

MESSICK'S KOREAN CULTURE LESSONS

Lesson #4

HIERARCHY

JUNE 13, 2024

16 FAMILY

Easy to Learn Korean Language Skills

Chad Meyer, Moonjung Kim

Grandfather 외할아버지 *oe-harabeoji* **Grandmother** 외할머니 *oe-halmoneoni*
Grandfather 친할아버지 *chin-harabeoji* **Grandmother** 친할머니 *chin-halmoneoni*

Mother 어머니, 엄마 *eomeoni, eomma* **Father** 아버지, 아빠 *abeoji, appa*

Older Sister 누나 *nuna* **Older Brother** 형 *hyeong* **Me** 저, 나 *jeo, na*

Younger Sister 여동생 *yeo-dongsaeng* **Younger Brother** 남동생 *nam-dongsaeng*

언니 *eon-ni* **오빠** *o-ppa*

TIP
 ● The proper use of 'older brother' and 'older sister' will depend on the gender of the younger sibling. If the younger sibling is a woman, she will call her older sister, 'eon-ni'. If the younger sibling is a man, he will call his older sister 'nuna'.
 ● Younger family members must address older family members respectfully by using their title, as listed in the diagram above.
 ● Older family members can address younger family members simply by adding the letter 'a' to their name. So Moon-jung becomes Moon-jung-a to her parents, older brothers, and older sisters.

19 RELATIVES

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Father-in-law 시아버지 *siabeoji* **Mother-in-law** 시어머니 *siemeoneoni* **Father-in-law** 장인 *jangin*
Mother-in-law 장모 *jangmo*

Husband 남편 *nampyeon* **Wife** 아내 *anae*

Daughter-in-law 며느리 *myeoneuri* **Son-in-law** 사위 *sawi*

WORD BANK

uncle (husband of mother's sister)	이모부	<i>imobu</i>
aunt (mother's sister)	이모	<i>imo</i>
uncle (husband of father's sister)	고모부	<i>gomobu</i>
aunt (father's sister)	고모	<i>gomo</i>
uncle (father's elder brother)	큰아버지	<i>keunabeoji</i>
aunt (wife of father's elder brother)	큰어머니	<i>keuneomeoni</i>
uncle (father's younger married brother)	작은아버지	<i>jakgeunabeoji</i>
aunt (wife of father's younger brother)	작은어머니	<i>jakgeuneomeoni</i>

● Unmarried younger uncles from the father's family are known as *samchon*.
 ● In the mother's family, *samchon* is used for an older or younger uncle.

MESSICK'S KOREAN CULTURE LESSON #4: HIERARCHY IN RELATIONSHIPS

Written by Dr. Kyle Messick

Social hierarchy is fundamentally important in Korean culture, which is a result of lingering Confucian ideas as well as the competitive nature of the culture where everyone must be at the same level; it is unacceptable to fall behind even if one isn't 'winning.' I'll discuss how this influences two domains: friendships and family relationships. Different characteristics including age, rank, and job titles play into these social hierarchies.

Among family, hierarchy is fundamentally important, with age being crucial in determining how to address and behave around other members of the family. Unlike most other cultures, Koreans have specific words for relationships based on age, including words for "elder brother-in-law" and "wife's elder sister's husband." Note the combination of familial relationship and age ranking. These rankings determine how to address different family members. An older person can call a younger person by name, but a younger person must refer to their

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elder by title and degree of kinship. A married woman must always use the appropriate titles when addressing her in-laws. For example, a wife calls her husband's older brother sijubeonim (elder brother-in-law). A married woman calls her husband's single younger brother doryeonim until he gets married, then she calls him seobangnim. A wife calls her husband's older sister hyeongnim and younger sister agassi. If a married woman fails to accurately use those titles for her in-laws she will be considered uncultured and uneducated.

They also literally quantify the distance between family members by units. A chon (촌; 寸) in Korean, refers to the distance of kinship between two persons. Siblings are considered to be separated by two chons, while children and parents are separated by one chon. A relationship between first cousins would be separated by four chons, and second cousins by six.

Friendships similarly require a level playing field, so although it is easy to make acquaintances, friendships are more difficult. Due to social hierarchy norms, friendships need to be among people of the same age, social status, and rank. It is often the case that if a friend gets a promotion or demotion, that ends their friendship since they're no longer equals (this can cause friction about one individual being 'better' or 'worse' than the other). To broaden the ability to have friendships, Koreans belong to many different associations and groups. Having many different spheres that they belong to increases the probability of level overlap with others in some categories (for example, elementary school alumni associations, status as former army reserve officers, hometown associations, etc.). Having overlapping categories creates fertile ground for potential friendships to be recognized as being on an even playing field.