



Korean Ladder Study Note

께서 / 께 / 께서는

Honorific Particles in Formal Korean

Level	Topic	Focus
B2 · Upper-Intermediate TOPIK 4	Honorifics Subject Honorifics	께서 / 께 / 께서는 Honorific Particles in Formal Korean

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-HON-SUB-002>

Watch the full video on YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ouo_LdxzrpM

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, real question. I already know 이 and 가 for the subject. So why do I keep seeing 께서 in polite sentences about grandparents and teachers?

좋은 질문이에요. 주어를 높일 때는 이/가 대신 께서를 써요. In English, 께서 is the honorific version of the subject marker.

오늘 배울 세 가지예요. 께서, 께서는, 그리고 께. Three honorific particles — subject, topic, and recipient.

이게 왜 중요할까요? 존댓말에서 주어를 안 높이면 조금 어색해요. Getting this wrong sounds a little rude, so it really matters.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	사장님께서는 지금 어디 계세요? —	Where is the boss right now?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	사장님께서는 회의실에 계세요. —	The boss is in the meeting room.
Junho	그럼 이 서류를 사장님께 드릴게요. —	Then I'll give these documents to the boss.
Hana	네, 사장님께 직접 드리세요. —	Yes, please give them to the boss directly.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
이/가 → 께서 i/ga → kkeseo	honorific subject marker	좋은 질문이에요. 주어를 높일 때는 이/가 대신 께서를 써요. In English, 께서 is the honorific version of the subject marker.
께서 · 께서는 · 께 —	subject · topic · recipient — all elevated	오늘 배울 세 가지예요. 께서, 께서는, 그리고 께. Three honorific particles — subject, topic, and recipient.
주어를 높이면 문장이 정중해져요 jueoreul nopimyeon munjangi jeongjunghaejyeoyo	elevating the subject makes the whole sentence polite	이게 왜 중요할까요? 존댓말에서 주어를 안 높이면 조금 어색해요. Getting this wrong sounds a little rude, so it really matters.
선생님께서 오세요 seonsaengnimkkeseo o oseyo	The teacher is coming.	예문을 볼게요. 선생님께서 오세요. The teacher is coming — notice 께서 on 선생님, not 이 or 가.
할아버지께서 주무세요 harabeojikkeseo jumuseyo	Grandfather is sleeping.	하나 더요. 할아버지께서 주무세요. Grandfather is sleeping. 께서 marks him as the honored subject.
선생님이 와요 → 선생님께서 오세요 —	plain → honorific	Let me reason it out. Normally I'd say 선생님이 와요. To be respectful I swap 이 for 께서 and the verb goes honorific too... 선생님께서 오세요?
이/가 → 께서 (+ -(으)시-) i/ga → kkeseo	subject marker becomes honorific and the verb takes 시	완벽해요. 이/가는 께서로, 그리고 동사도 같이 높여요. You changed both — that's exactly right.
께서 + -(으)시- kkeseo + -(eu)si-	honorific subject pairs with the honorific verb 시	중요한 점이에요. 께서는 거의 항상 동사에 -(으)시-와 함께 와요. 께서 rarely travels alone — its verb almost always carries the honorific 시.



Grammar / Structure Notes

이/가 → 께서

이/가 → 께서 — honorific subject marker

used when the subject is someone you respect

꿔서 · 께서는 · 께

꿔서 · 께서는 · 께 — subject · topic · recipient — all elevated

one family of respect particles

주어를 높이면 문장이 정중해져요

주어를 높이면 문장이 정중해져요 — elevating the subject makes the whole sentence polite

이게 왜 중요할까요? 존댓말에서 주어를 안 높이면 조금 어색해요. Getting this wrong sounds a little rude, so it really matters.

선생님꿔서 오세요

선생님 + 께서 + 오세요 — The teacher is coming.

예문을 볼게요. 선생님꿔서 오세요. The teacher is coming — notice 께서 on 선생님, not 이 or 가.

할아버지꿔서 주무세요

할아버지 + 께서 + 주무세요 — Grandfather is sleeping.

하나 더요. 할아버지꿔서 주무세요. Grandfather is sleeping. 께서 marks him as the honored subject.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
선생님꿔서 오세요	seonsaengnimkkeseo oseyo
꿔서	kkeseo
부모님께 드려요	bumonimkke deuryeoyo
꿔 + 드려요	kke + deuryeoyo

Self-Check

- 1 Say 께서 / 께 / 께서는 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
하셨습니다 / 하실 거예요 Honorifics in the Past and Future	B2 Honorifics: compare 하셨습니다 / 하실 거예요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-HON-SUB-001
-(으)시- Adding the Honorific Infix to Any Verb	B1 Honorifics: compare -(으)시- with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-HON-SUB-002
Korean Honorifics 세요 and 께서	A2 Honorifics: compare Korean Honorifics with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-HON-SUB-001
간접 높임 말씀 · 연세 · 댁에 높임 붙이기	C1 Honorifics: compare 간접 높임 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-HON-SUB-002

My Notes

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