

Learn Korean Ep. 110: “Using” and “As” | (으)로 and (으)로서

The (으)로 particle has several meanings, and this lesson will cover two of the most common ones. We'll also discuss a similar particle, (으)로서.

One of the meanings of (으)로 has been covered in a previous episode. (으)로 can be used to mean “toward” when used with a verb that shows *movement* (such as 가다, 오다, etc.). To learn about that usage, watch “Learn Korean Episode 68.”

Noun + 으로 “Using”

(으)로 can be used to mean “using.” For example, it can be used to say “using a pencil.” Depending on the sentence, the translation can change widely – from “by” to “with” to “using” to “out of” to “for” and other ways.

To use it, take a noun and attach 으로 if it ends in a *consonant*, or attach 로 if it ends in a *vowel*.

펜으로 “with a pen”

자동차로 “by car”

연필로 “with a pencil”

Note that nouns ending in ㄹ will also add 로 to the end.

The (으)로 particle shows what sort of *method, material, machine, tool, channel, or means* by which you do something. Here are some examples.

책상을 나무로 만들었어요.

I made a desk out of wood.

Since (으)로 shows the *means* by which you do something, you can also think of this sentence as meaning, “I made a desk *using* wood.”

핸드폰으로 철수 씨한테 전화했어요.

I called Chul-soo on my cell phone.

Using (으)로 here shows that the cell phone is the *means* by which you made a phone call.

이메일로 보내주세요.

Please send it by email.

In this sentence, email is the *method* of sending something.

비행기로 한국까지 가고 싶어요.

I want to go to Korea by plane.

Here, the plane is the *machine* (vehicle) that you'll take to get to Korea.

손으로 종이를 접었어요.

I folded the paper with my hands.

In this sentence, you're *using* your hands to fold the paper.

한국어로 설명할 수 있어요.

I can explain it in Korean.

Here, the Korean language (한국어) is the *method* by which you're explaining something.

빌리의 유튜브 채널로 한국어를 배우고 있어요.

I'm learning Korean through Billy's YouTube channel.

However, the 으로 particle can also be used in a few other ways too. Let's talk about one more.

Noun + 으로 "As"

The (으)로 particle can also mean "as" (also "as it is," "for," or "in the role of"). For example, you could say "I got a car *as* a gift," or "I was hired *as* a teacher." Here are some examples.

이거 선물로 받았어요.

I got this as a present.

(Or...) I got this for a present.

철수 씨를 친구로 생각해요.

I think of Chul-soo as a friend.

(Or...) I think of Chul-soo in the role of a friend.

어제 저녁으로 피자를 먹었어요.

Yesterday I ate pizza for dinner.

(Or...) Yesterday, I ate pizza as dinner.

스테이크를 레어로 주세요.

Please give me the steak rare.

(Or...) Please give me the steak **as** rare.

이거 라지로 있어요?

Do you have this in a large?

(Or...) Do you have this as a large?

선생님으로 고용됐어요.

I was hired as a teacher.

Before going further, I should specify that this (으)로 particle can only be used to mean "as" when it's modifying (affecting or describing) a verb. It cannot be used when the noun (used before 으로) is what you're talking about in a sentence.

For example, if the sentence is about you "as a teacher," then you could not use 선생님으로 to say "As a teacher." Starting a sentence with 선생님으로, followed by talking about your experiences as a teacher, would be grammatically incorrect (and sound awkward).

Again, the (으)로 particle can only be used when it's modifying a verb. Therefore, you could be hired as a teacher, work as a teacher, or do anything as a teacher using the (으)로 particle. But you *couldn't* use the (으)로 particle to say something like "As a teacher, you shouldn't do that." To say that, you'll need a different particle.

Noun + (으)로서

To say "as a teacher" or "as a person who likes languages" or "as a friend" when that's what your sentence is about, use the particle (으)로서. It works the same way as (으)로, just with 서 added to the end – but it is used whenever it is not modifying (affecting or describing) a verb.

The (으)로서 particle is used to show in what *capacity* or *position* that you're doing something (for example, what job you have or what your rank is). You can think of it as meaning "in the capacity of" or "in the position of."

However, be careful as this particle is not too commonly used in spoken Korean as it sounds a tad formal; it's good to know, but it can sound awkward when used on its own. Here are two examples.

언어를 좋아하는 사람으로서 한국어는 그렇게 어렵지 않아요.

As a person who likes languages, Korean isn't that difficult.

(Or...) In the capacity/position of a person who likes languages, Korean isn't that difficult.

친구로서 하는 말인데 다단계 하지 마.

I'm saying this as a friend, but don't do multi-level marketing.

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!

