



Korean Ladder Study Note

한국어 단모음

The Full Monophthong System

Level	Topic	Focus
A2 · Elementary TOPIK 2	Pronunciation Vowels	한국어 단모음 The Full Monophthong System

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

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

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ov4u3ZjGFyA>

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

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, real problem. When I see a new Hangul vowel, I just guess from English — like everything is ah, eh, oh, oo. Then 커피 and 고기 and 크다 all blur together.

그 추측이 제일 흔한 실수예요. That guessing habit is the most common mistake. Korean is not English's five-vowel club.

오늘은 단모음 열 개를 한 체계로 봐요. Today we treat ten single vowels as one system — front or back, rounded or unrounded.

혀는 앞·뒤, 입술은 둥글·평평, 그리고 혀의 높이—고·중·저—까지 보면 열 자리가 잡혀요. Three checks build the map: front/back, rounded/flat, and height — so all ten seats stay distinct.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	커피 마실래요? —	Would you like some coffee?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	좋아요. 저는 아이스 커피요. —	Sounds good. I'll have iced coffee.
Hana	우유도 넣을까요? —	Should I add milk too?
Junho	아니요. 그냥 커피로 주세요. —	No. Just coffee, please.
Junho	오늘 외국 음식 어때요? —	How about foreign food today?
Hana	좋아요. 근데 먼저 커피요. —	Good. But coffee first.
Junho	네. 커피 먼저, 그다음 음식. —	Yes. Coffee first, then food.
Hana	완벽해요. —	Perfect.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
단모음 열 개 danmoeum yeol gae	ten single vowels — one organized system	오늘은 단모음 열 개를 한 체계로 봐요. Today we treat ten single vowels as one system — front or back, rounded or unrounded.
앞·뒤 / 둥글·평평 / 고·중·저 ap·dwi / dunggeul·p yeongpyeong / go·jung·jeo	front·back / rounded·flat / high·mid·low	혀는 앞·뒤, 입술은 둥글·평평, 그리고 혀의 높이—고·중·저—까지 보면 열 자리가 잡혀요. Three checks build the map: front/back, rounded/flat, and height — so all ten seats stay distinct.
ㅏ ㅑ ㅓ ㅕ ㅗ ㅛ ㅜ ㅠ ㅡ ㅣ a ae eo e o oe u wi eu i	the ten monophthongs, left to right	카드에 열 글자가 있어요. On the card you see the ten vowel letters. Out loud we name them: 아, 애, 어, 에, 오, 외, 우, 위, 으, 이.
ㅣ · ㅔ · ㅐ i · e · ae	The Full Monophthong System	먼저 앞쪽, 입술이 평평한 줄이에요. First the front unrounded row: 이, 에, 애. Tongue forward, lips flat.
이름 · 네 · 새 ireum · ne · sae	The Full Monophthong System	단어로 들어 보세요. Listen in words: 이름, 네, 새. Same front family, three mouth heights.
ㅡ · ㅗ · ㅓ eu · eo · a	The Full Monophthong System	다음은 입술이 평평한 줄이에요. 으와 어는 가운데·뒤쪽이고, 아는 입을 크게 벌리는 아래쪽이에요. Next, the unrounded set: 으 is central-high, 어 is central-back, and open 아 is low central — lips stay unrounded.



Word	Meaning	Example
크다 · 커피 · 아이 keuda · keopi · ai	The Full Monophthong System	단어예요. In words: 크다, 커피, 아이. Hear 으, 어, 아 — none of them need round lips.
ㅏ · ㅑ o · u	The Full Monophthong System	이제 입술을 둥글게 해요. Now round the lips. Back rounded pair: 오 and 우. Small circle for 오, tighter circle for 우.



Grammar / Structure Notes

단모음 열 개

단모음 열 개 — ten single vowels — one organized system

front/back + rounded/unrounded + height

앞·뒤 / 둥글·평평 / 고·중·저

앞·뒤 / 둥글·평평 / 고·중·저 — front·back / rounded·flat / high·mid·low

tongue place, lips, and tongue height — ten deliberate seats

ㅏ ㅑ ㅓ ㅕ ㅗ ㅛ ㅜ ㅠ ㅡ ㅣ

ㅏ + ㅑ + ㅓ + ㅕ + ㅗ + ㅛ + ㅜ + ㅠ + ㅡ + ㅣ — the ten monophthongs, left to right

카드에 열 글자가 있어요. On the card you see the ten vowel letters. Out loud we name them: 아, 애, 어, 에, 오, 외, 우, 위, 으, 이.

ㅛ · ㅠ = 단모음 자리

ㅛ · ㅠ = 단모음 자리 — they still belong on the single-vowel map

learn the target shape before worrying about freestyle speech

앞·뒤 × 둥글·평평 × 높이

앞·뒤 × 둥글·평평 × 높이 — three checks (place, lips, height) organize all ten vowels

stop swapping English letters for Korean seats

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
이, 에, 애	i · e · ae
이름, 네, 새	ireum · ne · sae
으, 어, 아	eu · eo · a
크다, 커피, 아이	keuda · keopi · ai
오, 우	o · u
오빠, 우유	oppa · uyu
외, 위	oe · wi
외국, 귀	oeguk · gwi

Self-Check

1 Say 한국어 단모음 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 / ㅑ / ㅓ / ㅕ Korea's 'W' Glide Vowels	A2 Pronunciation: compare ㅏ / ㅑ / ㅓ / ㅕ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-PRON-VOW-001
계 Why Koreans Flatten These Diphthongs	A2 Pronunciation: compare 계 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-PRON-VOW-002
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
ㅏ The Vowels That Now Sound the Same	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-002

My Notes

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