



Korean Ladder Study Note

하오체

The Archaic Equal-Formal Style in Signs and Dramas

Level	Topic	Focus
C1 · Advanced TOPIK 5	Honorifics Speech Levels	하오체 The Archaic Equal-Formal Style in Signs and Dramas

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-HON-LVL-002>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLLbA0T0a6o>

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, real question. You walk up to a glass door in Seoul and it says 미시오. You push it open — but what does that 시오 part actually mean?

좋은 질문이에요. 그건 '하오체'예요. It's a whole speech style called 하오체 — old, dignified, and hiding in plain sight on signs.

한국어에는 말의 높낮이가 있어요. Korean sorts every sentence by how you treat the listener — and 하오체 is one of those levels.

하오체의 핵심은 두 어미예요. The 하오체 endings are dash 오 and dash 소. 존중은 하되, 상대를 위로 올리지는 않아요.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	어디 가오? —	Where are you going?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	장에 가요. —	I'm going to the market.
Hana	그럼 잘 가시오. —	Then go well — farewell.
Junho	고맙소. —	Thank you.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
말의 높낮이 mal-ui nopnaji	speech levels — how you treat the listener	한국어에는 말의 높낮이가 있어요. Korean sorts every sentence by how you treat the listener — and 하오체 is one of those levels.
-(으)오 / -소 -(eu)o / -so	the 하오체 endings	하오체의 핵심은 두 어미예요. The 하오체 endings are dash 오 and dash 소. 존중은 하되, 상대를 위로 올리지는 않아요.
하오체 ≠ 하십시오체 hao-che ≠ hasipsio-che	equal-formal vs. listener-elevating	하십시오체는 상대를 높여요. 하오체는 상대를 동등하게 대해요. 하십시오체 lifts the listener up; 하오체 meets them as an equal — with dignity.
어서 오시오 eoseo osio	Come in / Welcome	먼저 간판에서 봐요. '어서 오시오.' In English, that's a dignified 'Please, come in.'
당기시오 danggisio	Pull (this door)	이건 아주 흔해요. '미시오' 그리고 '당기시오.' Push and pull — you see these on every door in Korea.
들어가지 마시오 deureogaji masio	Do not enter	그리고 금지도요. '들어가지 마시오.' That's 'Do not enter.'
반갑소 bangapso	Nice to meet you (dignified)	간판만이 아니예요. 사극에서는 사람들이 이렇게 말해요. '반갑소.' It means 'Nice to meet you' — spoken, dignified.
미안하오 mianhao	I'm sorry (equal-formal)	'고맙소.' Thank you. '미안하오.' I'm sorry. 사극에서 정말 많이 들려요 — you hear these all through period dramas.



Grammar / Structure Notes

말의 높낮이

말의 높낮이 — speech levels — how you treat the listener

한국어에는 말의 높낮이가 있어요. Korean sorts every sentence by how you treat the listener — and 하오체 is one of those levels.

-(으)오 / -소

-(으)오 / -소 — the 하오체 endings

equal-formal: respect WITHOUT lifting the listener above you

하오체 ≠ 하십시오체

하오체 ≠ 하십시오체 — equal-formal vs. listener-elevating

same politeness family, different direction of respect

어서 오시오

어서 + 오 + 시오 — Come in / Welcome

먼저 간판에서 봐요. '어서 오시오.' In English, that's a dignified 'Please, come in.'

당기시오

당기 + 시오 — Pull (this door)

이건 아주 흔해요. '미시오' 그리고 '당기시오.' Push and pull — you see these on every door in Korea.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
반갑소	bangapso
반갑소	bangapso
완벽하오	wanbyeokhao

Self-Check

- 1 Say 하오체 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
하계체 The Familiar Speech Level Elders Use	C1 Honorifics: compare 하계체 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-HON-LVL-001
감사합니다 / 죄송합니다 Formal Thanks and Apologies	A1 Honorifics: compare 감사합니다 / 죄송합니다 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-LVL-002
요 Polite and Casual Korean	A1 Honorifics: compare 요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-LVL-001
하십시오체 The Formal Speech Level for Announcements	B1 Honorifics: compare 하십시오체 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-HON-LVL-001

My Notes

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