

Learn Korean Ep. 124: ~커녕 “Let alone”

This grammar form is advanced level, so I recommend learning it after you have a good understanding of the basics including conjugating verbs, using adverbs, and making full conversations.

Noun + (은/는) + 커녕

Take a noun and attach 은 if it ends in a *consonant*, or 는 if it ends in a *vowel*. Then attach 커녕. There are no spaces.

For example, 집 will become 집은커녕, and 학교 will become 학교는커녕.

Let's look at this form using A and B, with A being the noun and B being whatever comes after this form.

A (은/는)커녕 B

Both A and B have a low chance of happening.

B is something even more basic than A, and has a very low chance of happening.

Also, the noun that comes after it (B) is even more basic than A, and has an even lower chance of happening.

This form is used to express that both A and B will not likely, but B is even more basic than A and won't happen either.

Therefore, because B (something basic) won't happen, A definitely will not happen.

In English, we can express the same sort of thing with the expression “**let alone**” or “**forget**” or “**never mind (that).**”

This is most often used in negative sentences, but does not have to be.

This form can also be used with action verbs using the nominalization form ~기.

Action Verb Stem + 기는커녕

Take the stem of an action verb and attach 기는커녕. The rest works the same.

Let's look at some example sentences using the (은/는)커녕 form.

소 갈비는커녕 빵 사먹을 돈도 없어요.

"Forget beef ribs. I don't even have the money to buy bread."

도움이 되기는커녕 방해만 된 것 같아 죄송해요.

"I'm sorry because I think I was only a disturbance, let alone being helpful."

사람은커녕 개미 한 마리도 안 보인다.

"I can't even see one ant, let alone a person."

이 성적이면 취업은커녕 졸업도 힘들 것 같네요.

"Forget finding a job. With these grades I think even graduating will be difficult."

한자는커녕 한글도 잘 못 써요.

"Forget Hanja. I can't even write Hangul."

Advanced Notes

This form is often used together with the adverb 오히려 ("on the contrary," "contrary to what you thought/expect"), as well as the particle조차 ("even").

This form is interchangeable with the form ~(은/는)고사하고 [with nouns] or ~기는고사하고 [with action verbs] – however, ~(은/는)커녕 and ~기는커녕 are much more commonly used.

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!

