

Learn Korean Ep. 88: "Try to..." and "Intend to..."

This lesson will cover how to say "try to" or "intend to." For example, "Yesterday I tried to study." There are two forms that we'll need to cover.

Action Verb Stem + (으)려고 하다

To say that you "intend to" do something, take an action verb stem and attach 으려고 if it ends in a *consonant*, or 려고 if it ends in a *vowel*. Adding 하다 and conjugating it at the end is *optional*, but I'd recommend using it if this is your first time seeing this form.

This form literally means "intend to," but we can use it to mean "try to" as well. Here's an example.

다이어트를 하려고 했어요.

"I tried to diet."

"I intended to diet."

Since the verb 하다 at the end is optional, we could also write this sentence like this:

다이어트를 하려고요.

"I'm trying to diet."

"I'm intending to diet."

Note that if you don't use the verb 하다, you can't change the tense of the sentence (like in the first example). If you want to say that you *are* trying to diet, it's fine to not add 하다. But if you want to say that you *tried* to diet (past tense) then you'll need to add it.

Here are a few more example sentences.

자려고 하고 있어요.

"I am trying to sleep."

"I am intending to sleep."

내일 친구를 만나려고 해요.

"Tomorrow I intend to meet a friend."

"Tomorrow I'll try to meet a friend."

지금 학교로 가려고 해요.

"Now I'm intending to go to school."

"Now I'm trying to go school."

But saying that you're *intending* to go to school doesn't sound very natural. It also wouldn't sound natural even if we translated it to *trying* to go. This is because this form has one more usage – it can also translate as "going to." For example, "Now I'm going to go to school." Here are a few more examples.

숙제를 하려고 해요.

"I'm intending to do the homework."

"I'm trying to do the homework."

"I'm going to do the homework."

This form can translate as "going to," because in English saying that you're "going to" means that you're "intending to" do something.

However, note that this form is not the same as using the normal future tense. If you use the future tense, it does not mean that you are intending to do something. Instead, the future tense simply means that you *will* do something. Here's an example.

숙제를 할 거예요.

"I will do the homework."

If you're not sure whether to use this form, or the future tense, I'd recommend that you use the future tense. If what you want to say is that you *will* do something, you'll always be grammatically correct to use the future tense. As you become more used to using this form, you can start using it more often in your sentences.

Whether this form translates as "intending to" or "trying to" or "going to" will be clear from the context of the sentence.

Action Verb Stem + 아/어/etc. 보다

This form can be used to say "try to," but *not* "intend to." This is a simpler grammar form that can be used to show that you're *attempting* to do something.

To use it, take an action verb stem and conjugate it to the 요 form (without adding the 요). Then attach the verb 보다 ("to see") and conjugate it. This form literally means that you are *doing* a verb, and then *seeing* how it goes. This form can more naturally translate as "to try to do." Here is a quick example.

한국어를 공부해 봤어요.
"I tried to learn Korean."

The above sentence could more literally translate as, "I learned Korean and saw how it went." Here are a few more examples.

먹어 봐!
"Try (eating) it!"

그 셔츠를 입어 보고 싶어요.
"I want to try wearing that shirt."

More naturally, we can also translate the above sentence as "I want to try on that shirt."

생각해 볼게요.
"I'll try thinking about it."

More naturally, we can also translate the above sentence as "I'll think about it and see how it goes."

사장님을 만나 보고 싶지 않아요.
"I don't want to try meeting the boss."

Advanced Notes

More about (으)려고 하다

We learned that 하다 is optional in the (으)려고 하다 form. However, it can also be replaced with other verbs. The form (으)려고 by itself is what shows intention, and the 하다 is simply there to give the form a *tense*. Because of this, there are many other verbs that we can use instead of 하다. Here are two examples.

요즘 다이어트하려고 등산을 하고 있어요.
"I'm hiking (intending) to diet these days."
"I'm trying to diet these days by hiking."

여행을 가려고 돈을 모으고 있어요.
"I'm saving up money (intending) to go on a trip."

Note on (으)래요

Previously we learned about the (으)래(요) form, to say that we "wanna" do something, or for asking someone else if they "wanna" do something. This form is similar in usage to the (으)려고 하다 form. Both forms can be used to show intention. You can think of the (으)래(요) form as a combination of the (으)려고 하다 form and the meaning "want to."

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!

