

Learn Korean Ep. 119: 채(로) “In the State Of”

Before we start the lesson, I want to give you a tip to understanding the meaning and usage of 채(로); as much as possible, try to focus on the *literal* meaning of the sentences used here. Understanding what this form literally means will help you to be able to use it accurately, and therefore naturally in your own sentences.

Action Verb Stem + 은/ㄴ 채(로)

채 means “just as it is, in its current state.” It’s used for describing the state of someone or something. Specifically, it’s used to describe the state of *action* (with an action verb) that someone or something is currently in.

For example, someone can be in the state of wearing glasses, or the state of lying down. Something could be in the state of being open or closed. This form can work with many action verbs.

You could say that you simply sat down, or you could say that you’re in the state of having sat down – the latter simply describes your current state (*you are seated right now*), while the former is only expressing an action that happens (*you sat down sometime in the past*).

To make this form, conjugate an action verb into the past tense adjective form. This will most often mean just taking an action verb stem and attaching 은 after a consonant or ㄴ after a vowel. Note that some verbs have their own conjugation rules, as usual. Then attach 채(로) – the 로 is *optional*.

하다 → 한 채(로)

먹다 → 먹은 채(로)

그분은 식탁 앞에 앉은 채로 잠들었어요.

He fell asleep (while) seated in front of the table.

Literally this sentence means “In the state of having sat in front of the table, he fell asleep.” Or more naturally, “He sat down in front of the table, and *in that state* he fell asleep.”

This form will often translate in English as "while" or "when," but its meaning is different from other forms such as (으)면 and 동안, among others. The (으)면서 and 동안 forms show that two actions are happening at the same time as each other, but 채(로) is not doing that – 채(로) is simply describing something's state and does not emphasize when something happens.

이 정도는 눈을 감은 채로도 할 수 있어요.

I can do this much with my eyes closed.

Literally this means "I can also do it in the state of, I closed my eyes." Or more literally, "I closed my eyes, and also in that state I can do it."

화장실 문을 열어 놓은 채로 샤워를 하면 너무 추워요.

It's too cold if you take a shower with the door open.

머리를 말리지 않은 채로 밖에 나갔더니 감기에 걸렸어요.

I went outside without drying my hair and I caught a cold.

옆집 사람이 자꾸 셔츠를 안 입은 채로 쓰레기를 버리러 가요.

The next door neighbor keeps throwing out the garbage without a shirt on.

아무것도 모른 채로 살아갈 순 없어요.

You can't go on living without knowing anything.

화장을 지우지 않은 채로 잠들었어요.

I fell asleep without taking off my makeup.

채(로) is most commonly used in writing and in formal speech – it's less common in casual or everyday speech. Instead, use other forms (such as the ~서 or ~고 endings) for casual and everyday speech. These forms do not work exactly like 채(로), so you will have to pick the most appropriate one based on the situation. When you want to express "with" or "without" doing an action, ~고 will be common. When you want to express that something happens right after doing something ("while"), ~서 will be common.

화장을 지우지 않고 잠들었어요.

I fell asleep without taking off my makeup.

Or literally, "I didn't take off my makeup, and (then) I fell asleep."

그분은 식탁 앞에 앉아서 잠들었어요.

He fell asleep (while) seated in front of the table.

Or literally, "He sat in front of the table, and (immediately) fell asleep."

Also one final thing. Note that ~가다 and ~오다 action verbs will not use 채(로) – this is because 채(로) is used to describe a state of action. 채(로) is not used to describe the state of something moving somewhere.

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!

