the original wording helps preserve the pragmatic force and cultural resonance of the quote, which may be diluted if translated or paraphrased (Permana & Laila, 2023; Prirol & Masruddin, 2019).

3.2 Discussion

The results of this study indicate that *conversational code-switching* is the most dominant form of code-switching in the conversational data from *the Phoning podcast* featuring members of NewJeans. This dominance indicates that within the context of *digital K-pop discourse*, code-switching occurs not only as a linguistic phenomenon but also as a form of strategic language alternation used to maintain the fluency of interaction among members in spontaneous and informal conversations. This spontaneous use of mixed language is observed among K-Pop idols as part of the language practices of diaspora communities (Muhartoyo & Sharone, 2023). As a comparison outside the realm of idol podcasts, analysis of other digital entertainment media also indicates that code-switching is commonly used to adapt and build a natural rapport with the audience (Gaori & Maharani, 2024).

In this context, language strategy is evident in how group members flexibly switch between Korean and English without any significant change in the communicative situation. This code-switching is used to adapt speaking styles to the conversation partner, maintain the flow of the conversation, and create a more natural and intimate interpersonal atmosphere. Thus, *conversational code-switching* not only reflects bilingual habits but also demonstrates an interactional strategy for maintaining the fluidity of communication in a digital environment involving a global audience.

Furthermore, the predominance of *insertion* in code-mixing reflects a minimalist and efficient bilingual strategy, in which speakers maintain the core structure of Korean while inserting English elements that carry specific expressive or cultural value. This strategy allows speakers to preserve their primary linguistic identity while accessing additional meaning from another language without disrupting the flow of conversation. In the context of digital sociolinguistics, this relates to strategies of global identity marking, popular linguistic styles, and prestige markers in K-pop communication (Asdah & Safitri, 2025; Sakina & Haryanto, 2025).

From a pragmatic perspective, the use of *opic comment as one of the prominent factors* indicates that code-switching is employed to manage the flow of conversation and maintain interactive engagement among participants. Language shifts help speakers make comments, respond to topics, and dynamically maintain the continuity of the conversation. This confirms that code-switching in *the Phoning podcast* is not random but rather a deliberate communication strategy for managing digital discourse (Daulay et al., 2025; Wulandari et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the presence *of reiteration* and *message qualification* indicates strategies for reinforcing meaning in bilingual conversations. Speakers use two languages to repeat or clarify

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information in order to enhance the listener's understanding and reinforce the message being conveyed. This strategy demonstrates that bilingualism in the context of podcasts functions as an effective tool for negotiating meaning in spontaneous and interactive spoken communication (Azyizah & Nuryanti, 2023; Gaori & Maharani, 2024).

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that *conversational code-switching* is a key strategy in *strategic language alternation* within K-pop digital discourse. This practice reflects how NewJeans members utilize bilingualism not only as a linguistic ability but also as a communication strategy that fosters interpersonal closeness, maintains the flow of interaction, and accommodates the context of a global audience in the digital space.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the practices of code-switching and code-mixing in the *Phoning podcast* featuring members of NewJeans cannot be understood merely as linguistic phenomena, but as part of strategic language alternation within digital K-pop discourse**.** The analysis reveals that *conversational code-switching* is the most dominant form, indicating that language shifts are used naturally in interactions among members to maintain the flow of conversation, build interpersonal closeness, and sustain spontaneous communication.

Furthermore, the prevalence *of insertion* in code-mixing indicates the use of an efficient bilingual strategy, in which speakers insert foreign language elements to enrich their expressions without disrupting the main structure of the conversation. From a pragmatic perspective, the use of *topic comments*, *reiteration*, and *message qualification* reinforces the finding that code-switching in this data functions as a discourse management strategy, serving to maintain the topic, clarify meaning, and reinforce the message in the conversation.

Overall, these findings confirm that the bilingual practices in *the Phoning podcast* constitute a form of strategic language alternation that plays a crucial role in fostering adaptive, interactive, and globally oriented communication. This strategy allows group members not only to express their bilingual identities but also to adapt their communication styles to the transnational digital context of K-pop. Thus, this study contributes to digital sociolinguistic research by demonstrating how language is used strategically to shape interactions and identities in modern K-pop media.

The findings imply that bilingual practices in K-pop digital platforms should be understood not merely as linguistic alternation but as a strategic resource for managing global accessibility, cultural intimacy, and audience engagement. Future research may examine a larger corpus of Phoning episodes, compare NewJeans with other multilingual K-pop groups, and integrate multimodal discourse analysis to explore how verbal code-switching works together with visual and interactional cues.

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