



Korean Ladder Study Note

ㅡ의 세 가지 발음

의사 · 회의 · 민주주의

Level	Topic	Focus
C1 · Advanced TOPIK 5	Pronunciation Vowels	ㅡ의 세 가지 발음 의사 · 회의 · 민주주의

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

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

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhGfVC1ISXo>

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

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

I keep seeing 의, but sometimes I hear 이, sometimes 에, and sometimes 예. Is Korean hiding three vowels in one spelling?

좋아요. The short answer is this: spelling 의 has three common pronunciations depending on where it appears.

Exactly. 이사 means moving house or a director, so 의사 and 이사 should stay different in careful speech.

맞아요. Many dictionaries list both, but everyday speech strongly favors 회이 for 회의.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	오늘 회의는 짧게 할까요? —	Shall we keep today's meeting short?
Junho	좋아요. 저의 의견도 간단해요. —	Good. My opinion is simple too.



Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
의 → 의 / 이 / 에 ui → ui / i / e	One spelling, three common sounds	좋아요. The short answer is this: spelling 의 has three common pronunciations depending on where it appears.
의사 uisa	의사 · 회의 · 민주주의	First rule: at the beginning of a word, 의 is pronounced carefully as 의, like 의사 and 의미.
의사 ≠ 이사 uisa ≠ isa	doctor is not moving house	Exactly. 이사 means moving house or a director, so 의사 and 이사 should stay different in careful speech.
회의 hoeui	의사 · 회의 · 민주주의	Second rule: when 의 is not at the beginning, it often sounds like 이 in natural speech.
회의 → 회이 hoeui → hoe-i	meeting: 의 becomes 이 in natural speech	맞아요. Many dictionaries list both, but everyday speech strongly favors 회이 for 회의.
민주주의 minjujuui	의사 · 회의 · 민주주의	The same thing happens in 민주주의. The 의 is inside the word, so it is usually pronounced 이.
나의 → 나에 na-ui → na-e	my; of me	Now the third rule is grammatical. When 의 means possession, like my or your, it is very commonly pronounced 에.
나의 na-ui	의사 · 회의 · 민주주의	So 나의 can sound like 나에 because 의 is the possessive particle, not because every 의 becomes 에.



Grammar / Structure Notes

의 → 의 / 이 / 에

의 → 의 / 이 / 에 — One spelling, three common sounds

Position and grammar decide the sound.

의사예요.

의사 + 예요. — It is a doctor.

의사 means doctor. Here 의 is word-initial, so keep the full starting sound.

의사 ≠ 이사

의사 ≠ 이사 — doctor is not moving house

Initial 의 can distinguish meaning.

회의가 길어요.

회의 + 가 + 길 + 어요. — The meeting is long.

회의 is spelled 회의, but in natural Korean you usually hear 회이.

회의 → 회이

회의 → 회이 — meeting: 의 becomes 이 in natural speech

Because 의 is not word-initial.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
의사	uisa
회의	hoeui
민주주의	minjujuui
나의	na-ui
회의 / 저의	hoeui / jeo-ui

Self-Check

- 1 Say 나의 세 가지 발음 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
장단음 When 눈, 말, and 밤 Mean Two Different Things	C1 Pronunciation: compare 장단음 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-PRON-VOW-001
ㅏ The Two Open Vowels Beginners Blur	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅏ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-006
ㅗ The Vowels That Now Sound the Same	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅗ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-002
ㅟ / ㅢ / ㅙ / ㅞ The 'Y' Glide Vowels	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅟ / ㅢ / ㅙ / ㅞ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-004

My Notes

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