



Korean Ladder Study Note

달 · 덜 · 돌 · 둘 · 들

Five-Vowel Minimal-Pair Drills

Level	Topic	Focus
A1 · Beginner TOPIK 1	Pronunciation Vowels	달 · 덜 · 돌 · 둘 · 들 Five-Vowel Minimal-Pair Drills

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-012>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANwDfBg40Sc>

Visit [koreanladder.com](https://www.koreanladder.com) for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, confession. Last week I asked a server for my stew less spicy. She looked confused, and then she laughed.

아마 덜 대신 돌이라고 했을 거예요. You probably said 'stone' instead of 'less.' 돌 매운 거. Stone spicy.

Stone spicy. Great. But honestly, those two words sound almost the same to me.

That's very common. 영어 화자에게는 이 모음들이 비슷하게 들려요. English ears blur these vowels. But in Korean, one vowel changes the whole word.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	오늘 달이 정말 밝네요. —	The moon is really bright tonight.
Hana	네. 저기 돌 위에 앉을까요? —	Yes. Shall we sit on that stone over there?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	좋아요. 둘이 앉기에 딱 좋네요. —	Sounds good. It's just right for two of us.
Hana	들에서 바람이 불어서 좀 추워요. —	The wind is blowing from the field, so it's a bit cold.
Junho	그래도 어제보다는 덜 추워요. —	Still, it's less cold than yesterday.
Junho	오늘 달이 정말 밝네요. —	The moon is really bright tonight.
Hana	네. 저기 돌 위에 앉을까요? —	Yes. Shall we sit on that stone over there?
Junho	좋아요. 둘이 앉기에 딱 좋네요. —	Sounds good. It's just right for two of us.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
덜 ≠ 돌 deol ≠ dol	less ≠ stone	아마 덜 대신 돌이라고 했을 거예요. You probably said 'stone' instead of 'less.' 돌 매운 거. Stone spicy.
ㄷ + 모음 + ㄹ d + vowel + l	Same frame, five vowels	그래서 오늘은 다섯 단어를 연습해요. 달, 덜, 돌, 둘, 들. Five words with the same 디글 and 리을 frame. Only the vowel in the middle changes.
최소 대립쌍 choeso daeripssang	minimal pair	이걸 최소 대립쌍 연습이라고 해요. 소리 하나만 다른 단어를 같이 연습하는 거예요. A minimal pair drill. We practice words that differ by just one sound.
둘이에요 ≠ 들이에요 durieyo ≠ deurieyo	It's two (of us) ≠ It's a field	가끔은요. Sometimes. 그런데 둘이에요랑 들이에요는 완전히 달라요. One means 'two of us,' the other means 'it's a field.' Context can't always save you.
달이 밝아요 dari balgayo	The moon is bright.	먼저 아. 달. 달이 밝아요. 'The moon is bright.' Your mouth opens wide, like 'ah' at the doctor.
덜 매운 거 주세요 deol maeun geo juseyo	Something less spicy, please.	다음은 어. 덜. 덜 매운 거 주세요. 'Something less spicy, please.' The jaw drops, but the lips stay relaxed.
돌이 무거워요 dori mugeowoyo	The stone is heavy.	그리고 오. 돌. 돌이 무거워요. 'The stone is heavy.' Your lips make a small, round circle.



Word	Meaning	Example
둘이에요 durieyo	(We're) two.	다음은 우. 둘. 몇 분이세요? 둘이에요. 'How many are you? Two.' The lips push forward, like a little tube.



Grammar / Structure Notes

덜 ≠ 돌

덜 ≠ 돌 — less ≠ stone

Only the vowel is different.

덜 ≠ 돌

덜 ≠ 돌 — less ≠ stone

Stone spicy. Great. But honestly, those two words sound almost the same to me.

ㄷ + 모음 + ㄹ

ㄷ + 모음 + ㄹ — Same frame, five vowels

달 · 덜 · 돌 · 둘 · 들

최소 대립쌍

최소 대립쌍 — minimal pair

Words that differ by only one sound

둘이에요 ≠ 들이에요

둘이에요 ≠ 들이에요 — It's two (of us) ≠ It's a field

가끔은요. Sometimes. 그런데 둘이에요랑 들이에요는 완전히 달라요. One means 'two of us,' the other means 'it's a field.' Context can't always save you.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
달, 덜, 돌, 둘, 들	dal · deol · dol · dul · deul
달 · 덜 · 돌 · 둘 · 들	dal · deol · dol · dul · deul
돌 → 들	dul → deul
돌, 들	dul → deul
돌 → 덜	dol → deol
돌, 덜	dol → deol
달, 덜	dal · deol
달 · 덜	dal · deol

Self-Check



- 1 Say 달 · 덜 · 돌 · 둘 · 들 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
ㅏ Hearing the Difference in 사다 and 새	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅏ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-029
ㅑ The Two Open Vowels Beginners Blur	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅑ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-006
ㅓ The Vowels That Now Sound the Same	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅓ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-002
ㅕ / ㅖ / ㅗ / ㅛ The 'Y' Glide Vowels	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅕ / ㅖ / ㅗ / ㅛ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-004

My Notes

Your ladder to fluent Korean. This PDF, the website, and the video lessons are free for personal study.