



Korean Ladder Study Note

격음화

When ㅎ Turns ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ into ㅋ/ㅌ/ㅍ

Level	Topic	Focus
B2 · Upper-Intermediate TOPIK 4	Pronunciation Linking Sounds	격음화 When ㅎ Turns ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ into ㅋ/ㅌ/ㅍ

Study Links

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

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

[Watch the full video on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALDMaCcGr2Y)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALDMaCcGr2Y>

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

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Core Idea

Okay, real question. I tried to say congratulations — I read 축하해요 letter by letter — and my Korean friend just blinked at me.

I've felt that too. The spelling says one thing, but every Korean speaker says something smoother. It feels like a secret rule nobody told us.

It's not a secret — it's a rule, and once you hear it you can't un-hear it. 축하 is spelled 축 plus 하, but it's pronounced 추카.

이 규칙의 이름은 격음화예요. In English, aspiration: when ㅎ meets a plain stop, the two melt together into one strong, breathy sound.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	시험 합격 축하해요. —	Congratulations on passing the exam.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	고마워요. 정말 좋다. —	Thank you. This is really great.
Junho	그렇지? 같이 백화점 가요. —	Right? Let's go to the department store together.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
격음화 gyeok-eum-hwa	aspiration rule: ㅎ + a plain stop → one aspirated stop	이 규칙의 이름은 격음화예요. In English, aspiration: when ㅎ meets a plain stop, the two melt together into one strong, breathy sound.
ㅎ + ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ/ㅈ h + g/d/b/j	→ ㅋ / ㅌ / ㅍ / ㅊ	히읇 carries a puff of air. When it touches 기역, 디귤, 비읍, or 지읇, it gives that puff away and you get 키읇, 티귤... 티읇, 피읇, or 치읇 instead.
축하 / 좋다 chu-ka / jo-ta	stop+ㅎ and ㅎ+stop both aspirate	그리고 방향은 두 가지예요. It works whether ㅎ comes first or second. 축하 has the stop first; 좋다 has the ㅎ first. Same merge, both ways.
축하해요 chu-ka-hae-yo	Congratulations.	들어 보세요. 축하해요 — 추카해요. 기역과 히읇이 만나서 키읇 소리가 났죠. The ㄱ and the ㅎ became one ㅋ.
백화점 bae-kwa-jeom	department store	또 하나. 백화점 — department store. 백 plus 화 looks like 백-화, but everyone says 백과점. Again 기역 plus 히읇 becomes 키읇.
좋다 jo-ta	to be good	이번엔 히읇이 먼저예요. 좋다 — to be good — is spelled 좋 plus 다, but spoken 조타. The ㅎ at the bottom of 좋 jumps onto 디귤 and makes 티읇.
좋고 jo-ko	(it's) good, and...	같은 단어, 다른 어미. 좋고 becomes 조코 — that's 히읇 plus 기역 turning into 키읇. So 좋다 is 조타, 좋고 is 조코. The ㅎ keeps reshaping its partner.
그렇지 geu-reo-chi	right? / that's so	마지막 예시. 그렇지 — right? — is said 그러치. 히읇 plus 지읇 gives 치읇. You hear this one constantly in real conversation.



Grammar / Structure Notes

격음화

격음화 — aspiration rule: ㅎ + a plain stop → one aspirated stop

ㄱ+ㅎ→ㅋ · ㄷ+ㅎ→ㅌ · ㅂ+ㅎ→ㅍ · ㅈ+ㅎ→ㅊ

ㅎ + ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ/ㅈ

ㅎ + ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ/ㅈ → ㅋ / ㅌ / ㅍ / ㅊ

the breath of ㅎ moves onto the next consonant

축하 / 좋다

축하 / 좋다 — stop+ㅎ and ㅎ+stop both aspirate

order doesn't matter — they still fuse

축하해요

축 + 하 + 해요 — Congratulations.

들어 보세요. 축하해요 — 추카해요. 기억과 히읃이 만나서 키읃 소리가 났죠. The ㄱ and the ㅎ became one ㅋ.

백화점

백 + 화 + 점 — department store

또 하나. 백화점 — department store. 백 plus 화 looks like 백-화, but everyone says 배과점. Again 기억 plus 히읃 becomes 키읃.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
추카해요	chu-ka-hae-yo
조타	jo-ta

Self-Check

- 1 Say 격음화 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
연음 법칙 How Korean Words Blur Together	C1 Pronunciation: compare 연음 법칙 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-PRON-LNK-001
억양 Question vs Statement Intonation	B2 Pronunciation: compare 억양 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-PRON-INT-001
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
ㅋ ㅌ ㅍ Aspirated and Tense Consonants	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅋ ㅌ ㅍ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-001

My Notes

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