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Unit 1

Lesson 1

<p>Nouns:</p> <p>한국 = Korea 도시 = city 이름 = name 저 = I, me (formal) 나 = I, me (informal) 남자 = man 여자 = woman 이 = this 그 = that 저 = that (when something is far away) 것 = thing 이것 = this thing 그것 = that thing 저것 = that thing 의자 = chair 탁자 = table 선생님 = teacher 침대 = bed</p>	<p>Nouns:</p> <p>집 = house 차 = car 사람 = person 책 = book 컴퓨터 = computer 나무 = tree/wood 소파 = sofa 중국 = China 일본 = Japan 문 = door 의사 = doctor 학생 = student</p> <p>Adverbs and Other Words:</p> <p>이다 = to be 네 = yes 아니 = no</p>
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Greeting Words

Throughout my lessons, I will only use grammar and vocabulary that you have learned from a previous lesson. In Unit 0, I taught you how to write words in Korean. Above, you can see the first set of words you should study to get you started. I have not yet taught you how to *use* those words or how conjugate them.

The words for “hello,” “thank you,” “how are you,” and “please” are actually quite difficult in Korean. There is actually grammar within the words themselves. At this stage, I would simply memorize these “greeting words” as one unit, and you can worry about the grammar within them later when it becomes relevant. The words are:

안녕하세요 = hello

감사하다 and 고맙다 are the two words that are commonly used to say "thank you." However, they are rarely used in those forms and are almost always conjugated. They can be conjugated in a variety of ways, which will be introduced in Lesson 5 and Lesson 6.

The most common ways to conjugate these words are:

감사합니다
감사해요

고마워
고맙습니다
고마워요

The way to say “how are you” in Korean is:

잘 지내세요? = How are you

Although this is the most literal way to say “how are you” in Korean, it is not as common as the English expression. Korean people love food, and common way to greet somebody is to ask them if they have eaten. The idea of asking questions in Korean is taught in Lesson 21.

The way to say “please” in Korean is:

제발 = Please

It is, of course, important for you to memorize these expressions in Korean, but you need to know that there is a reason why they are said that way. For now, don't worry about why they are said that way, and simply memorize them. We will get back to them in later lessons when they become important.

Korean Sentence Structure

One of the hardest things to wrap your head around in Korean is the alien-like sentence structure. Essentially, Korean sentences are written in the following order:

Subject – Object – Verb (for example: I hamburger eat), Or
Subject – Adjective (for example: I beautiful)

I am going to quickly explain what a “subject” and “object” mean, as your ability to understand later concepts depends on your understanding of this.

The subject refers to person/thing/noun/whatever that is acting. The subject does the action of the verb. For example, the subject in each sentence below is underlined:

I went to the park

I will go to the park

My mom loves me

He loves me

The dog ran fast

The clouds cleared up

In English, the subject always comes before the verb.

The object refers to whatever the verb is acting *on*. For example, the object in each sentence below is underlined

My mom loves me
The dog bit the mailman
He ate rice
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In English, the object always comes after the verb. However, a sentence with a verb does not require an object. For example:

I slept
I ate
He died

Sometimes there is no object because it has simply been omitted from the sentence. For example, “I ate” or “I ate rice” are both correct sentences. Other verbs, by their nature, cannot act on an object. For example, you cannot place an object after the verbs “to sleep” or “to go:”

I sleep you
I go you

Subjects are also present in sentences with adjectives. However, there is no object in a sentence with an adjective. The subjects are underlined in the following adjective-sentences below:

School is boring
I am boring
The movie was funny
The building is big
My girlfriend is pretty
The food is delicious

Verbs and adjectives are placed at the *end* of a sentence. Actually, every Korean sentence and clause must end in one of the following:

- A verb
- An adjective, or
- 이다

I talk about the meaning of 이다 later in this lesson. It is neither a verb nor an adjective, but it behaves like them. Every verb, every adjective and 이다 end in “다,” and these are the only words in Korean that can be conjugated.

Korean also has a formality system built into the language. That is, the way one speaks to an older person who deserves high respect would be different than the way one speaks to a friend. There are many ways words in a sentence can change depending on the formality of the situation, but the two most common, basic and important things to be aware of are:

1) There are two ways to say “I” or “me” in Korean:

나, used in informal situations, and
저, used in formal situations.

2) There are many ways to conjugate a word. As we saw above, the word 고맙다 can be conjugated many different ways. It is important to know which conjugation to use in which situation. This is taught in Lesson 6. Until Lesson 6, I make no distinction of formality and the focus is more on sentence structure than conjugations. Until then, you will see both 나 and 저 arbitrarily used. Don't worry about why one is used over the other until Lesson 6, when formalities will be explained.

Okay, now that you know all of that, we can talk about making Korean sentences.

Korean Particles (~는/은 and ~를/을)

Most words in a Korean sentence have a particle (a fancy word to say ‘something’) attached to them. These particles indicate the role of each word in a sentence –that is, *which* word is the subject or object. Note that there is absolutely no way of translating these particles to English, as we do not use anything like them.

The following are the most common particles:

는 or 은 (Subject)

This is placed after a word to indicate that it is the subject of a sentence

Use 는 when the last letter of the last syllable of the subject is a vowel. For example:

나 = 나는

저 = 저는

Use 은 when the last letter of the last syllable of the subject is a consonant. For example:

집 = 집은

책 = 책은

를 or 을 (Object)

This is placed after a word to indicate that is the object of a sentence.

Use **를** when the last letter of the last syllable is a vowel:

나 = 나를

저 = 저를

Use **을** when the last letter of the last syllable is a consonant:

집 = 집을

책 = 책을

We can now make sentences using Korean sentence structure and Korean particles.

1) I speak Korean = I **는** Korean **을** speak

는 is attached to "I" (the subject)

을 is attached to "Korean" (the object)

2) I like you = I **는** you **를** like

는 is attached to "I" (the subject)

를 is attached to "you" (the object)

3) I wrote a letter = I **는** letter **을** wrote

는 is attached to "I" (the subject)

을 is attached to "letter" (the object)

4) I opened the door = I **는** door **을** opened

는 is attached to "I" (the subject)

을 is attached to "the door" (the object)

5) My mom will make pasta = My mom **은** pasta **를** will make

은 is attached to "my mom" (the subject)

를 is attached to "pasta" (the object)

The same could be done for sentences with adjectives. However, remember that sentences with adjectives will not have an object:

1) My girlfriend is pretty: My girlfriend **은** is pretty

은 is attached to "my girlfriend" (the subject)

2) The movie was scary = The movie **는** was scary

는 is attached to "the movie" (the subject)

We will now switch our focus to using actual Korean words to create sentences ending in **이다**.

To be: 이다

Let's start building sentences in Korean. In this lesson, we will start by making simple sentences using the word 이다. The translation for “이다” is “to be.” English speakers often don't realize how difficult the word “to be” is. Depending on who is being referred to, the word “to be” could be any of the underlined words below:

I am a man
He is a man
They are men
I was a man
They were men

In each of those sentences, a different word (is, am, are, was, were) is used depending on the subject and tense of the sentence. I can't imagine how difficult this would be for an English learner. In Korean, the 이다 is used to represent all of those “to be” words.

As mentioned earlier, 이다 can be conjugated. In that way, 이다 is similar to verbs and adjectives, but the rules for 이다 are often (but not always) different. I will teach you how 이다 differs from verbs and adjectives as it becomes important in later lessons. For example, in Lesson 52 you will learn that the process for quoting a sentence with 이다 is different than with verbs and adjectives.

Like adjectives, 이다 can not act on an object. Only verbs can act on objects. For example:

I eat hamburgers (eat is a verb, the object is a hamburger)
She meets my friend (meet is a verb, the object is my friend)
They study Korean (study is a verb, the object is Korean)
We listen to music (listen is a verb, the object is music)

All of those sentences (can) have objects because the verb is the predicate of the sentence. However, in sentences that are predicated by adjectives, there will not be an object:

I am pretty
She is beautiful
They are hungry
We are smart

Look at those four sentences. When we use adjectives in English, we must also use “to be” words like am, is and are. In other words, we cannot make sentences like this:

I pretty
She beautiful
They hungry
We smart

Unlike in English, 이다 is *not* used in these types of sentences. That is, we do not use 이다 to indicate that something “is” an adjective. The structure of sentences predicated by adjectives is discussed in Lesson 3.

So, 이다 is not used in these types of sentences:

I am pretty
She is beautiful
They are hungry
We are smart

However, 이다 is used in these types of sentences:

I am a man
He is a man
They are men
I was a man
They were men

이다 is used to indicate that a noun *is* a noun. The basic structure for a sentence predicated by “이다” is:

[noun 은/는] [another noun][이다]

For example:

I 는 man 이다 = I am a man

Now substitute the words for “man” and “I,” which are:

나 = I
남자 = man

The Korean sentence would look like this:

나는 남자이다 = I am a man

Notice that 이다 is attached directly to the second noun. Verbs and adjectives are not attached to nouns like this, but 이다 is. It would be incorrect to include a space between the second noun and 이다. For example, this would be incorrect:

나는 남자 이다

Although it might look and feel like “남자” is an object in that sentence, it is not. 이다, like adjectives and unlike verbs cannot act on an object. It would be incorrect to include the object particle on the second noun. For example, this would be incorrect:

나는 남자를 이다

The focus of this lesson (and Lessons 2, 3 and 4) is to introduce you to simple Korean *sentence structure*. Until you reach Lesson 5 and Lesson 6 you will not be exposed to the conjugations and honorifics of Korean verbs, adjectives and 이다. These words are very rarely used without conjugations and honorifics.

The conjugation of sentences is very important, but so is the structure of sentences. When creating these lessons, I went back in forth many times thinking about which one I should present first. You can't conjugate sentences if you don't have a logical sentence to conjugate; and you can't create a logical sentence if you don't know how to conjugate it. In the end, I figured it would make more sense to present the information this way – where learners are introduced to sentence structure and then learn how to conjugate the words within the sentence.

Throughout all of my lessons, I use example sentences to show how grammar can be used. The example sentences in Lessons 1 – 4 are not conjugated. However, directly beneath each non-conjugated sentence is a conjugated version of the same sentence in parenthesis (one formal and one informal conjugation). You might want to glimpse at how the words are conjugated, but remember that this will be taught in Lessons 5 and 6.

Below we can see other examples of how 이다 can be used:

나는 여자이다 = I am a woman
(나는 여자야 / 저는 여자예요)

나는 선생님이다 = I am a teacher
(나는 선생님이야 / 저는 선생님이예요)

나는 사람이다 = I am a person
(나는 사람이야 / 저는 사람이예요)

나는 _____ 이다 = I am a _____
(나는 _____ 이야 / 저는 _____ 이에요)

You can substitute any word into the blank space to make these sentences.

The words "this" and "that" are often used as the subject of these types of sentences. Let's now look at how we can apply 이것, 그것 and 저것 to sentences with 이다 .

This and That (이/그/저)

You can see in the vocabulary above that the word for “this” is 이 in Korean. We use 이 in Korean when we are talking about something that is within touching distance (For example: this pen - i.e. the one I am holding). Just like in English "이" (this) is placed before the noun it is describing. For example:

- 이 사람 = This person
- 이 남자 = This man
- 이 여자 = This woman
- 이 차 = This car
- 이 탁자 = This table
- 이 의자 = This chair

Unfortunately, there are two words for “that”: 그 and 저. Early learners of Korean are always confused with the difference between “그” and “저.”

We use 그 when we are talking about something from a previous sentence or from previous context, regardless of if you could see it or not. Providing examples would be too difficult right now because you do not know any Korean sentences. However, if I were to say: “I don’t like that man [when your friend mentioned him in a previous sentence].” The word “that” in that sentence would be how “그” is used.

We use 저 when we are talking about something that we can see, but cannot touch because it is too far away.

We can place “그” or “저” before a noun to describe “this” or “that” thing just like we did with “이.”

- 이 사람 = This person
- 그 사람 = That person
- 저 사람 = That person

- 이 남자 = This man
- 그 남자 = That man
- 저 남자 = That man

- 이 여자 = This woman
- 그 여자 = That woman
- 저 여자 = That woman

- 이 의자 = This chair
- 그 의자 = That chair
- 저 의자 = That chair

이 탁자 = This table
그 탁자 = That table
저 탁자 = That table

Again, although the English translations of “그” and “저” are the same, it is important to remember that they do not have the same meaning in Korean.

One of the most common words in Korean is “것” meaning “thing.” When 이, 그 or 저 are placed before “것,” the result is a compound word. Therefore, when placing “것” after 이, 그 or 저, there should not be a space between the two. In other words, the following are words in and within themselves, and not two separate words:

이것 = this thing
그것 = that thing
저것 = that thing

We see this same phenomenon happen with other common words that you learn in future lessons. You don't need to worry about this now, but we see this same thing happen with the word 곳 (meaning “place”) and 때 (meaning “time”).

With these words, the word “thing” isn't necessary in the English translation. Let me explain.

I'll use “that” as an example, but the same idea can be applied to the word “this.”

“That” can be placed before a noun to describe it. As we saw earlier:

That person
That man
That woman

However, it can also *be* a noun itself. For example:

I like that

In this type of English sentence, “that” is referring to some thing that you like. It *is* a noun. It *is* a thing.

Therefore, the sentence could just as easily be said as:

I like that *thing*

I don't like to use grammatical jargon in my lessons, but if you know what these words mean, it could be helpful. In both English and Korean, "that" can be a determiner (as in, "I like that man"), and it can also be a pronoun (as in "I like that"). When used as a determiner in Korean, you should place 그 before a noun. When used as a pronoun in Korean, the word 그것 is used.

In this same respect, while "이, 그 and 저" translate to "this, that and that" respectively, and are placed before nouns to indicate "this noun, that noun and that noun," "이것, 그것 and 저것" are nouns (they are pronouns). Therefore, they do not need to be followed by the redundant word "thing," although their meanings would be exactly the same:

I like this
I like this thing

I like that
I like that thing

We can now use these nouns as subjects or objects in a sentence. We will look at how they can be used with "이다" next.

Using This/That with 이다

Remember, 이다 translates to "to be" and is conjugated as "am/is/are" in English. Now that we know how to use 이, 그 and 저 (and 이것, 그것 and 저것), we can now make sentences like this:

That person is a doctor

We can start by putting those words into the Korean structure:
That person 는 doctor is

And then changing the English words to the appropriate Korean words:

그 사람은 + 의사 + 이다
그 사람은 의사이다
(그 사람은 의사야 / 그 사람은 의사예요)

More examples:

그 사람은 선생님이다 = That person is a teacher
(그 사람은 선생님이야 / 그 사람은 선생님이예요)

이것은 탁자이다 = This (thing) is a table
(이것은 탁자야 / 이것은 탁자예요)

저것은 침대이다 = That (thing) is a bed
(저것은 침대야 / 저것은 침대예요)

그 사람은 남자이다 = That person is a man
(그 사람은 남자야 / 그 사람은 남자예요)

그 사람은 여자이다 = That person is a woman
(그 사람은 여자야 / 그 사람은 여자예요)

그것은 차이다 = That (thing) is a car
(그것은 차야 / 그것은 차예요)

이것은 나무이다 = This (thing) is a tree
(이것은 나무야 / 이것은 나무예요)

Wow! That was an extremely difficult lesson. If you were to pick up another Korean textbook, I am sure the first chapter would be much easier than this. Trust me though; learning this at the start will be very useful to you later on. When I was learning how to speak Korean, it took me months to realize some of these things (not because they were hard, but because I was using a text book that never taught me the reason why things are the way they are in Korean).