

Learn Korean Ep. 100: 하고 있다 vs. 해 있다 (Verb States)

Before starting this lesson, first make sure that you're comfortable with both the Progressive Tense and Passive speech. There are video lessons on both of these topics on my channel and web site (as well as free PDFs) so check those out first.

For a quick review, the Progressive Tense is used to say that something is *currently* happening or that you're *currently* doing something. Here's an example.

지금 하고 있어요.
"I'm doing it now."

Passive speech is used whenever the subject of a sentence is also the object of an action. For example, in a regular (active) sentence we might say this:

원숭이는 사자를 먹었어요.
"The monkey ate the lion."

The same sentence made into passive voice might be this:

사자가 원숭이에게 먹혔어요.
"The lion was eaten by the monkey."

That's a seriously dangerous monkey, but back to the lesson. We can combine both the Passive Tense and Passive voice together. Take this sentence for example:

저는 문을 닫았어요.
"I closed the door."

Let's re-write this sentence using the Progressive Tense.

저는 문을 닫고 있었어요.
"I was closing the door."

Now let's re-write that sentence by changing it to passive voice. So the verb 닫다 ("to close") will become 닫히다 ("to be closed").

문이 닫혔어요.

"The door was closed."

If any of this is confusing so far, re-watch the episodes on Progressive Tense and/or Passive voice on my channel which cover these concepts in detail.

So what if we wanted to say something a bit different: "The door *is currently* closed." As in, the door was closed (perhaps someone closed it), and it's still in the *state* of being closed. To do that, we'll need a new form.

Action Verb Stem + 어/아/etc. 있다

To use it, take the verb stem of an action verb and conjugate it as if you were conjugating the 요 form. Then attach the verb 있다 ("to exist") and conjugate that.

We can use this form to say that something is in the *state* of having done something (or having something done to it). For example, we can use this form with our previous example to say that the door was closed, and that it's *still* in the state of being closed. More naturally, we would say "The door is (still) closed."

For our example, we can take 닫히다 ("to be closed" or "to get closed") and conjugate it to 닫혀 있다 ("to *be* closed" or "to be in the state of having been closed"). Now instead of saying that the door is currently in the *process* of being closed, or that the door *was* closed, we can say that the door **is** closed.

This form can therefore be used to show that something is still in the state of having done some verb – and that verb can be either active or passive. It might sound like this form will rarely be used, but it's actually quite common. Here's another example.

Take the verb 앉다 (“to sit down”). We can change it to the Progressive Tense by making it 앉고 있다 (“to be in the process of sitting down”). If you use 앉고 있다 when talking about someone, it means that person hasn’t yet sat down but is in currently leaning backward and moving toward the chair. I can’t think of any real situation where you’d need to use 앉고 있다 unless you’re describing a sloth taking a seat. Usually sitting down is a very quick process, so a person is either already sitting down or standing.

If we want to say that someone has already sat down (meaning that they’re in the *state* of having sat down, and are still like that), then you can use this form: 앉아 있다. This means “to be sitting down,” as in “someone has sat down, and is still in the state of having sat down. Here’s an example.

철수가 저기에 앉아 있어요.

“Chul-soo is sitting over there.”

Contrast this sentence with the Progressive Tense: 철수가 저기에 앉고 있어요. This sentence would mean something like “Chul-soo is in the process of sitting down, but hasn’t yet sat down. I have no idea why he’s taking so long to sit down.”

Here are a few more common examples of this form.

열리다 → “to open”

열려 있다 → “to be open”

창문이 열려 있었어요.

“The window was open.”

살다 → “to live”

살아 있다 → “to be alive”

벌레가 아직 살아 있어! 빨리 죽여!

“The bug is still alive! Hurry and kill it!”

서다 → "to stand"
서 있다 → "to be standing"

철수가 김 선생님 옆에 서 있어요.
"Chul-soo is standing next to Mr. Kim."

깨어지다 → "to break"
깨어져 있다 → "to be broken"

유리가 깨어져 있지 않아요. 깨어지지 않았어요.
"The glass isn't broken. It didn't break."

The above sentence uses both the new form *and* the regular past tense to show how they're different. It also shows how you can make this form negative, by changing 있다 into 있지 않다 and conjugating it.

연결이 되다 → "to become connected"
연결이 되어 있다 → "to be connected."

선이 연결되어 있어요.
"The wires are connected."

Advanced Notes:

있다 and 계시다:

When using *honorific speech*, you can switch 있다 with 계시다. You can review honorific speech on my channel or web site (Learn Korean #93 and #94). Here's an example:

선생님께서 저기에 앉아 계시요.
"The teacher is sitting over there."

Two more examples:

눅다 → "to lie down"
누워 있다 → "to be lying down"

철수가 소파에 누워 있어요.
"Chul-soo is lying on the sofa."

죽다 → "to die"
죽어 있다 → "to be dead"

원숭이가 죽어 있어요.
"The monkey is dead."

Conclusion

If you have any questions, feel free to send me a message through my web site or on YouTube. Good luck in your studies!

