



Korean Ladder Study Note

억양

Question vs Statement Intonation

Level	Topic	Focus
B2 · Upper-Intermediate TOPIK 4	Pronunciation Intonation	억양 Question vs Statement Intonation

Study Links

[Open this lesson on Korean Ladder](https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-PRON-INT-001)

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-PRON-INT-001>

[Watch the full video on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9drR9srY91k)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9drR9srY91k>

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

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, real question. I said 집에 가요 to my friend, and she just... waited. Did I ask her something?

아, 좋은 질문이에요. 같은 단어라도 억양이 다르면 뜻이 달라져요. The same words, different pitch, different meaning.

오늘의 핵심은 이거예요. 끝을 올리면 질문, 끝을 내리면 평서문.

끝 음을 올리면 질문이 돼요. If your pitch rises at the end, it becomes a question.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	어디 가요? —	Where are you going? (rising)
Junho	학교에 가요. —	I'm going to school. (falling)



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	지금 가요? —	Are you going now? (rising)
Junho	네, 가요. —	Yes, I'm going. (falling)

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
끝을 올리면 질문, 내리면 평서문 kkeut-eul ollimyeon jilmun, naerimyeon pyeongseomun	Lift the end = question. Lower the end = statement.	오늘의 핵심은 이거예요. 끝을 올리면 질문, 끝을 내리면 평서문.
↗ 질문 · ↘ 평서문 —	Rising = ask · Falling = tell	끝 음을 올리면 질문이 돼요. If your pitch rises at the end, it becomes a question.
평서문 · 의문문 pyeongseomun · uimunmun	statement · question	그리고 가요? 의문문이에요. 끝을 올려요.
가요 ↘ = tell · 가요 ↗ = ask —	One word, two jobs.	So 가요 going down means I'm going, and 가요 going up means Are you going?
단어는 그대로, 억양만 바뀌어요 daneo-neun geudaero, eogyang-man bakkwieoyo	The word stays the same; only the pitch changes.	맞아요. 단어는 그대로예요. 억양만 바뀌어요.
놀람: 더 높이 ↗↗ nollam: deo nopi	Surprise = a sharper, higher rise.	한 가지 더. 놀랐을 때는 끝을 더 확 올려요.
강조: 중요한 단어를 세게 gangjo: jungyohan daneo-reul sege	Emphasis = hit the key word harder and higher.	그리고 강조할 때는 중요한 단어를 조금 더 세게, 더 높게 말해요.
커피 ↗ 마셔요 —	Spotlight the word that matters.	So I hit the important word a little harder and higher. Got it.



Grammar / Structure Notes

끝을 올리면 질문, 내리면 평서문

끝을 올리면 질문, 내리면 평서문 — Lift the end = question. Lower the end = statement.

The words don't change — only the pitch on the last syllable.

↗ 질문 · ↘ 평서문

↗ 질문 · ↘ 평서문 — Rising = ask · Falling = tell

The very last syllable does the work.

가요. ↘

가요. ↘ — I'm going. / Let's go. (statement)

Pitch falls on 요.

평서문 · 의문문

평서문 · 의문문 — statement · question

가요. ↘ tells. 가요? ↗ asks.

가요.

가요 + . — I'm going. (statement, falling)

이게 평서문이에요. 가요. 끝이 내려가요.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
가요 ↘	gayo.
가요.	gayo.
가요?	gayo?
가요 ↗	gayo?
가요? ↗	Listen first, then repeat slowly.

Self-Check

- 1 Say 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
화용적 억양 Sarcasm, Doubt, and Emphasis in Tone	C1 Pronunciation: compare 화용적 억양 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-PRON-INT-001
면접 자기소개 Introducing Yourself in a Job Interview	B2 Conversation: compare 면접 자기소개 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-CONV-INT-001
격음화 When ㅎ Turns ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ into ㅋ/ㅌ/ㅍ	B2 Pronunciation: compare 격음화 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-PRON-LNK-001
제 이름은 / 만나서 반갑습니다 Introducing Yourself in Korean	A1 Conversation: compare 제 이름은 / 만나서 반갑습니다 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-CONV-INT-001

My Notes

Free Korean lessons, one rung at a time. This PDF, the website, and the video lessons are free for personal study.