



Korean Ladder Study Note

높임의 일관성

Keeping Honorifics Consistent Across a Long Sentence

Level	Topic	Focus
C1 · Advanced TOPIK 5	Honorifics Subject Honorifics	높임의 일관성 Keeping Honorifics Consistent Across a Long Sentence

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-HON-SUB-004>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjfBrbi9Ad8>

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, I do this all the time. When I make a long sentence about my grandmother or my boss, I start super politely, and I remember the polite ending on the final verb. Why do native speakers still wince at the middle of my sentence?

Listen to this sentence: 할머니께서 밥을 먹고 주무셨어요. You started with 할머니께서, Grandmother with the honorific subject marker, and you ended with 주무셨어요, slept honorifically. Everything at the edges is polite.

Right in the middle, though, 밥을 먹고 drops down to plain language for eating a meal. To a Korean ear, it feels like bowing politely, suddenly slouching in the middle, and bowing again at the end. It should be 할머니께서 진지를 드시고 주무셨어요.

Slouching in the middle of a bow—that is the exact picture I needed. Because in English, once I say Grandmother politely, the verbs 'ate' and 'slept' don't change at all.

Conversation Snapshot



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	부사장님께서 오전에 보내신 자료를 다 확인하셨어요? —	Did you check all the materials the vice president sent this morning?
Junho	네, 부사장님께서 직접 정리하시고 말씀해 주신 부분부터 수정하고 있습니다. —	Yes, I am revising starting from the parts the vice president organized in person and told us about.
Hana	다행이네요. 아까 점심도 못 드시고 회의에 들어가셨거든요. —	That's a relief. Earlier, they went into the meeting without even having lunch.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
높임의 일관성 nopimui ilgwanseong	Honorific consistency across clauses	In Korean, we call this principle 높임의 일관성, consistency of honorifics. When you elevate a respected subject like a grandparent, professor, or client, that level of respect has to hold steady across the whole sentence.
께서 → 특수 어휘 → -(으)시- kkeseo → teuksu eohwi → -(eu)si-	Honorific particle → Special vocabulary → Honorific suffix	At the C1 level, your sentences have multiple clauses—background clauses, connected actions, and relative clauses that describe nouns. Every time that respected person is the subject of a clause, you have three checkpoints: the particle께서, special honorific words, and the suffix 시 or 으시.
특수 어휘는 절대로 생략 불가 teuksu eohwineun jeoldaero saengnyak bulga	Lexical honorifics can NEVER be dropped	Great question. First, special honorific vocabulary—words like 드시다 for eat or drink, 계시다 for be or stay, 주무시다 for sleep, and 말씀하시다 for speak—can never be downgraded to plain verbs in any clause. 특수 어휘는 절대로 생략할 수 없어요.
-(으)시- : 접속절 · 관형절 · 종결어미 -(eu)si- : jeopsokjeol, gwanhyeongjeol, jonggyeoreomi	Keep -(으)시- in connected clauses, noun-modifying clauses, and final verbs	Second, for the suffix 시 or 으시, learners most often drop it in two places: in the first half of a two-part sentence, and inside relative clauses that modify a noun. Let's look at both.
검토하시고 (O) vs 검토하고 (Awkward with께서) geomtohasigo	reviewed (honorific) and...	Notice the first verb: 검토하시고. Because we opened with 교수님께서, the professor is already elevated as the subject. Saying 검토하시고 keeps that respect alive across the connector 고 before we reach 조연해 주셨어요.



Word	Meaning	Example
검토하시고 조언해 주셨어요 geomtohasigo joeonhae jusyeosseoyo	reviewed and gave advice	So because both actions—reviewing the paper and giving advice—are separate, deliberate actions done by the professor, putting the honorific suffix on both clauses makes the whole sentence sound balanced.
바쁘신데도 (O) / 바쁜데도 (X) bappeusindedo	even though (they) are busy	Look at 바쁘신데도. Learners almost always say 원장님께서 바쁜데도, forgetting that 'being busy' describes the director's state. When you attach the honorific marker 시 and the contrast ending 은데도 to 바쁘다, it combines into 바쁘신데도.
피곤하신데도 / 편찮으신데도 pigonhasindedo / pyeonchaneusindedo	even though tired / even though unwell	Oh, that's a huge blind spot for me. I always remember honorifics on action verbs like 'attended', but I forget them on descriptive words like 'busy' or 'tired' in the setup clause.



Grammar / Structure Notes

할머니께서 진지를 드시고 주무셨어요.

할머니께서 진지를 드시고 주무셨어요. — Grandmother had her meal and went to sleep.

Keep honorific vocabulary (진지, 드시고) in the middle clause too.

할머니께서 진지를 드시고 주무셨어요.

할머니께서 진지를 드시고 주무셨어요. — Grandmother had her meal and went to sleep.

Consistent elevation from start to finish.

높임의 일관성

높임의 일관성 — Honorific consistency across clauses

Subject marker + lexical honorifics + -(으)시- must align.

께서 → 특수 어휘 → -(으)시-

께서 → 특수 어휘 → -(으)시- — Honorific particle -> Special vocabulary -> Honorific suffix

Three checkpoints in every complex sentence.

께서 → 특수 어휘 → -(으)시-

께서 → 특수 어휘 → -(으)시- — Honorific particle -> Special vocabulary -> Honorific suffix

Where must honorifics appear across clauses?

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
바쁘신데도 참석해 주셨어요	bappeusindedo chamseokhae jusyeosseoyo
진지를 드시고 댁에서 쉬셨어요	jinjireul deusigo daegeseo swisyeosseoyo

Self-Check

- 1 Say 높임의 일관성 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
간접 높임 말씀·연세·덕에 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
압존법 When to Lower Honorifics in Front of a Higher Superior	C1 Honorifics: compare 압존법 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-HON-SUB-001
커피 나오셨습니다 사물에 잘못 붙이는 과잉 높임 바로잡기	C1 Honorifics: compare 커피 나오셨습니다 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-HON-SUB-003
-(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

My Notes

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