

LEVEL 3 LESSON 13

Korean and English are different in many ways, but one of the key differences is that in Korean, "adjectives" also take the form of "verbs". For example, if you say "beautiful" in English, that is an adjective and you can look it up in the dictionary, but in Korean, you can only find **예쁘다** [ye-ppeu-da] in the dictionary, which is in the verb form and means "to be beautiful" and you can't find 예쁜 [ye-ppeun], which means "beautiful", in the dictionary.

Therefore, all the adjectives in English have to be in the "to be + adjective" form in order to mean the same thing as the Korean descriptive verbs.

Examples

싸다 [ssa-da]

--> It does NOT mean "cheap". It means "to be cheap".

바쁘다 [ba-ppeu-da]

--> It does NOT mean "busy". It means "to be busy".

Since the "adjectives" are presented in the form of "descriptive verbs" in Korean, you can conjugate them just like other "action verbs" whereas the adjectives never change forms.

For example, if you say "It is fun." "It was fun." and "It will be fun.", the word "fun" does not change its form. But in Korean, since the descriptive verbs are conjugated, you change 재미있다 [jae-mi-it-da] to 재미있어요 [jae-mi-i-sseo-yo] (present tense), 재미있었어요 [jae-mi-i-sseo-sseo-yo] (past tense), and 재미있을 거예요 [jae-mi-i-sseul geo-ye-yo] (future tense).

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What if you want to use them as adjectives?

Good question. When you want to use descriptive verbs in the adjective form, you need to change them to the -(으)ㄴ form.

- Verb stems ending with a vowel + -ㄴ
- Verb stems ending with a consonant + -은

Examples

작다 [jak-da] = to be small

--> 작 + -은 = 작은 [ja-geun] = small

빠르다 [ppa-reu-da] = to be fast

--> 빠르 + -ㄴ = 빠른 [ppa-reun] = fast

조용하다 [jo-yong-ha-da] = to be quiet

--> 조용하 + -ㄴ = 조용한 [jo-yong-han] = quiet

비싸다 [bi-ssa-da] = to be expensive

--> 비싸 + -ㄴ = 비싼 [bi-ssan] = expensive

Exceptions

하얗다 --> 하얀 [ha-yan] = white [NOT 하얗은]

그렇다 --> 그런 [geu-reon] = such [NOT 그렇은]

달다 --> 단 [dan] = sweet [NOT 달은]

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Common Mistake

A lot of people make the mistake of trying to say "to be (이에요)" + "adjective" just like in English.

예쁜 이에요 (x)

비싼 이에요 (x)

This is incorrect. Since all the "adjectives" in Korea are "descriptive verbs", you need to conjugate them like verbs:

예쁘다 --> 예뻐요 (o)

비싸다 --> 비싸요 (o)

Sample sentences

1. 좋은 아이디어예요.

[jo-eun a-i-di-eo-ye-yo.]

= It's a good idea.

2. 이상한 사람이에요.

[i-sang-han sa-ra-mi-e-yo.]

= He's a strange person.

3. 더 작은 가방 있어요?

[deo ja-geun ga-bang i-sseo-yo?]

= Do you have a smaller bag?

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4. 시원한 커피 마시고 싶어요.

[si-won-han keo-pi ma-si-go si-peo-yo.]

= I want to drink some cold coffee.

5. 나쁜 사람이에요.

[na-ppeun sa-ram-i-e-yo]

= He is a bad person.