



Korean Ladder Study Note

저 / 제 / 저희

The Humble 'I' and 'We'

Level	Topic	Focus
A2 · Elementary TOPIK 2	Honorifics Humble Forms	저 / 제 / 저희 The Humble 'I' and 'We'

Study Links

[Open this lesson on Korean Ladder](https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-HON-HUM-001)

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-HON-HUM-001>

[Watch the full video on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96zCVBEyGSE)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96zCVBEyGSE>

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

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Core Idea

Quick question — when you say 'I' in Korean, do you say 나 or 저? Get this wrong, and you can sound rude without even knowing it.

Wait, there are two words for 'I'? I've just been saying 나 to everyone.

And 'my' too — is it 내 or 제? I never know which one to grab.

Here's the rule. 나 and 우리 are casual. 저 and 저희 are the humble, polite versions — you lower yourself to lift the listener.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	안녕하세요. 저는 김준호입니다. —	Hello. I'm Junho Kim. (humble)
Hana	네, 저희 회사에 오신 걸 환영해요. —	Yes, welcome to our company. (humble)



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	제 명함이에요. —	Here's my business card. (humble)

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
나 → 저 / 우리 → 저희 na → jeo / uri → jeohui	casual 'I/we' → humble 'I/we'	Here's the rule. 나 and 우리 are casual. 저 and 저희 are the humble, polite versions — you lower yourself to lift the listener.
저 = 낮춘 '나' jeo = humble 'na'	the humble 'I'	저는 주제를 낮춰서 상대를 높이는 말이에요. In English, 저 is the humble 'I' — you use it to show respect to the person you're talking to.
저는 학생이에요 ↔ 나는 학생이야 jeoneun haksangieyo ↔ naneun haksangiya	polite vs casual: 'I'm a student'	같은 뜻이지만 친구한테는 '나는 학생이야'라고 해요. Same meaning, but with a close friend you'd say 나는 학생이야.
저의 → 제 jeoui → je	humble 'my' — a contraction of 저의	이제 '제'예요. '제'는 '저의'의 준말이에요. In English, 제 is just the contraction of 저의 — it means 'my,' the humble version.
나 / 내 ↔ 저 / 제 na / nae ↔ jeo / je	casual I/my ↔ humble I/my	So 저 is 'I,' and 제 is 'my' — the polite pair. And the casual pair is 나 and 내?
나의 → 내, 저의 → 제 nau → nae, jeoui → je	'my' shrinks the same way in both registers	맞아요. 나 → 내, 저 → 제. The vowel just shrinks — casual 내, humble 제.
면접 = 저 + 제 myeonjeop = jeo + je	In formal settings, switch to the humble pair	Okay, so at a job interview, everything becomes 저 and 제. Got it.
우리 → 저희 uri → jeohui	humble 'we / our'	이제 '우리'예요. The humble 'we' is 저희. You use it for 'our company,' 'our team' — talking to outsiders.



Grammar / Structure Notes

나 → 저 / 우리 → 저희

나 → 저 / 우리 → 저희 — casual 'I/we' → humble 'I/we'

Use 저/저희 with strangers, elders, customers — anyone you respect.

저 = 낮춘 '나'

저 = 낮춘 '나' — the humble 'I'

Lower yourself, raise the listener.

저는 학생이에요.

저 + 는 + 학생 + 이에요 + . — I am a student. (polite)

들어보세요. 저는 학생이에요 — 'I am a student,' said politely.

저는 학생이에요 ↔ 나는 학생이야

저는 학생이에요 ↔ 나는 학생이야 — polite vs casual: 'I'm a student'

Same meaning, different respect level.

저의 → 제

저의 → 제 — humble 'my' — a contraction of 저의

Casual 'my' is 내 (from 나의); humble 'my' is 제.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
저는 미국 사람이에요	jeo-neun mi-guk sa-ram-i-e-yo

Self-Check

- 1 Say 저 / 제 / 저희 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
드리다 / 뵙다 / 여쭙보다 Humble Forms That Show Respect	B2 Honorifics: compare 드리다 / 뵙다 / 여쭙보다 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-HON-HUM-001
모시다 / 올리다 / 말씀 올리다 Elevated Humble Vocabulary	C1 Honorifics: compare 모시다 / 올리다 / 말씀 올리다 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-HON-HUM-001
Korean Honorifics 세요 and 께서	A2 Honorifics: compare Korean Honorifics with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-HON-SUB-001
님 / 씨 Korean Titles and Address	A2 Honorifics: compare 님 / 씨 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-HON-ADR-001

My Notes

Free Korean lessons, one rung at a time. This PDF, the website, and the video lessons are free for personal study.