November Recap

Monthly update of my Korean language progress (weeks 21-24)

DEC 2, 2022

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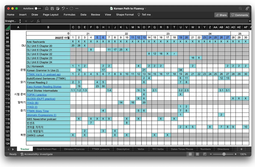
안녕! I can't believe I'm already halfway done my Korean course! I'm feeling good about my progress and have still avoided burning out, but I could feel myself getting close a few times. I wake up early to study and prepare for class, and after class, I have a few hours of homework and then Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) classes online, so "personal time" has been pretty much nonexistent. I'm looking forward to being done with ACSC (a requirement for people of my rank to complete) so I can get back to having time for Skype sessions with language partners and the ability to just relax some evenings. I sometimes feel jealous of the European language students in my building, but I still find Korean to be extremely rewarding and I wouldn't have it any other way.

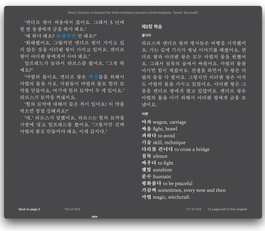
FYI, this update is more in the weeds for my friends who're interested in the language learning nuts and bolts and for those who'll follow in my footsteps in this same program, so if that's you, read on!

Completed in November:

I changed things up a little bit in November, but I've kept up my essential daily habits which has helped me retain all the vocabulary I've learned so far. The class workload/difficulty has increased, so I have to spend a lot more time each evening ensuring I have the 20+ new vocabulary words and new grammar concepts memorized. Because of this increased time on mandatory material, I haven't used as much supplementary material as I would have liked, but I'm still chipping away at them when I can.



The biggest and most helpful change this month has been adding natural Korean materials and short stories into the mix. I found an outstanding short stories book full of intermediate level Korean to see words and grammar in new situations other than the boring textbook scenarios. It's been quite rewarding to get attached to characters and learn by context in a book entirely in Korean! I also bought a few "young adult" style novels to work through once I'm finished with the short stories I have.



After each chapter, there is a concise summary and a list of potentially unfamiliar words

Speaking of vocab, my Anki deck continues to grow and grow. It's encouraging to look back on really old cards and remember how hard some of the words were at one point! As of today, I've "learned" 2,744 unique words and generally run through my daily reviews pretty quickly/easily.

I did make a significant change to my Anki deck this past month though. I spent a few hours organizing my cards with tags and moved all grammar cards to separate grammar decks now that they're adding up. I also started a deck for idiomatic expressions as I come across them and a deck for useful phrases that are niche to me and my interests. I'm also starting to study Chinese characters (*hanja* in Korean) which makes learning harder Korean vocabulary much easier. It's akin to learning basic Latin roots for learning harder English words, and it's already proven helpful with my limited hanja knowledge.

New consolidated Anki organization

Front of a grammar card - it automatically plays audio of an example dialogue, and then describe the highlighted grammar form.

The "back" of the grammar card shows a more detailed explanation of the grammar form and a reference to where I learned it.

In less nerdy news, one of the chapters this month had to do with traditional holiday traditions and games, so we played a few in class! A game called 윷놀이 (*yunnori*, pictured below, played during New Years celebrations) was my favorite. Also, the hit show *Squid Game* has a whole new meaning to me now after learning about the roots of those games in Korean history.

North Korea

I finished the North Korea program this month at George Washington University and I'm so glad I applied for and participated in this program. I got to meet ambassadors, people who lived and worked in North Korea, researchers, diplomats, and special envoys, learn from their experiences, and discuss niche North Korea issues with a very small group of interested members of the cohort. It did take up quite a bit of my evening time though, with each session lasting several hours at night, but it was well worth the time. I was happy to have my evenings back for all of a few days though before my next "facilitated" ACSC class started 😭

Thanks for reading, and feel free to leave a comment or question below :)

그럼 이만 안녕히 계세요!

–Sean