



Korean Ladder Study Note

사잇소리 현상

Why 나뭇잎 Sounds Like 나뭇잎

Level	Topic	Focus
C1 · Advanced TOPIK 5	Pronunciation Linking Sounds	사잇소리 현상 Why 나뭇잎 Sounds Like 나뭇잎

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

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

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dv3YOIP2mc>

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, real confusion. I look at 나뭇잎 — tree leaf — and I read 나뭇잎. But every Korean says 나뭇잎. Where did that ㄴ come from?

좋은 질문이에요. 이건 사잇소리 현상이에요. In English, it's a sound that gets inserted when two nouns join into one word.

그리고 규칙이 있어요. It is not random. 조건만 알면 소리를 예측할 수 있습니다 — once you know the conditions, you can predict the sound.

먼저, 이 ㅅ을 보세요. 이것을 사이시옷이라고 해요 — we call this ㅅ the 'sai-siot', the between-ㅅ. 시옷 is the name of the letter ㅅ.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	등굣길에 껏잎을 샀어요. —	On the way to school, I bought perilla leaves.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	등교길, 껌 — 사잇소리가 두 번 들리네요. —	[deunggyokkil], [kkaennip] — I hear the inserted sound twice.
Hana	바닷가에도 나뭇잎이 많았어요. —	There were many leaves at the seaside too.
Junho	바다까, 나문닙 — 하나는 된소리, 하나는 니은 첨가예요. —	[badakka], [namunnip] — one tenses, one adds a ㄴ.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
사잇소리 현상 sait-sori hyeonsang	the 'inserted sound' phenomenon	좋은 질문이에요. 이건 사잇소리 현상이에요. In English, it's a sound that gets inserted when two nouns join into one word.
예측 가능 yecheuk ganeung	predictable, not random	그리고 규칙이 있어요. It is not random. 조건만 알면 소리를 예측할 수 있습니다 — once you know the conditions, you can predict the sound.
사이시옷 (ㅅ) sai-siot	the 'between-ㅅ' written into a compound	먼저, 이 ㅅ을 보세요. 이것을 사이시옷이라고 해요 — we call this ㅅ the 'sai-siot', the between-ㅅ. 시옷 is the name of the letter ㅅ.
① 된소리 (tensing) doensori	the next consonant tenses: ㄱ→ㄲ, ㄷ→ㄸ, ㅂ→ㅃ...	이 사이시옷이 세 가지 소리를 만들어요. It makes one of three things happen. 첫째는 된소리 — a tensed sound.
등곳길 → [등교길] deunggyokkil	the way to school (등교 + 길)	예를 들어, 등교 더하기 길은 등곳길이 돼요. 우리는 등교길이라고 읽어요 — we read 등곳길 as [등교길], with a tensed ㅍ.
② ㄴ 첨가 (ㄴ inserted) nieun cheomga	a ㄴ sound is added before ㄴ or ㄹ	둘째, 뒷말이 니은이나 미음으로 시작하면 니은 소리가 하나 생겨요. If the second word starts with ㄴ or ㄹ, a single ㄴ appears.
콧날 → [콘날] konnal	bridge of the nose (코 + 날)	코 더하기 날은 콧날이에요. 소리는 콘날 — 코가 콘이 되지요. Nose plus ridge becomes 콧날, read [콘날].
③ ㄴㄴ 첨가 (ㄴㄴ inserted) nieun-nieun cheomga	a double ㄴ appears before 이/야/여/요/유	셋째, 뒷말이 이, 야, 여, 요, 유로 시작하면 니은 소리가 두 개 생겨요. If it starts with an i- or y-sound, we get a double ㄴㄴ.



Grammar / Structure Notes

사잇소리 현상

사잇소리 현상 — the 'inserted sound' phenomenon

appears when two nouns form a compound

예측 가능

예측 가능 — predictable, not random

learn the conditions, then hear the sound

사이시옷 (ㅅ)

사이시옷 (ㅅ) — the 'between-ㅅ' written into a compound

the letter ㅅ is named 시옷

① 된소리 (tensing)

① 된소리 (tensing) — the next consonant tenses: ㄱ→ㄲ, ㄷ→ㄸ, ㅂ→ㅃ...

outcome 1 of 3

등굣길 → [등교깁]

등굣길 → [등교깁] — the way to school (등교 + 길)

길 tenses to 깁

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
나무닙	namunnip
나뭇잎 [나무닙]	namunnip
콘날	konnal
콧날 [콘날]	konnal

Self-Check

- 1 Say 사잇소리 현상 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
ㄴ 첨가 Why 한여름 Sounds Like 한너름	B2 Pronunciation: compare ㄴ 첨가 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-PRON-LNK-002
ㅎ 약화·탈락 좋아요 → 조아요	B1 Pronunciation: compare ㅎ 약화·탈락 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-PRON-LNK-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

My Notes

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