



## Korean Ladder Study Note



### Plain and Tense Sibilants

Level	Topic	Focus
A2 · Elementary TOPIK 2	Pronunciation Consonants	ㅅ Plain and Tense Sibilants

## Study Links

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

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

[Watch the full video on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-UKYSsK6-Q)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-UKYSsK6-Q>

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

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## Core Idea

Okay, real question. I tried to say I want to buy something, and Hana, you giggled. What did I actually say?

You said 싸다, which means 'cheap.' You wanted 사다, 'to buy.' One tiny tightening of the sound flips the whole word.

So today's pattern is the difference between ㅅ and ㅆ — one letter, written single or doubled, and it changes meaning.

These two belong to a family. ㅆ은 된소리예요. In English we call it a tense sound — 된소리. And ㅅ은 예사소리, a plain, relaxed sound — 예사소리.

## Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	이 쌀 비싸요? —	Is this rice expensive?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	아니요, 싸요. 그래서 많이 살 거예요. —	No, it's cheap. So I'll buy a lot.

## Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
ㅅ vs ㅆ s vs ss	single vs doubled sibilant	So today's pattern is the difference between ㅅ and ㅆ — one letter, written single or doubled, and it changes meaning.
된소리 / 예사소리 doensori / yesasori	tense sound / plain sound	These two belong to a family. ㅆ은 된소리에요. In English we call it a tense sound — 된소리. And ㅅ은 예사소리, a plain, relaxed sound — 예사소리.
예사소리 → 된소리 yesasori → doensori	plain → tense	예사소리 means the everyday, ordinary sound. 된소리 means the hard, tightened sound. Same letter shape, doubled for tension.
사다 sa-da	to buy	Let me show you the real pair. 사다 — to buy. Notice how soft and easy the start is.
싸다 ssa-da	to be cheap	Now tighten it. 싸다 — to be cheap. The throat squeezes a little, the air holds back, then releases sharply.
사다 / 싸다 sa-da / ssa-da	Plain and Tense Sibilants	Listen back to back. 사다... 싸다. 사다 is a sigh of air; 싸다 is a quick, pressed snap.
된소리 = 긴장 + 멈춤 doensori = tension + hold	tense = squeeze then release	Exactly, Alice. Think of holding your breath for a split second, then releasing. That tension is 된소리.
살 / 쌀 sal / ssal	Plain and Tense Sibilants	좋아요. 살 — 'flesh' or to live, soft; and 쌀 — 'uncooked rice,' tense. 살 vs 쌀.



# Grammar / Structure Notes

## ㅅ VS ㅆ

ㅅ vs ㅆ — single vs doubled sibilant

Same place in the mouth, different tension.

## 된소리 / 예사소리

된소리 / 예사소리 — tense sound / plain sound

ㅆ = 된소리 (긴장), ㅅ = 예사소리 (relaxed)

## 예사소리 → 된소리

예사소리 → 된소리 — plain → tense

Doubling the letter signals tension.

## 사다

사 + 다 — to buy

Let me show you the real pair. 사다 — to buy. Notice how soft and easy the start is.

## 싸다

싸 + 다 — to be cheap

Now tighten it. 싸다 — to be cheap. The throat squeezes a little, the air holds back, then releases sharply.

# Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
사다, 싸다	sa-da / ssa-da
살, 쌀	sal / ssal
사다	sa-da
싸다	ssa-da

# Self-Check

- 1 Say ㅅ 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
ㅋ ㅌ ㅍ Aspirated and Tense Consonants	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅋ ㅌ ㅍ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson <a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-001">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-001</a>
받침 ㄹ Pronouncing the Korean Liquid Final	A2 Pronunciation: compare 받침 ㄹ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson <a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-PRON-BAT-001">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-PRON-BAT-001</a>
ㅏ The Vowels That Now Sound the Same	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅏ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson <a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-002">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-002</a>
ㅑ / ㅓ / ㅕ / ㅗ The 'Y' Glide Vowels	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅑ / ㅓ / ㅕ / ㅗ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson <a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-004">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-004</a>

## My Notes

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