



Korean Ladder Study Note

형님 / 누님 / 매형

Address Terms Between Adult Siblings and In-Laws

Level	Topic	Focus
B2 · Upper-Intermediate TOPIK 4	Honorifics Titles & Address	형님 / 누님 / 매형 Address Terms Between Adult Siblings and In-Laws

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-HON-ADR-004>

Watch the full video on YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-_X87m_aVg

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Here's my real question. If a man called his older brother 형 as a kid, why do I hear adults say 형님? And where do 매형 and 형수님 fit?

좋은 질문이에요. 한국어에서는 나이가 들어도 가족 호칭이 남아 있고, 결혼하면 더 정확한 호칭이 필요해져요.

오늘의 핵심은 이거예요. 형님, 누님은 친형제자매 사이에서도 공손하게 쓰고, 매형, 제부, 형수님은 배우자를 부르는 호칭이에요.

먼저 프레임을 잡을게요. 형님은 형의 공손한 말이에요. In English, it is a respectful way for a man to address an older brother, and it also appears in some in-law relationships.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	매형, 주말에 시간 괜찮으세요? —	Brother-in-law, are you free this weekend?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	네, 괜찮아요. 같이 식사할까요? —	Yes, I'm free. Shall we eat together?
Hana	좋아요. 누님도 같이 오세요? —	Sounds good. Is my older sister coming too?
Junho	네, 같이 갈게요. —	Yes, we'll come together.
Junho	형수님, 제가 도와드릴까요? —	Sister-in-law, may I help you?
Hana	고마워요. 그럼 그릇 좀 놔 주세요. —	Thank you. Then please set out the bowls.
Junho	네, 형수님. —	Yes, sister-in-law.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
형님 · 누님 · 매형 · 제부 · 형수님 hyeongnim · nunim · maehyeong · jebu · hyeongsunim	respectful adult sibling and in-law address terms	오늘의 핵심은 이거예요. 형님, 누님은 친형제자매 사이에서도 공손하게 쓰고, 매형, 제부, 형수님은 배우자를 부르는 호칭이에요.
형 → 형님 hyeong → hyeongnim	older brother → respectful older brother / certain in-law title	먼저 프레임을 잡을게요. 형님은 형의 공손한 말이에요. In English, it is a respectful way for a man to address an older brother, and it also appears in some in-law relationships.
누나 → 누님 nuna → nunim	older sister → respectful older sister	누님은 누나의 공손한 말이에요. In English, a man may use it for an older sister when he wants a more adult, respectful tone.
친근함 → 공손함 chingeonham → gongsonham	familiar warmth → respectful warmth	So 형 and 누나 can sound close, but 형님 and 누님 sound more grown-up and respectful.
가족 + 예의 gajok + yeui	family + respect	맞아요. 차갑다는 뜻이 아니에요. 가족 안에서도 예의를 조금 더 세우는 느낌이에요.
매형 maehyeong	older sister's husband, usually called by a younger brother	좋아요. 이제 결혼으로 생기는 호칭을 볼게요. 매형은 보통 남자가 누나의 남편을 부를 때 써요. In English, my older sister's husband, from a younger brother's viewpoint.



Word	Meaning	Example
남동생 → 누나의 남편 = 매형 namdongsaeng → nuna-ui nampyeon = maehyeong	younger brother → older sister's husband = 매형	So if I'm a younger brother talking to my older sister's husband, I can say 매형.
여동생 → 언니의 남편 = 형부 yeodongsaeng → eonni-ui nampyeon = hyeongbu	younger sister → older sister's husband = 형부	맞아요. 그런데 여동생이면 보통 형부라고 해요. 매형은 아무나 쓰는 universal brother-in-law가 아니에요.



Grammar / Structure Notes

형님 · 누님 · 매형 · 제부 · 형수님

형님 · 누님 · 매형 · 제부 · 형수님 — respectful adult sibling and in-law address terms

Who says it depends on the speaker's gender and the family relationship.

형 → 형님

형 → 형님 — older brother → respectful older brother / certain in-law title

Common among adult men, and also used in some married-family roles.

누나 → 누님

누나 → 누님 — older sister → respectful older sister

Usually from a male speaker to an older sister.

친근함 → 공손함

친근함 → 공손함 — familiar warmth → respectful warmth

Not cold. Just more adult and polite.

가족 + 예의

가족 + 예의 — family + respect

Korean family titles can be warm and respectful at the same time.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
누님, 오랜만이에요.	nunim, oraenman-ieyo.
형님 · 누님 · 형수님	hyeongnim · nunim · hyeongsunim
형님	hyeongnim
형님, 누님, 형수님.	hyeongnim · nunim · hyeongsunim
형님, 식사하셨어요?	hyeongnim, siksa-hasyeosseoyo?
매형, 주말에 볼게요.	maehyeong, jumal-e boelgeyo.
형수님, 음식 정말 맛있어요.	hyeongsunim, eumsik jeongmal masisseoyo.

Self-Check

- 1 Say 형님 / 누님 / 매형 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
부장님 / 과장님 / 대리님 Addressing Coworkers by Rank	B2 Honorifics: compare 부장님 / 과장님 / 대리님 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-HON-ADR-001
선배님 / 후배 Addressing Seniors and Juniors	B2 Honorifics: compare 선배님 / 후배 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-HON-ADR-002
손님 / 고객님 / 회원님 Service-Industry Address Terms	B2 Honorifics: compare 손님 / 고객님 / 회원님 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-HON-ADR-003
귀하 / 귀사 / 본인 Formal Written Address in Letters	C1 Honorifics: compare 귀하 / 귀사 / 본인 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-HON-ADR-003

My Notes

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