



Korean Ladder Study Note

대조 · 강조 억양

Stressing the Contrasted Word

Level	Topic	Focus
B1 · Intermediate TOPIK 3	Pronunciation Intonation	대조 · 강조 억양 Stressing the Contrasted Word

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

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

Watch the full video on YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FNN_DzpnPo

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

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, real story. Last week a Korean friend thought I was blaming her for something. I said the right words. So what went wrong?

I think I know. 문장은 맞았는데, 강조가 틀렸어요. The sentence was right, but the stress was in the wrong place. Stress? I thought Korean was pretty flat. Like, no word ever gets a big push.

단어 안에서는 맞아요. 영어처럼 정해진 강세는 없어요. Inside a single word, that's true. There's no fixed stress like in English. 그런데 문장 안에서는 달라요. But inside a sentence, it's different.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	하나 씨, 이 커피 하나 씨가 샀어요? —	Hana, did you buy this coffee?
Hana	아니요, 제가 아니라 '민수 씨'가 샀어요. —	No, not me — MINSU bought it.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	아, 민수 씨가 라테를 샀어요? —	Oh, Minsu bought lattes?
Hana	아니요, 라테 말고 '아메리카노'를 샀어요. —	No, not lattes — AMERICANOS.
Junho	그럼 내일은 '제가' 살게요. —	Then tomorrow, I'll buy.
Hana	좋아요. 내일은 준호 씨 차례예요. —	Sounds good. Tomorrow it's your turn.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
대조 강조 daejo gangjo	contrastive stress	이게 대조 강조예요. We call this contrastive stress. 새로운 정보나 고치는 정보에 힘을 줘요. You push the word that's new, or the word that corrects someone.
음을 높이고, 조금 길게 eumeul nopigo, jogeum gilge	Raise the pitch + stretch it a little	방법은 두 가지예요. 음을 높이고, 조금 길게. Raise the pitch, and stretch the word a little. Not just louder.
강조 뒤는 낮고 평평하게 gangjo dwineun natgo pyeongpyeonghage	After the peak: low and flat	그리고 강조한 단어 뒤는 낮고 평평하게 가요. After the stressed word, the rest of the sentence drops low and flat. That drop is what makes the peak stand out.
제가 어제 갔어요 jega eoje gaseoyo	I went yesterday.	Let's hear one sentence three ways. 제가 어제 갔어요. I went yesterday.
커피 말고 차 주세요 keopi malgo cha juseyo	Not coffee — TEA, please.	하나 더 볼까요. 커피 말고 '차' 주세요. Not coffee. TEA, please.
커피 말고 '차' 주세요 keopi malgo CHA juseyo	Stressing the Contrasted Word	여기서 '차'가 고치는 정보예요. 차는 높고 조금 길게, 주세요는 낮게. Tea is the correction, so it goes high and a bit long. 주세요 stays low.
영어: 크게 · 한국어: 높게, 길게 —	English: louder · Korean: higher + longer	아이디어는 같아요. The idea is the same. 그런데 영어는 소리를 크게 해요. English leans on loudness. 한국어는 음 높기와 길이가 더 중요해요. Korean leans more on pitch and length.
내가 아니라 '개'가 했어 naega anira GYAE-ga haesseo	Stressing the Contrasted Word	맞아요. 그리고 강조할 단어 앞에서 아주 짧게 쉬어도 좋아요. A tiny pause before the stressed word also helps. 내가 아니라, '개'가 했어.



Grammar / Structure Notes

내가 아니라 '개'가 했어.

내가 아니라 '개'가 했어. — It wasn't me — THEY did it.

Peak on 개: higher pitch + a little longer.

대조 강조

대조 강조 — contrastive stress

Stress the NEW or CORRECTING word.

음을 높이고, 조금 길게

음을 높이고, 조금 길게 — Raise the pitch + stretch it a little

Louder alone is not enough.

강조 뒤는 낮고 평평하게

강조 뒤는 낮고 평평하게 — After the peak: low and flat

The drop makes the peak easy to hear.

제가 어제 갔어요

제 + 가 + 어제 + 갔 + 어요 — I went yesterday.

Let's hear one sentence three ways. 제가 어제 갔어요. I went yesterday.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
커피 말고 '차' 주세요.	keopi malgo CHA juseyo
내가 아니라 '개'가 했어.	naega anira GYAE-ga haeseo
오늘이 아니라 '내일' 만나요.	oneuri anira NAEIL mannayo

Self-Check

- 1 Say 대조·강조 억양 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
뭐 먹어 Wh-Question Intonation Without a Rising End	B1 Pronunciation: compare 뭐 먹어 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-PRON-INT-001
부가의문 억양 -지? / -잖아? / -죠? Tag-Question Pitch	B1 Pronunciation: compare 부가의문 억양 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-PRON-INT-003
가요 끝을 올리면 질문이 돼요	A1 Pronunciation: compare 가요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-INT-001
감사해요 Statement vs Soft-Question Pitch on Polite Fragments	A1 Pronunciation: compare 감사해요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-INT-005

My Notes

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