



Korean Ladder Study Note

ㄹ 발음

The Korean R/L Sound at the Start and Middle of Words

Level	Topic	Focus
A1 · Beginner TOPIK 1	Pronunciation Consonants	ㄹ 발음 The Korean R/L Sound at the Start and Middle of Words

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-002>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPTBKupGuss>

Visit Korean Ladder for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, real talk — every time I see ㄹ, my brain freezes. Is it an R? Is it an L? Which one is it?

Same. In 사랑 it sounds kind of like an R, but at the end of 물 it sounds like an L. It feels like the rules keep changing.

좋은 질문이에요. 사실은 규칙이 아주 간단해요. The rules never change — your tongue just does two small jobs with one letter.

여기 핵심이에요. 하나의 글자, 두 개의 소리. One letter, two sounds — and where ㄹ sits in the syllable tells you which one.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	우리 라면 먹을래요? —	Shall we eat ramyeon?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	좋아요. 그리고 물도 주세요. —	Sounds good. And water too, please.
Hana	우리 · 라면 · 그리고 —	light R tap
Junho	물 —	clear L

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
ㄹ = R / L rieul	One letter, two sounds	여기 핵심이에요. 하나의 글자, 두 개의 소리. One letter, two sounds — and where ㄹ sits in the syllable tells you which one.
모음 사이 → R · 받침 → L moeum sai → R · batchim → L	Between vowels = R tap · End of syllable = L	규칙은 이래요. 모음 사이에 있으면 가벼운 R 소리, 받침에 있으면 L 소리. Between two vowels it's a light R; sitting at the bottom of a syllable, the batchim, it's an L.
사랑 sa-rang	love	예를 들어 볼게요. 사랑. 사랑. 여기 ㄹ은 모음 사이에 있어서 가벼운 R이에요. Hear how light it is — 사랑.
우리 u-ri	we / our	또 다른 예요. 우리. 우리. 그리고 — 그리고. 둘 다 모음 사이의 ㄹ, 가벼운 R이에요. Both 우리 and 그리고 use that same soft tap.
물 mul	water	이제 받침을 봐요. 물. 물. 여기 ㄹ은 받침이어서 L 소리에요. Now 물 — water. The ㄹ is at the bottom, so it becomes a clear L.
물 · 서울 mul · seo-ul	The Korean R/L Sound at the Start and Middle of Words	받침 ㄹ에서는 혀가 입천장에 닿아서 멈춰요. For the batchim L, the tongue touches and stays — 물, 서울. Seoul.
모음 사이 ㄹ tap, like 'butter'	A light flick — not a heavy English R	Oh! So between vowels the tongue just taps and lets go — that's the R. Kind of like the 'tt' in the word 'butter'?
버터의 'tt' = 우리의 ㄹ u-ri	The 'butter' flick IS the Korean R	맞아요. 'butter'의 그 빠른 소리, 바로 그거예요. Exactly — that fast little flick in 'butter' or 'water' is your Korean R. 우리, 사랑.



Grammar / Structure Notes

ㄹ = R / L

ㄹ = R / L — One letter, two sounds

The letter's name is 리을

모음 사이 → R · 받침 → L

모음 사이 → R · 받침 → L — Between vowels = R tap · End of syllable = L

Position decides the sound

사랑

사 + 랑 — love

예를 들어 볼게요. 사랑. 사랑. 여기 ㄹ은 모음 사이에 있어서 가벼운 R이에요. Hear how light it is — 사랑.

우리

우 + 리 — we / our

또 다른 예요. 우리. 우리. 그리고 — 그리고. 둘 다 모음 사이의 ㄹ, 가벼운 R이에요. Both 우리 and 그리고 use that same soft tap.

물

물 — water

이제 받침을 봐요. 물. 물. 여기 ㄹ은 받침이라서 L 소리에요. Now 물 — water. The ㄹ is at the bottom, so it becomes a clear L.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
사랑	sa-rang
물, 서울	mul · seo-ul
라면	ra-myeon
우리	u-ri
그리고	geu-ri-go
물	mul

Self-Check

- 1 Say ㄹ 발음 three times: slow, natural, then inside a short sentence.
- 2 Write one original sentence that was not in the video.
- 3 Rewatch the YouTube lesson and pause when the same pattern appears.



Related / Subsequent Studies

Lesson	Why study it next	Link
ㅋㅌㅍ Aspirated and Tense Consonants	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅋㅌㅍ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-001
ㅅ Plain and Tense Sibilants	A2 Pronunciation: compare ㅅ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-PRON-CNS-001
비음화 When ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ Become ㅇ/ㄴ/ㅁ	B1 Pronunciation: compare 비음화 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-PRON-CNS-001
ㅚ The Vowels That Now Sound the Same	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅚ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-002

My Notes

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