



## Korean Ladder Study Note

# 반존대

When Koreans Mix 요 and 반말 in One Breath

| Level                        | Topic                       | Focus                                          |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| B1 · Intermediate<br>TOPIK 3 | Honorifics<br>Speech Levels | 반존대<br>When Koreans Mix 요 and 반말 in One Breath |

## Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-HON-LVL-002>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vTzbi9M3B9I>

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

## Core Idea

Okay, here's something that's been driving me a little crazy. Sometimes a Korean person says 했어요 to me, and then two seconds later says 했어. Same person. Same conversation. Did I do something wrong?

아, 좋은 질문이에요. 그건 실수가 아니에요. 한국 사람들은 자주 그렇게 말해요.

우리는 이걸 '반존대'라고 불러요. 반은 존댓말, 반은 반말. Half honorific, half casual.

Wait, so 반존대 is a real thing with a name? I thought you had to pick one — polite or casual.

## Conversation Snapshot

| Speaker | Korean         | Meaning                       |
|---------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Hana    | 어, 왔어요?<br>—   | Oh, you're here? (polite tag) |
| Junho   | 네, 안녕하세요.<br>— | Yes, hello.                   |



| Speaker | Korean           | Meaning                                                 |
|---------|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Hana    | 오늘 좀 춥지?<br>—    | It's a bit cold today, isn't it? (drops the 요)          |
| Junho   | 네, 진짜 추워요.<br>—  | Yes, it's really cold.                                  |
| Junho   | 말 편하게 하세요.<br>—  | Please speak comfortably (= you may use casual speech). |
| Hana    | 아, 그래도 될까요?<br>— | Oh, is that really okay?                                |
| Junho   | 네, 그럼요.<br>—     | Yes, of course.                                         |

## Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

| Word                                    | Meaning                                                   | Example                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 반존대<br>banjondae                        | half-honorific speech — polite and casual mixed together  | 우리는 이걸 '반존대'라고 불러요. 반은 존댓말, 반은 반말. Half honorific, half casual.                                |
| 존댓말 ↔ 반말<br>jondaenmal ↔ banmal         | polite speech ↔ casual speech                             | 많은 교과서는 그렇게 가르쳐요. 존댓말 아니면 반말. 하지만 진짜 대화는 더 부드러워요.                                              |
| -요<br>-yo                               | the politeness tag on the end of a sentence               | 핵심은 딱 하나예요. 그 작은 '요'. The tiny 요 at the end is the whole game.                                 |
| 했어요<br>haeseoyo                         | (I / you) did — polite                                    | 보세요. 존댓말은 '했어요'. 여기 끝에 '요'가 있어요.                                                               |
| 했어<br>haeseo                            | did — casual                                              | 반말은 '했어'. '요'를 뺐어요. Just drop it.                                                              |
| 했어(요)<br>haeseo(yo)                     | did — the (요) is the politeness switch                    | Oh. So 했어요 and 했어 are the same words — the only difference is that little 요 riding on the end. |
| 요 + 반말 = 반존대<br>yo + banmal = banjondae | mixing the polite ending with dropped endings in one talk | 맞아요. 그래서 한 사람이 두 개를 섞을 수 있어요. That's 반존대.                                                      |
| 나이 차이<br>nai chai                       | an age gap — the elder softens, but not all the way       | 첫째, 나이. 나이가 많은 사람이 어린 사람에게 편하게 말해요. 그런데 완전히 반말은 조금 부담스러워요.                                     |



## Grammar / Structure Notes

### 반존대

반존대 — half-honorific speech — polite and casual mixed together

반 = half, 존대 = honorific

### 존댓말 ↔ 반말

존댓말 ↔ 반말 — polite speech ↔ casual speech

Real speech lives on a slider, not two buttons.

### -요

-요 — the politeness tag on the end of a sentence

Add 요 → polite. Drop 요 → casual.

### 했어요

했어 + 요 — (I / you) did — polite

보세요. 존댓말은 '했어요'. 여기 끝에 '요'가 있어요.

### 했어

했어 — did — casual

반말은 '했어'. '요'를 뺐어요. Just drop it.

## Pronunciation Loop

| Phrase | How to practice |
|--------|-----------------|
| 왔어요?   | wasseyoyo?      |
| 왔어?    | wasseo?         |

## Self-Check

- 1 Say 반존대 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                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 하십시오체<br>The Formal Speech Level<br>for Announcements | B1 Honorifics: compare 하십시오체 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.         | Open lesson<br><a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-HON-LVL-001">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-HON-LVL-001</a> |
| 감사합니다 / 죄송합니다<br>Formal Thanks and<br>Apologies       | A1 Honorifics: compare 감사합니다 / 죄송합니다 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer. | Open lesson<br><a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-LVL-002">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-LVL-002</a> |
| 요<br>Polite and Casual Korean                         | A1 Honorifics: compare 요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.             | Open lesson<br><a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-LVL-001">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-LVL-001</a> |
| 하게체<br>The Familiar Speech Level<br>Elders Use        | C1 Honorifics: compare 하게체 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.           | Open lesson<br><a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-HON-LVL-001">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-HON-LVL-001</a> |

## My Notes

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