



Korean Ladder Study Note

잘 모르겠습니다 / 제가 부족해서

Humbly Declining and Deflecting Praise

Level	Topic	Focus
A2 · Elementary TOPIK 2	Honorifics Humble Forms	잘 모르겠습니다 / 제가 부족해서 Humbly Declining and Deflecting Praise

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-HON-HUM-003>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fd68e1g7uWw>

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Here's my problem. In English, I can say, "I'm not sure," or "Oh, no, I'm not that good." But in Korean, I'm scared it will sound too blunt or too negative.

좋은 질문이에요. 한국어에서는 직접적인 "no"보다, 나를 조금 낮추는 말이 더 따뜻하게 들릴 때가 많아요.

오늘의 키워드는 겸양이에요. In English, humble speech means lowering yourself a little, so the other person feels respected.

오늘의 첫 표현은 '잘 모르겠습니다'라는 표현이에요. 확신이 없을 때 공손하게 말해요.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	이번 발표도 맡아 주실 수 있을까요? —	Could you take on this presentation too?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	죄송하지만, 제가 아직 준비가 부족해서 이번에는 어렵겠습니다. —	I'm sorry, but I'm not prepared enough yet, so this time it may be difficult.
Hana	지난 발표 정말 좋았어요. —	Your last presentation was really good.
Junho	아니에요. 좋게 봐 주셔서 감사합니다. —	Not at all. Thank you for your kind words.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
겸양 gyeomyang	humble, self-lowering speech	오늘의 키워드는 겸양이에요. In English, humble speech means lowering yourself a little, so the other person feels respected.
자신을 조금 낮추기 jasineul jogeum natchugi	lowering yourself a little	겸양은 자신을 조금 낮춰서 상대를 편하게 해 주는 말하기 방식이에요. It is not insulting yourself. It is social softness.
몰라요 → 잘 모르겠습니다 mollayo → jal moreugesseumnida	I don't know → I'm not sure	맞아요. 특히 공식적인 자리에서는 '몰라요'보다 '잘 모르겠습니다'가 훨씬 안전하고 공손해요.
겸손한 반응 gyeomsonhan baneung	a modest response	네, 맞아요. 너무 스스로를 깎아내리는 말이 아니라, 상대의 칭찬 앞에서 겸손하게 반응하는 말이에요.
준비가 부족해서 junbiga bujokhaeseo	because my preparation is lacking	So for a refusal, I should not just say 제가 부족해서요. I can say what is lacking, like 준비가 부족해서.



Grammar / Structure Notes

겸양

겸양 — humble, self-lowering speech

You lower yourself a little to show respect.

잘 모르겠습니다.

잘 모르겠습니다. — I'm not sure. / I don't know well.

Formal and careful

제가 아직 부족해서요.

제가 아직 부족해서요. — I still have a lot to learn.

Softly deflecting praise

자신을 조금 낮추기

자신을 조금 낮추기 — lowering yourself a little

The goal is respect, not self-hate.

잘 모르겠습니다.

잘 + 모르 + 겠 + 습니다 + . — I'm not sure.

예를 들어 상사가 의견을 물었는데 확신이 없어요. 그럴 때는 '잘 모르겠습니다'라고 하면 좋아요.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
어렵겠습니다	eoryeopgesseumnida.
죄송하지만, 이번에는 어렵겠습니다.	joesonghajiman, ibeoneneun eoryeopgesseumnida.
잘 모르겠습니다.	jal moreugesseumnida.
아니예요. 제가 아직 부족해서요.	anieyo. jega ajik bujokhaeseoyo.
별말씀을요.	byeolmalsseumeuryo.

Self-Check

- 1 Say 잘 모르겠습니다 / 제가 부족해서 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
도와드릴게요 / 여쭙봐도 될까요 나를 낮추는 기본 표현	A2 Honorifics: compare 도와드릴게요 / 여쭙봐도 될까요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-HON-HUM-002
저 / 제 / 저희 The Humble 'I' and 'We'	A2 Honorifics: compare 저 / 제 / 저희 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-HON-HUM-001
당사 / 폐사 / 소생 Humbling Your Own Company in Business Korean	B2 Honorifics: compare 당사 / 폐사 / 소생 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-HON-HUM-003
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

My Notes

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