



Korean Ladder Study Note

계

Why Koreans Flatten These Diphthongs

Level	Topic	Focus
A2 · Elementary TOPIK 2	Pronunciation Vowels	계 Why Koreans Flatten These Diphthongs

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-PRON-VOW-002>

Watch the full video on YouTube

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

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

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, I have a confession. I learned that 시계 means clock, but when Koreans say it, I swear I hear 시게. Am I going crazy?

You are not going crazy. 아주 좋은 질문이에요. In real speech, 시계 really does sound like 시게.

The letter is ㅈ. On paper it's a glide, like 'y-eh'. But everyday Korean often flattens it to plain ㄷ, just 'eh'.

Let me show you the pattern. ㅈ is | plus ㅊ glued together — your mouth glides from 'ee' into 'eh'.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	지금 시계 좀 봐 주세요. —	Please check the clock.
Hana	네, 지금 세 시예요. —	Sure, it's three o'clock now.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	계란 살 시간 있어요? —	Do we have time to buy eggs?
Hana	네, 시간 있어요. —	Yes, we have time.
Junho	시계가 정확해요? —	Is the clock accurate?
Hana	네, 아주 정확해요. —	Yes, very accurate.
Junho	그럼 계란 사러 가요. —	Then let's go buy eggs.
Hana	좋아요, 같이 가요. —	Great, let's go together.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
ㄹ → ㄹ ye → e	The glide often flattens to a plain vowel	The letter is ㄹ. On paper it's a glide, like 'y-eh'. But everyday Korean often flattens it to plain ㄹ, just 'eh'.
ㅣ + ㄹ = ㄹ i + e = ye	A glide vowel: ee-eh said quickly	Let me show you the pattern. ㄹ is ㅣ plus ㄹ glued together — your mouth glides from 'ee' into 'eh'.
계 = ㄱ + ㄹ → 게 gye → ge	After a consonant, ㄹ becomes plain ㄹ	When ㄹ comes after a consonant, that glide is hard work. So Korean quietly drops it and just says ㄹ.
시계 si-gye	Why Koreans Flatten These Diphthongs	Listen to the clock word. 시계. 시계. Notice the second part is just 게, flat.
계란 gye-ran	Why Koreans Flatten These Diphthongs	Same thing with egg. 계란. It's written 계, but it lands as 계란 in normal speech.
자음 + ㄹ → ㄹ consonant + ye → e	After a consonant, say plain ㄹ	So the rule so far. After a consonant, the glide in ㄹ disappears, and you say a clean ㄹ.
쓰기 시계 · 소리 시계 write si-gye · say si-ge	Keep the spelling, flatten only the sound	Good instinct, but no. You still WRITE 시계 with ㄹ. Only the SOUND flattens. Spelling and pronunciation are two different things here.
예 = ㅇ + ㄹ ye	Alone, ㄹ keeps the full 'ye' glide	Now here is the important twist. Sometimes ㄹ keeps its full glide. When the syllable stands alone, with no consonant in front.



Grammar / Structure Notes

ㄷ → ㅌ

ㄷ → ㅌ — The glide often flattens to a plain vowel

Written ㄷ, spoken ㅌ in many words

ㅣ + ㅌ = ㅌ

ㅣ + ㅌ = ㅌ — A glide vowel: ee-eh said quickly

The glide is the part that gets dropped

계 = ㄱ + ㅌ → 게

계 = ㄱ + ㅌ → 게 — After a consonant, ㅌ becomes plain ㅌ

This is standard, not lazy speech

자음 + ㅌ → ㅌ

자음 + ㅌ → ㅌ — After a consonant, say plain ㅌ

계 → 게, 폐 → 페

쓰기 시계 · 소리 시계

쓰기 시계 · 소리 시계 — Keep the spelling, flatten only the sound

Never change the written ㅌ

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
시계	si-gye
계란	gye-ran
예	ye
예술	ye-sul
은혜	eun-hye
나에	na-ui
의사	ui-sa
세 시예요	jigeum se si-ye-yo

Self-Check

1 Say 계 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
ㅘ / ㅙ / ㅚ / ㅓ Korea's 'W' Glide Vowels	A2 Pronunciation: compare ㅘ / ㅙ / ㅚ / ㅓ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-PRON-VOW-001
ㅏ The Two Open Vowels Beginners Blur	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-006
ㅗ The Vowels That Now Sound the Same	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅗ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-002
ㅜ / ㅠ / ㅡ / ㅓ The 'Y' Glide Vowels	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅜ / ㅠ / ㅡ / ㅓ 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.