



Korean Ladder Study Note

유음화

Why 신라 Sounds Like 실라

Level	Topic	Focus
B1 · Intermediate TOPIK 3	Pronunciation Consonants	유음화 Why 신라 Sounds Like 실라

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

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

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2fCSWfJnWA>

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, real question. I see 신라 — the letters are right there — so why does everyone say 실라?

Right? The 니은 just... turned into a 리을. Did I mishear it?

You heard it correctly. 이건 유음화예요. In English, liquid assimilation — when 니은 and 리을 bump together, they blend.

규칙은 간단해요. Whether it's 니은 then 리을, or 리을 then 니은, both become 리을 리을.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	신라 역사를 좋아해요? —	Do you like Silla history?
Junho	네, 설날에 경주에 가요. —	Yes, on Seollal I go to Gyeongju.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	권력의 중심이었죠. —	It was the center of power.
Junho	일년에 한 번은 가요. —	I go at least once a year.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
유음화 yueumhwa	liquid assimilation: ㄴ + ㄹ blend into ㄹㄹ	You heard it correctly. 이건 유음화예요. In English, liquid assimilation — when 니은 and 리을 bump together, they blend.
ㄴ + ㄹ → ㄹ + ㄹ —	ㄴㄹ and ㄹㄴ both become ㄹㄹ	규칙은 간단해요. Whether it's 니은 then 리을, or 리을 then 니은, both become 리을리을.
신라 silla	Silla — one proper noun; split only to show the ㄴ/ㄹ contact	그래서 신라, spelled 신 라, is spoken 실라. 신라 is one name — the Silla kingdom — I'm only splitting it to show where 니은 meets 리을.
권력 → [꺠력] gwollyeok	power — ㄴ before ㄹ becomes ㄹㄹ	또 하나. 꺠력 — power. The 니은 touches 리을, so we say 꺠력. 꺠력 is a tight two-syllable word, so 유음화 applies fully. 이 단어를 기억해 두세요 — 뒤에서 다시 나와요.
설날 seollal	Lunar New Year's Day (설 'New Year' + 날 'day')	설날도 볼까요. 설 means New Year, 날 means day — two real words. 리을이 니은을 만나서 둘 다 리을리을이 돼요: 설랄.
일년 → [일련] illyeon	one year — ㄹ before ㄴ becomes ㄹㄹ	일년 — one year. 리을 다음에 니은이 오죠. So it becomes 일련.
ㄹ = 자석 —	ㄹ acts like a magnet — a nearby ㄴ becomes ㄹ	So the 리을 is like a magnet — whatever 니은 is next to it just becomes another 리을?
ㄹ > ㄴ —	ㄹ is strong, ㄴ is soft; the soft one copies the strong one	정확해요. 리을은 강하고 니은은 부드러워요. Side by side, the soft one copies the strong one.



Grammar / Structure Notes

유음화

유음화 — liquid assimilation: ㄴ + ㄹ blend into ㄹㄹ

ㄹ is a 'liquid' sound; it pulls ㄴ toward it.

ㄴ + ㄹ → ㄹ + ㄹ

ㄴ + ㄹ → ㄹ + ㄹ — ㄴㄹ and ㄹㄴ both become ㄹㄹ

The ㄴ gives up and copies the ㄹ.

신라

신 + 라 — Silla — one proper noun; split only to show the ㄴ/ㄹ contact

그래서 신라, spelled 신 라, is spoken 실라. 신라 is one name — the Silla kingdom — I'm only splitting it to show where 니은 meets 리을.

권력 → [궐력]

권력 → [궐력] — power — ㄴ before ㄹ becomes ㄹㄹ

A short, lexicalized 2-syllable word — assimilation runs freely. Hold this thought; 결단력 later behaves differently.

설날

설 + 날 — Lunar New Year's Day (설 'New Year' + 날 'day')

설날도 볼까요. 설 means New Year, 날 means day — two real words. 리을이 니은을 만나서 둘 다 리을 리을이 돼요: 설랄.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
실라	silla
설랄	seollal
생산냥	saengsannyang

Self-Check

- 1 Say 유음화 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
비음화 When ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ Become ㅇ/ㄴ/ㅁ	B1 Pronunciation: compare 비음화 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-PRON-CNS-001
ㄹ 발음 The Korean R/L Sound at the Start and Middle of Words	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㄹ 발음 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-002
ㅅ Plain and Tense Sibilants	A2 Pronunciation: compare ㅅ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-PRON-CNS-001
ㅇ의 두 얼굴 첫소리 묵음과 받침 받침 'ㅇ'	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅇ의 두 얼굴 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-004

My Notes

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