

# Functions of Code-switching in Korean EFL Learners' Conversation

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**Kim, Du-Re. (2012). Functions of Code-switching in Korea EFL Learner's Conversation. *Language Research* 48.2, 297-318.**

This study aims to investigate the functions of code-switching in Korean EFL learners' conversation. The recordings of six advanced learners' discussion were transcribed and analyzed. The result revealed, similar to previous studies, learners switched codes when they did not know the right English words at the moment. Significantly, there also were cases of code-switching when participants knew the correct English equivalents. The deliberate use of Korean functioned to make sure if the recipients have understood the message accurately. Moreover, code-switching was encouraged when they talked about Korean words that had culture-related meanings. Learners reported being forced to use English-translated words in such cases could lead to misunderstanding of the intended messages. The finding suggests that the code-switching should be interpreted not as the learners' lack of TL knowledge but as the learners' efforts to take responsibility in the communication.

**Keywords:** code-switching, functions of native language, communication strategy, conversation analysis

## 1. Introduction

With the global trend of emphasizing oral proficiency skills of English in Korean education, how learners apply their target language (TL) knowledge into a real speaking communication situation has gained attention by scholars. The previous research with second language acquisition (SLA) (e.g., Corder 1981, Tarone 1981, Dörnyei 1995) found that learners use "communication strategies" as an effort to convey meanings to compensate their lack of TL skills. Among several strategies, one of the common patterns of the strategies is the use of native language (NL) in a TL speech context, which is labeled as *code-switching* (Gumperz 1982).

Code-switching, or the use of NL in TL communication setting, has been investigated in bilingualism and SLA for its interdisciplinary nature. The studies have been conducted differently in each discipline (Y-i Moon 2009). The most studies in the bilingualism have revealed how participants, who are highly fluent in two languages equally, use both languages to ease their communication and to strengthen their relationship (Adendorff 1995). In SLA discipline, on the other hand, code-switching is merely a sub-component of the compensation strategies and the study of it has been limited to L2 learners' lack of linguistic proficiency (Ellis 2008). Moreover few studies have attempted to focus only on learners' code-switching itself and to investigate the specific functions in nonnative speakers' conversation (Halmari 2004).

The present study takes SLA discipline since speakers in the conversation, though advanced, prefer speaking in Korean and identify themselves as English learners. Nevertheless, it does not necessarily mean all code-switchings in the study are to be regarded as learning strategies. Rather, the study is to focus on all occurrences of code-switching as presented and attempts to find out its own function within the context. By taking conversation analysis (CA) framework, this paper will not only describe the use of native language by Korean EFL (English as a foreign language) learners in the English conversation but also discuss the roles that code-switching serves in the oral communication. While the focus of the study is more on the description of learners' using Korean in the interaction, the result gained from the analysis will be potentially conducive for understanding the nature of code-switching and comprehending responsive roles that learners are willing to take during the conversation.

## **2. Literature Review**

In this section, because code-switching is a complicated phenomenon and its boundaries are difficult to be delimited, the definition of code-switching in the present study is to be discussed first. Next, prior studies regarding the function of code-switching are going to be analyzed. The research questions in the study will be followed.

## 2.1. The Definition of Code-switching in the Present Study

Since the word *code-switching* has been variably used by different researchers, the definition of the term in the present study should be proposed first. Gumperz (1982), who focused more on the social functions of code-switching, defined the term as “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchanges of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems.” (1982:59) Gumperz’s definition involved using any two languages that have different grammatical systems. In communicative strategy perspective, on the other hand, Dörnyei (1995) defined it as “using a L1 word with L1 pronunciation or a L3 word with L3 pronunciation while speaking in L2 (1995:58).” He accepted using two or more languages could also be included in code-switching. Tarone (1981)’s explanation, however, specified it to using native language words without having to translate them into target language. Although the three definitions are common in that it involves the use of more than one language, the controversy remains. Does code-switching mean using of two or more languages or using only NL in the TL conversation?

To which linguistic unit code-switching involves raises another issue. Can an exchange of a single grammatical morpheme or a word be labeled as code-switching, or does it only refer to code changes which occur in sentential levels? Some researchers adopted the term *code-mixing* to settle this problem. However, this only complicates the terminology issue because there is no fixed definition in the term code-mixing either. Kachru (1978) suggested while code-switching has to do with the shifting of register or identity, code-mixing is restricted to switching of linguistic units. In other words, the code-switching happens for functional or pragmatic purposes, and the code-mixing is related with pure language items. Bokamba (1989), on the other hand, used the term in a different way. He wrote “code-switching is the mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two distinct grammatical systems across sentence boundaries” and “code-mixing is the embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes, words, phrases and clauses from a cooperative activity. (1989:278)” In S-Y Shin’s (2010) accounts, code-mixing is the change of languages in sentence level such as changing words or idiomatic expressions while code-switching refers to inter-sentential language change. In addition to two confusing terminologies, Wei (2000)

even coined the term *tag-switching* to indicate the specific language change in the code-mixing, such as changes of a tag phrase or a word.

In this study, to avoid confusion, the term code-switching follows Tarone's (1981) definition in that it only includes NL and TL, that is, Korean and English. Thus, speakers' use of other languages such as Japanese or French in English conversation is not the focus of the analysis. Additionally, this study assumes that the term code-mixing and code-switching are interchangeable, and any instance of using Korean - from morphemes, words or phrases to sentences - is to be analyzed in the framework of code-switching.

## 2.2. Previous Studies on the Functions of Code-switching

The use of NL in the TL communication context has been studied from two different approaches in SLA field. Traditional approaches take the use of NL as one of the communication strategies in which learners employ as a resource to express the meaning in communication breakdowns (Dörnyei and Scott 1997). The focus was on describing how code-switching compensated learners' lack of TL knowledge (e.g., Faerch & Kasper 1983).

The recent studies, however, have revealed that code-switching does not always indicate learners' lower proficiency, but rather serves its own communicative and social functions. The attempt to take the functional approach in the interpretation of NL use goes back to Kachru's (1978). He suggested code-switching is the learners' choice "determined by function, the situation and roles. (1978:107)" In addition, Gumperz (1982) looked into the social functions in language switching. He stated that speakers entail socially constructed notions into language codes and use the notions for the effective communication.

Moreover, Adendorff (1995), adopting Gumperz's (1982) term, viewed code-switching as a "contextualization cue" which helps interlocutors to signal information such as the activity types they are engaged in, the meaning of words, or other social relationships. By analyzing interactional data with teacher education in different disciplines, he found that the switches play a role of "guiding the participants' interpretation of academic goals and intentions and their interpretation of social relationships (1995:405)." Auer (1998) also agreed with Gumperz's (1982) idea that code-switching is a cue to contextualization and it

cannot be explained without discourse contexts. Auer suggested that the functions of code-switching can be interpreted with the presence of the information on what the interlocutors are doing now (1998:18).

Another study which emphasized the functions of code-switching is H-H Chung (2006). She investigated the conversation between her two children and husband, all of whom are Korean-English bilinguals. She found out that the father switched between two languages in the sentence-level considering his children's language competence. The father's use of two languages was intended to make his point clear by lowering language barriers through translation. H-H Chung stated another function of code-switching in her family was consolidating cultural identity. Her children preferred using Korean when speaking to their parents. Even when speaking in English, they put "an honorific suffix *-nim*(님)" before the name of teachers and ministers, conforming to Korean speech act of showing respect.

Some studies further elaborated a number of functions of code-switching in detail. Appel and Muysken (2006), for example, suggested six functions of code-switching. First one is a referential function; learners switch code when they do not know a certain word or a certain concept in one language. Directive function aims to involve another speaker by using a familiar language to the person. Expressive function refers to using another language to stress the identity or feeling while emphatic function means using code-switching to signal a change in tone to emphasize certain part of the speech. Metalinguistic function deals with using one language to comment on another. Last one is a poetic function in which people switch languages for the purpose of entertainment.

Watson (2005) categorized eight different functions of code-switching in native and nonnative speakers' interaction, and put each function in a continuum, which is called "A continuum of Interactional Co-operation (2005:2330)," that ranges from least successful to most successful. In his research, most successful or most interactional function is the appeal for assistance in which speakers use their NL when they cannot find TL equivalents in conversation. The most non-interactive function was unambiguous code-changes where learners avoid searching for appropriate word items and use direct NL grammar and lexicon. He stated the continuum can measure the functional use of code-switching in natural speech.

Additionally, Ariffin and Rafik-Galea (2009) recorded the speaker's speech during the organizational training sessions and extracted language changes in the speaker's utterances. The rich amount of data demonstrated eleven different functions of code-switching: "signaling social relationships, signaling language preference, obviating difficulties, framing discourse, contrasting personalization and objectification, conveying cultural-expressive message, lowering language barriers, maintaining the appropriateness of context, and showing membership and affiliation with others." They concluded that code-switching occurrence is not a sign of linguistic deficiency, but rather, "a negotiation between language use and the communicative intents of the speakers. (2009:15)"

The prior studies concluded that code-switching should no longer be viewed as an indication of language deficiency but rather should be understood as a speaker's intention to convey the meaning and to assimilate to the language community. In an effort to demonstrate how code-switching contributes to carrying out the interaction among interlocutors, the previous literature listed various functions it serves. Aligned with the previous literatures, this study attempts to analyze the functions of code-switching in Korean EFL learner's conversation. The relevant research questions and methods of the study will be followed next.

### 2.3. Research Questions

The present study discriminates itself from other studies in three aspects. First, the study attempts to investigate the function of code-switching in not bilinguals' but English learners' conversation. As discussed in the prior section, the code-switching itself gained less attention in SLA field compared to bilingual studies and has been taken as just one component of various strategies. It is assumed to be meaningful, therefore, to find out communicative and sociolinguistic functions of code-switching per se in nonnative English speakers. Second, this study is in EFL context, while the previous literatures in Korean-English code-switching are limited to ESL context (e.g., Y-i Moon 2009, H-H Chung 2006). Lastly, this study takes conversation analysis (CA) for analysis. Stroud (1992) proposed that the problem in prior code-switching studies is "to what extent the intentions and meaning that we assign to switches can in fact be said to be intended by a

speaker or apprehended by his or her interlocutors.” (1992:131) Stroud claimed that CA approach is beneficial for dealing with this problem since it takes not analyst-oriented, but participant-oriented framework. Likewise, Wei (2005) explained the two advantages of taking CA approach in code-switching research. First, it prioritizes “the effect of a participant’s choice of language at a particular point in the conversation. (2005:382)” Second, it restricts analyst’s interpretation and investigates the utterance as manifested in the behavior. In other words, CA encourages investigation of the code-switching as it is presented and excludes observer’s prejudice. Using this CA framework, the study attempts to investigate the following research questions.

Research Question 1. How do Korean EFL learners use code-switching in the interaction?

Research Question 2. What functions does code-switching serve in the conversation?

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Participants**

For this study, the conversation among four undergraduate (B, C, E, F) and two graduate students (A, D) were analyzed. They formed a study group by themselves to practice English speaking for several reasons. Some participants were studying English for a job interview, and some were working to get an admission to graduate schools in English-speaking countries. Others were learning English for fun. Although not everyone was able to participate every time, they managed to have discussions four times a week for about a year. The profiles of participants are illustrated in the Table 1.

**Table 1.** Participants

Name	Age	Major	English proficiency	Time in English-speaking countries
A	30	Economics	TOEFL 105	None
B	24	Health Administration	TOEIC 915	None
C	26	Business Administration	TOEIC 965	One year in Canada
D	27	Economics	TOEFL 101	Two years in US
E	24	Education	TOEFL 94	Two years in US before puberty
F	22	Food & Nutrition	None	Two years in US before puberty and one year in Canada

Overall, the participants generally had high proficiency in English when it comes to standard English proficiency test. While F did not have a standard English testing score, her language training in English speaking countries and her fluency in the recordings indicated that she had an advanced level in English speaking. They took turns serving the role of host, who had to prepare the topics for the discussion after reading news articles from *The New York Times*. The topics were various from their favorite books, or sports, to current economic issues. The host introduced the topic and questions to discuss and the rest of the members shared the article, talking about their ideas.

### 3.2. Materials

Participants have recorded their discussion from the first day of the discussion. They had not been aware of the present research since the writer was allowed to use the data for the study after their discussion took place. Among thirteen recordings that the writer had permission to use, five recordings were selected. The selected recordings had good voice quality enough to be transcribed and the topics used in each discussion were independent from others. The detailed information of each recording is described in the following Table 2.



**Table 2.** Materials

Recording	Recorded date	Topic	Time
(a)	Aug. 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2011	Major League Baseball	30:14
(b)	Aug. 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2011	Stock Market Crash	39:29
(c)	Sep. 21 <sup>st</sup> , 2011	Free Meals in School	38:52
(d)	Oct. 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2011	Economic Growth	38:25
(e)	Nov. 24 <sup>th</sup> , 2011	Markets in e-book	39:22

### 3.3. Data Analysis

For research question #1, every episode which contains the use of L1 in the selected recording was transcribed and analyzed. In the data, the transcription system developed by Jefferson (2004) was adopted. Applying Ohta's (2005) method to describe turns, (i) the initial turn that contains the utterance causing the problem in communication, (ii) the turn containing code-switching, and (iii) the turn containing the response of the code-switching were basically transcribed. However, since the data in the study was mainly about discussion, some learners talked for a long time as in a monolingual speech, and in such cases, code-switching occurred without the initial turn or the response turn. The transcription described in the study, therefore, focused mainly on the turn containing code-switching.

For research question #2, the frequency and the function of L1 code-switching episodes from each recording was analyzed. After the analysis of transcription, verbal reports were also followed to clarify the intention of the speaker's Korean usage. The writer had participants listen to the episodes in which they had changed the code to Korean, and the researcher asked why they used the native language in the moment. All the interviews were conducted in Korean. The recorded interview was later transcribed in Korean and translated into English by the researcher.

## 4. Results and Discussion

In this section, each episode of Korean usage is provided and ana-

lyzed. The transcriptions of code-switching in the study suggested five main functions of NL: (i) compensation for the lack of TL knowledge, (ii) helping interlocutors' comprehension in advance, (iii) clarification of intended message, (iv) delivery of culture-related messages and (v) maintenance of conversation.

#### 4.1. Compensation for the Lack of TL Knowledge

Episodes of code-switching resulted from the speakers' lack of language knowledge were observed in the data. These findings are in line with the previous literature in SLA field. (e.g., Dörnyei and Scott 1997) Learners codeswitched when they could not find equivalent TL words. Learner's use of hesitation markers (*um, uh*), pause, or direct word searching remarks (*I don't know how to say it* in line 3, Episode 1 or *what is it* in line 1, Episode 2) clearly showed that they were spending time for word search before using L1.

##### [Episode 1]

01 E: so we go to the some kind of big- ..uh.. (1.0) > I don't know  
< 기술원↑=  
02 C: =Yes [yes  
03 E: [I don't know how to say it=  
04 A: =institute technology!  
05 E: yeah

##### [Episode 2]

01 A: they support the- uh (1.0) >what is it< 노예↑ 노예제도↑  
02 E: sl[aves  
03 C: [slaves=  
04 A: =slaves. slave or something they respect the white americans

In Episode 1, E directly told her listeners that she didn't know the word for 기술원 (line 1). A responded by giving a possible answer 'institute technology' (line 4) to which E accepts (*yeah* in line 5) and kept on discussing. The similar finding can be observed from Episode 2. A used Korean with rising intonation to ask for help since he couldn't find the right word (line 1) and accepted the possible translation provided by E and C (line 2-3).

Unlike the Episode 1 and 2, however, there were times when no TL equivalent was given by interlocutors and speakers simply let it pass by saying *yes* (line 4, Episode 3). When the interlocutors did not know the correct TL word either, they did not waste time looking for the correct word, but moved on to discuss something else. This finding mostly occurred when they looked for a special or technical term such as 'balanced finance (균형재정)' in the following example.

[Episode 3]

- 01 D: maybe he said until next by next year korean government will try to  
 02 meet uh- um (1.0) 균형재정 how could I say um likeuh balanced  
 balanced  
 03 something.  
 04 A: yes

Similar to Episode 3, in the following Episode 4, C also used Korean when talking about the special legal terminology. In this case, as well, interlocutors did not bother to give TL equivalent, but continued discussing the topic.

[Episode 4]

- 01 D: but wh- why do you think ss likeuh (1.0) likeuh the owner of the  
 the  
 02 illegal system=  
 03 C: =yeah↑  
 04 D: like give like provide <slow uh- download it. system>↓  
 05 C: ah it (1.0) if some uh (2.0) 법적부여 hh=  
 06 D: =but do you know the- their likeuh action theres likeuh their doing is illegal↓

Compared to communication breakdowns such as pauses, or direct help (*how could I say* in line 2, Episode 3) after speakers' use of Korean in the previous episode, in Episode 4, the next speaker D continued the flow of communication. Even though C hesitated before using Korean word 법적부여, D in line 6 did not consider it as a problem and not try to give any possible alternative in English.

What is noticeable in the use of Korean is that, even though learners used their NL to compensate for their lack of TL knowledge, it

does not always guarantee the successful communication.

[Episode 5]

- 01 B: Especially. uh this year↓ Philadelphia Phillies haz a (1.0)  
 very nice  
 02 pitcher↓  
 03 (2.0)  
 04 D: oh °real[ly↓°  
 05 B: [yes  
 06 A: mm. okay. you mean the g- good bullpen=  
 07 B: =bullpen bullpen uhm (1.0) °선-선발°↑ hh  
 08 (3.0)  
 09 B: °선발°  
 10 A: um. okay↓ OKAY

In the above Episode 5, they are talking about the baseball players in *Philadelphia Phillies*. B was talking about one player and 2.0 pause followed (line 3), which indicated the listeners were not following the conversation. A asked for the clarification (line 6) and B answered using Korean word ‘선발’ (line 7), after which the long pause followed (line 8). This silence meant still the listeners did not comprehend B’s intention. B repeated the word in a small voice (line 9) again and A tried to recover from the communication breakdown by saying “okay” and again with loud voice (line 10).

To understand the repeated use of ‘선발’, the researcher asked B why he used the word several times. B responded:

*When I said Philadelphia had a nice pitcher, I only meant a starting pitcher. But A used a word ‘bullpen’ which refers to all relief pitchers. I wanted to correct what I had intended to say, but I didn’t know how to say in English.*

The above interview showed that B codeswitched to clarify what he meant. When B said ‘a very nice pitcher,’ (in line 1-2) he was only talking about the starting pitcher. To correct A’s misunderstanding, B used the word ‘선발’, but after a few seconds, he failed to come up with the word ‘the starting pitcher’ and he used the word ‘선발’ again. Unfortunately, A did not understand what B was trying to say and moved on to talk about something else by saying *okay OKAY* (line 10). This episode revealed that the use of Korean does not necessarily suc-

ceed in conveying the intended meaning.

The previous episodes illustrated in this section showed that learners were switching codes when they were not aware of the target word in English. Learners uttered Korean words with *repair initiators* such as hesitation (*uh, um*) or pauses (Schegloff 1979). Listeners provided a possible TL equivalent for word spoken in Korean. However, if the words were about professional or academic terminologies or if learners were not aware of the target TL word either, they continued talking, after deploying positive commentaries (*yes, okay*) not to waste time for word searches. Moreover, there was even a case that the use of Korean word did not contribute to the successful communication. In this case, too, the listeners did not take it as an issue and moved on to discussing something else.

#### 4.2. Helping Interlocutors' Comprehension

While most of code-switching episodes were related with the lack of TL knowledge as in previous section, sometimes speakers used both English and Korean during the conversation. The following episodes in this section show the function of NL in helping other listeners to understand the utterances.

##### [Episode 6]

- 01 F: What was the name↑  
 02 A: Norwegian Wood↓  
 03 F: A:::h  
 04 A: 노르웨이 숲↑=  
 05 F: =okay↓

In the above episode, students were talking about their favorite books and speaker A introduced a book to F titled "Norwegian Wood." Later, however, he mentioned the title in Korean again. The researcher asked his use of Korean in line 4, and A responded that he was worried if F surely figured out the book he had talked about. In the interview, he said:

*I think some people cannot relate the original title with its Korean translated version even though they are exactly the same.*

The interview with A showed that he was concerned about how his interlocutor had understood his utterance. The same finding can be observed in the following example.

[Episode 7]

- 01 A: as you mentioned in korea we the uh especially large compa-  
 nies like um  
 02 (0.8) 대기업† is- are exempted from the uh- um. co- corporate  
 tax 법인세†  
 03 uh (rizingly) for the u:h for their uh for their contribu-  
 tion to our  
 04 country's economic development

When talking about 'corporate tax,' even though the speaker A was aware of the word, he immediately uttered the word in Korean (법인세). When asked, A replied he thought some of the members in the study group might not be familiar with the word 'corporate tax' since it is an academic term used in economics.

A's uttering the word '대기업' was different from other two examples ('노르웨이 숲' and '법인세'). In the occurrence of Korean in the former episodes, repair initiators (e.g., pause or *uh*) were not deployed since the speaker did not need time to search for the possible TL equivalent. However, in the case of using '대기업' after uttering 'large companies,' there were hesitation (*um*) and pause (0.8). In the interview A said, *I should have used 'conglomerates' not 'large companies,' but I did not come up with the word.* In other words, he wanted to avoid the misinterpretation that could be caused by his wrongly chosen words 'large companies.' He told the researcher that he had to add Korean word '대기업' at that time to convey what he actually meant.

Two episodes revealed that the speaker was anxious about misinterpretation of his utterances and wanted to make the message clear by deploying Korean. This finding indicates that learners were showing responsibility in the interaction by taking the listeners into consideration.

#### 4.3. Clarification of Intended Message

It was the speaker who used code-switching in the previous episodes, but there was one occurrence in which the listener used L1. In

the following episode, during A's talk, E interrupted and used Korean word.

[Episode 8]

01 A: >Do you know< in the civil war uh they were [against the

02 E: [남북전쟁↑=

03 A: =남북전쟁,they uh they were again- against the united states  
america

In the above episode, A used the word Civil War, and E used Korean with rising intonation. E used code-switching to clarify if what she had understood was right. This finding reveals that the code-switching functions for listeners to confirm the intended message uttered by the speaker.

#### 4.4. Delivery of Culture-related Message

According to Ariffin and Rafik-Galea (2009), code-switching functions to convey cultural-expressive message. They argued that some unique cultural expressions have its own particular meaning and cannot be expressed in another language. The similar interpretation can be applied to examples in this section.

[Episode 9]

01 D: If only the poor people- poor children get the free meal  
then the

02 controversy. I mean conflict can happen like lik- °왕따°↑ or  
something

03 could be uh take place in the school at school↓ y'know take  
place, so

04 the other party proposed like another like a proposal like  
a solution uh

05 no one knows who get the free meal at the school↓ actually  
동사무소 can

06 take other can handle like uh like other administrative  
process

In the above example, D used two Korean words, '왕따' and '동사무소', while talking about the issue of free meals in elementary schools. The interview with the speaker showed that he thought some words were

impossible to be translated for its own cultural connotations.

*I guess I tried to translate 왕따 in English. But 왕따 is a new word even in Korea, and I couldn't find the equal word in English. 왕따 was coined in Korea and the word reflects the context of our society. It's like you cannot substitute 'academia' for 학원. 'Academia' and 학원 are totally different words.*

This interpretation applies the same for his use of '동사무소' as well.

*I might have used the expression like 'office for the citizens who lives in neighbors...' but I don't need to. It would only confuse listeners and they may not understand what I intended to say. It's rather comfortable to use the word 동사무소 instead.*

In the interview, D's reply supports two findings that he, the speaker, was taking responsibility for listeners' understanding the message as in the previous section 4.2, and that he believed the word '동사무소' was irreplaceable in English for its own socio-cultural connotation. The following Episode 10 shows the similar finding.

[Episode 10]

- 01 A: y'know maybe three years ago a um a 선배, 선배 of mine uh he works in STX  
 02 and he recommend me to uh to buy the stocks at STX†

In line 1, the speaker A used the word Korean '선배.' When asked for the use of Korean word, he answered:

*I think I wanted to use the word 'senior' at first. But, what occurred to me is that, when you look up the word 'senior' in the dictionary, it usually means someone who is old or it refers to students in their final year at university. When we use the word '선배' in Korea, we presume we refer to someone who goes to the same school with us. There is no right English word for '선배', and if I had used the word 'senior', other members would not have understood the meaning.*

The examples in the section indicated that learners in the conversation changed codes when they could not find the possible TL equivalent words. Since these words have its own culture-related connotations, learners were worried if translated English words might convey a dif-



ferent meaning to listeners. This section, too, demonstrated speakers' responsive role even in the conversation in English.

#### 4.5. Maintenance of the Communication Flow

Jamshidnejad (2011) argued that one of the communication strategic functions is to maintain the flow of conversation. Likewise, Korean words in the following episodes were deployed to avoid the communication breakdowns and to keep conversation going. This interpretation is supported by the fact that participants chose to use Korean number units to English ones.

##### [Episode 11]

- 01 A: 'Cause it may be amount to 3조 .. ah 3조 or 4조 in in Korean  
won↑ that is  
02 not that big money I believe we have enough economic abil-  
ity to provide uh  
03 out children free meal

The speaker kept using Korean number unit '조(one hundred billion)' and no other speaker tried to switched the term into English. The use of Korean when talking about the numbers can be observed more accurately in the long transcription of Episode 12.

##### [Episode 12]

- 01 C: uh. um- how much he got. from uh (0.6) that working↓  
02 D: okay let's say my mother like uh invest 8억 let's say↑ every  
like a  
03 month he got like a 천만원↑ or little bit less than 천만원  
cause uh  
04 actually he doesn't get like other- money like from my mom  
just like ey  
05 uh 수수료 or something  
06 A: yeah  
07 D: he sell and buy a stock whenever he's like uh does a process  
he got the  
08 some part of money may that's it  
09 E: a:h  
10 D: but i- it's not that big because its like a only like a point  
one or

- 11 something↓  
 12 C: yes[yes  
 13 D: [i- it its like or less a than 천만원 or 천만원 like something  
 for just  
 14 he operate like uh- runs like more than 백억 or at the 몇- 몇  
 백억  
 15 C: several 억s hhh  
 16 A,E: several 억s [hhh  
 17 D: [hhh several 억s hh I think he got the maybe I think his sal-  
 ary is  
 18 몇십억s  
 19 C: yeah  
 20 E: maybe

Learners consistently switched codes when they were referring to numbers. In the above conversation, the number units were always spoken in Korean. Even with English adjectives (*several*), the unit (억) itself was not changed into English as if they were intended to make a humorous expression ('*several 억s*' in line 15-16). Participants gave several reasons for code-switching during the interview which can be categorized into four reasons. First, speakers themselves wanted to avoid facing difficulty in calculating Korean units into English ones. Unlike English units that change in every three-digit, the unit changes in every four-digit in Korean. It adds processing burden in the situation where they had to speak in English. Second, units in Korean are monosyllabic words as 천 (*chun*), 만 (*man*), 억 (*uk*), 조 (*cho*). They are simpler than polysyllabic words in English such as *thousand*, *million*, or *billion*. Third, not only speakers but also listeners would encounter the processing difficulty to calculate and comprehend the numbers. Last but not least, all the problems would hinder the natural flow of communication which was the last thing they wanted.

The episodes in this section also revealed that learners were concerned not only about speakers' delivering the message but also listeners' understanding the message. They were also aware of the flow of conversation and did not want to take a risk of blocking it by sticking to English. They preferred flexible usage of both Korean and English to maintain the conversation.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study aimed to describe how Korean learners of English use code-switching and to analyze the function of code-switching. The term *code-switching* was limited to the use of NL and TL conforming to Tarone's (1981) definition. The code-switching in this paper is taken as an interchangeable term with *code-mixing* in that it covers from the changes in morphemes to sentences. Five recordings of six adult EFL learners' conversation were analyzed and transcribed in CA framework. A number of occurrences of code-switching were observed in the five recordings and each occurrence revealed five functions of code-switching.

One of the functions of code-switching observed in the study was, as found in previous literatures, the compensation for the lack of TL knowledge. Learners used Korean with hesitation or pauses when they could not think of correct English equivalent words. Although the most frequently observed function of code-switching episodes was related with this lack of TL knowledge, it is inaccurate to say that code-switching results from the lack of TL knowledge. Learners only switched codes in word levels not above sentence levels, and in most cases, they used Korean for difficult academic or specific terminology. The second function of code-switching was helping interlocutors' comprehension in advance. The speaker knew the word in English, but switched codes to Korean to make sure every listener could understand the message. Deploying Korean for the clarification was not only for the speaker but also for the listeners. The listener used code-switching when s/he wanted to check what s/he had understood was accurate, and this was the third function in the interaction. The fourth function had to do with the socio-linguistic perspective in that learners used their NL to conveying culture-related messages. Learners used Korean words when they thought the equivalent English word did not exist, since some words retained their own cultural connotations. Speakers responded that trying to translate these culture-related words into English could lead to misunderstanding. Lastly, participants used NL to maintain the natural flow of communication. Learners avoided using English number units since it caused processing difficulty for both speakers and listeners. To lower the processing burden and ease the flow of communication, learners preferred using Korean when talk-

ing about number units.

The most important implication for the study is that, Korean EFL learners in the study were not just trying to translate NL to TL. Learners, though they are not as proficient as native speakers, were taking responsibility in the communication, keeping aware of listeners' comprehension and speakers' intention. They tried to maintain the natural flow of conversation and avoided communication breakdowns. The code-switching, in other words, is a reflection of several functions deliberately employed by learners. Therefore, using NL during the conversation should not necessarily be interpreted as the lack of TL knowledge. Rather, it should be viewed as learners' active and responsible effort to convey and comprehend the message.

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Received : July 10, 2012

Revised version received: July 29, 2012

Accepted: August 10, 2012