

Learn Korean Ep. 116: 반면에 “On the Other Hand”

반면에 is an intermediate level grammar form that can be used to show contrast – similar to the expression “on the other hand.” It can be used with verbs in both the present tense and the past tense.

Present Tense:

Action Verb Stem + 는 반면(에)

Descriptive Verb Stem + 은/ㄴ 반면(에)

This grammar form is similar to the expression “on the other hand.” It’s used to contrast two statements or sentences that are different from each other.

You can think of it as meaning “While **A** is true, on the other hand... **B**.” Or you can think of it as meaning “On one hand **A**, and on the other hand **B**.”

Literally, 반면 comes from Chinese characters (反面) and means “opposing side(s)” – therefore this form is literally like saying “on the opposing side of” the sentence that it’s used with.

To use it, take a verb (action verb or descriptive verb) and conjugate it into an adjective. Then attach 반면(에) and finish the sentence – while 에 is optional, it’s most often used.

For action verbs in the present tense, attach 는 반면에. And for descriptive verbs in the present tense, attach 은 반면에 or ㄴ 반면에 depending on the verb conjugation. Remember that certain descriptive verbs have their own unique conjugation rules; for example, 춥다 will become 추운 반면에.

Here are two example sentences.

친구가 요리를 잘 하는 반면에 설거지를 못 해요.

My friend cooks well, but on the other hand he can’t do the dishes.

You can also think of this sentence as translating, "On one hand my friend cooks well, but on the other hand he can't do the dishes."

강아지가 너무 예쁜 **반면에** 털이 많이 빠져요.

The puppy is so pretty, but on the other hand she sheds a lot.

Saying 털(이) 빠지다 literally means that "fur comes off" and is how to say that something "sheds fur."

Past Tense:

Action Verb Stem + 은/ㄴ 반면(에)

Descriptive Verb Stem + 쓰던 반면(에)

For action verbs in the past tense, attach 은 반면에 or ㄴ 반면에. And for descriptive verbs in the past tense, attach 쓰던 반면에 after first conjugating the verb as usual; for example, 출다 will become 추웠던 반면에.

Here are some more example sentences using this grammar form.

철수와 영희가 같이 운동을 **한 반면에** 철수만 체중이 늘었어요.

Chul-soo and Yung-hee exercised together, but on the other hand only Chul-soo gained weight.

Note that 운동을 한 반면에 uses the past tense, so "exercised."

제레미는 게임을 많이 좋아하는 **반면에** 잘하는 게임이 없어요.

Jeremy likes games a lot, but on the other hand there's no game he's good at.

철수는 친구가 많은 **반면에** 철수의 동생은 친구가 한 명만 있어요.

Chul-soo has a lot of friends, but on the other hand his brother has only one friend.

Note that 많은 is the present tense, since 많다 ("to be many") is a descriptive verb.

그 음식점은 맛있었던 **반면에** 가격이 많이 비쌌어요.

That restaurant was delicious, but on the other hand the price was very expensive.

맛있다 ("to be delicious") becomes a past tense adjective as 맛있었던. To make the past tense using descriptive verbs, first conjugate the verb as normal (맛있어), then attach 쓰던 to the end (맛있었던).

철수는 목소리가 큰 **반면에** 말이 적어요.

Chul-soo has a loud voice, but on the other hand he doesn't talk much.

Literally, 말(이) 적다 means "to have few words."

서해 바다에는 갯벌이 많아요. **반면에** 동해 바다에는 절벽이 많아요.

The west coast beach has a lot of mud flats. On the other hand, the east coast beach has a lot of cliffs.

Just like in this example you can even use **반면에** by itself at the start of a sentence, as long as there's a context before **반면에** so it can show contrast.

Advanced Notes

Another similar form is **반해** ("opposing," "going against"). The **반해** form is used following the **은/ㄴ 데** form. This **은/ㄴ 데** form is made by first conjugating a verb (action or descriptive) to an adjective, and then adding a space. This **데** means "event" or "case" and is not the same as the **데** form which is used without a space and contrasts sentences.

For example, **하다** would become **하는 데 반해**, and **먹다** would become **먹는 데 반해**.

Therefore **하는 데 반해** would literally mean "opposing or going against the event/case of (verb)," whether that be an action verb or a descriptive verb. It's used in this way to mean "on the other hand," similarly to **반면에**, but with a few important differences.

Unlike **반면에**, **반해** must come after a verb (it can't start a sentence) and must be followed by a second statement. In addition, **반해** shows a stronger contrast than **반면에** and is only used when both statements are directly connected – not to say two separate facts that simply contrast each other. And finally, **반해** is less common than **반면에**.

Here's an example sentence.

그 한국어 수업이 아주 어려운 데 **반해** 학생들에게 인기가 많아요.

That Korean class is very difficult, but on the other hand it's popular with the students.

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!

