

Learn Korean Ep. 98: Korean Numbers Part 2 (Pure Korean)

In the last episode we learned about Sino-Korean numbers and how to use that system when counting 원. However, the Sino-Korean number system can't be used to count *everything*. There are some things that the Sino-Korean system will be used for when counting (such as 원 as we learned) and other things that the Pure Korean number system will need to be used for.

For example, to count 500 Won we can just say 오백원. But to count 5 *people* or 5 *monkeys* we can't simply say "오사람" or "오원숭이." In fact, saying "오 원숭이" would just mean "Oh, monkey!" To count a larger variety of things, we'll need to also learn the Pure Korean number system.

The next lesson will cover in more detail how to count using these two systems, so for now let's first go over the Pure Korean number system.

1 - 10

- 1 → 하나
- 2 → 둘
- 3 → 셋
- 4 → 넷
- 5 → 다섯
- 6 → 여섯
- 7 → 일곱
- 8 → 여덟

Note that 6 is just pronounced as "여덟" due to sound change rules.

- 9 → 아홉
- 10 → 열

To make 11, it works just like in the Sino-Korean number system. We can look at the 10s digit and see that it's just 10, so we can first say 열. Then the next digit also has a 1, which is 하나. 열 하나 is 11. We can continue this to 19.

| | |
|----|--------|
| 11 | → 열 하나 |
| 12 | → 둘 |
| 13 | → 열 셋 |
| 14 | → 열 넷 |
| 15 | → 열 다섯 |
| 16 | → 열 여섯 |
| 17 | → 열 일곱 |
| 18 | → 열 여덟 |
| 19 | → 열 아홉 |

After 19 is where Pure Korean numbers differ from Sino-Korean numbers. In Sino-Korean numbers, we could continue until 99 using the same 10 numbers, but in Pure Korean numbers each multiple of 10 has its own number. So each time we enter a new multiple of 10 (20, 30, 40, etc.) we'll need to switch to that number instead. There is a similar concept in English (ten, twenty, thirty, etc.).

To say 21, first say 20 (스물), then 1 (하나). So 스물 하나 is 21. Here are the rest of the numbers we'll need to learn.

10 - 90

Wait. Before you memorize these, just take a moment to look them over.

| | |
|----|------|
| 10 | → 열 |
| 20 | → 스물 |
| 30 | → 서른 |
| 40 | → 마흔 |
| 50 | → 쉰 |
| 60 | → 예순 |
| 70 | → 일흔 |
| 80 | → 여든 |
| 90 | → 아흔 |

This might seem like a lot of extra work, but fortunately (here's the cool part) we don't really need 60 to 90 most of the time. And, you can probably get away with ignoring 50 too. *Usually* once a number gets above 40 or 50, Koreans will just switch back to using the Sino-Korean number system – no matter what they were counting. Basically, Pure Korean numbers are mainly only used from 1 up to 49 or 59.

To make things even simpler, once a number gets above 99, Koreans will *only* use Sino-Korean numbers. This means that once you've learned the first 10 numbers, and the digits for 20, 30, 40, and maybe 50, you've learned all of the Pure Korean number system (for a total of 13 or 14 words).

However I've included all of the digits anyway for reference, so that you can be aware of them. Older Koreans will typically still use digits in Pure Korean above 50, but it depends on the person. Still, above 99 everyone switches to Sino-Korean numbers.

Advanced Notes: *There technically are numbers in the Pure Korean system for a hundred (은), a thousand (즈믄), and higher. However, these larger numbers are all archaic and have not been used in a very long time. Most Koreans will not even be aware of these numbers.*

Practice

Practice reading these Pure Korean numbers on your own. The answers are at the bottom.

15

23

35

38

41

Answers: 열 다섯, 스물 셋, 서른 다섯, 서른 여덟, 마흔 하나

Conclusion

A good way to practice Korean numbers (both systems) is by walking around or climbing up steps. Each time you take a step, count one number higher out loud. The more you practice, the better you'll get at reciting and recognizing Korean numbers. As an added bonus, you also won't have to worry about skipping leg day.

If you have any questions, feel free to send me a message through my web site or on YouTube. Good luck in your studies!

