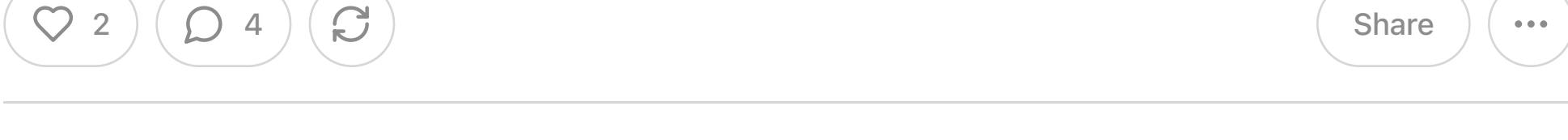


September Recap

Monthly update of Korean language progress (weeks 12-16)

OCT 2, 2022



안녕! September is over, so it's time for another monthly update. Autumn here in Washington DC has been incredible so far, and I'm trying to soak up as much of it as I can. I've been running in the historic and picturesque Georgetown neighborhoods to experience each stage of the changing foliage and pictures just can't do it justice! October has always been my favorite month of the year, and I've already started wearing my favorite fall jackets, bought cozy fall candles and yes, even had a few PSLs 🍂🍷🕯️

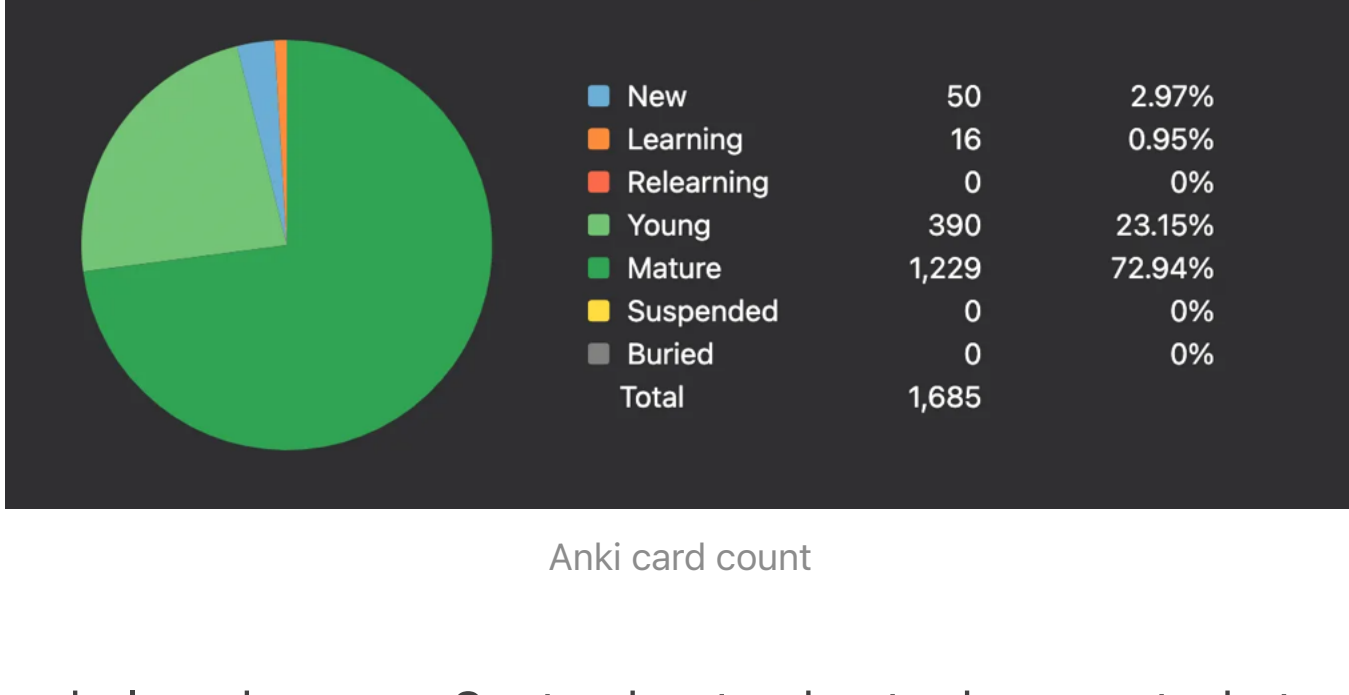
Completed in September:

September has brought my first set of real challenges learning Korean. I had it good with my original instructor, but I now have a substitute teacher for the nearly 2 months he's in Korea. My new instructor is fantastic, and I know I'm learning more Korean and getting much more speaking practice with her, but she's the polar opposite of my original teacher. She's organized, dedicated, and has high expectations...all of which are good things, but my brain is *completely* fried at the end of each day. I also have a lot more homework with her and we're pushing through the textbook faster, so I haven't been able to do as much of my own self-motivated study in the evenings like before. I also haven't had much time to watch any Korean dramas or movies in the evenings, and we don't watch any in class anymore.

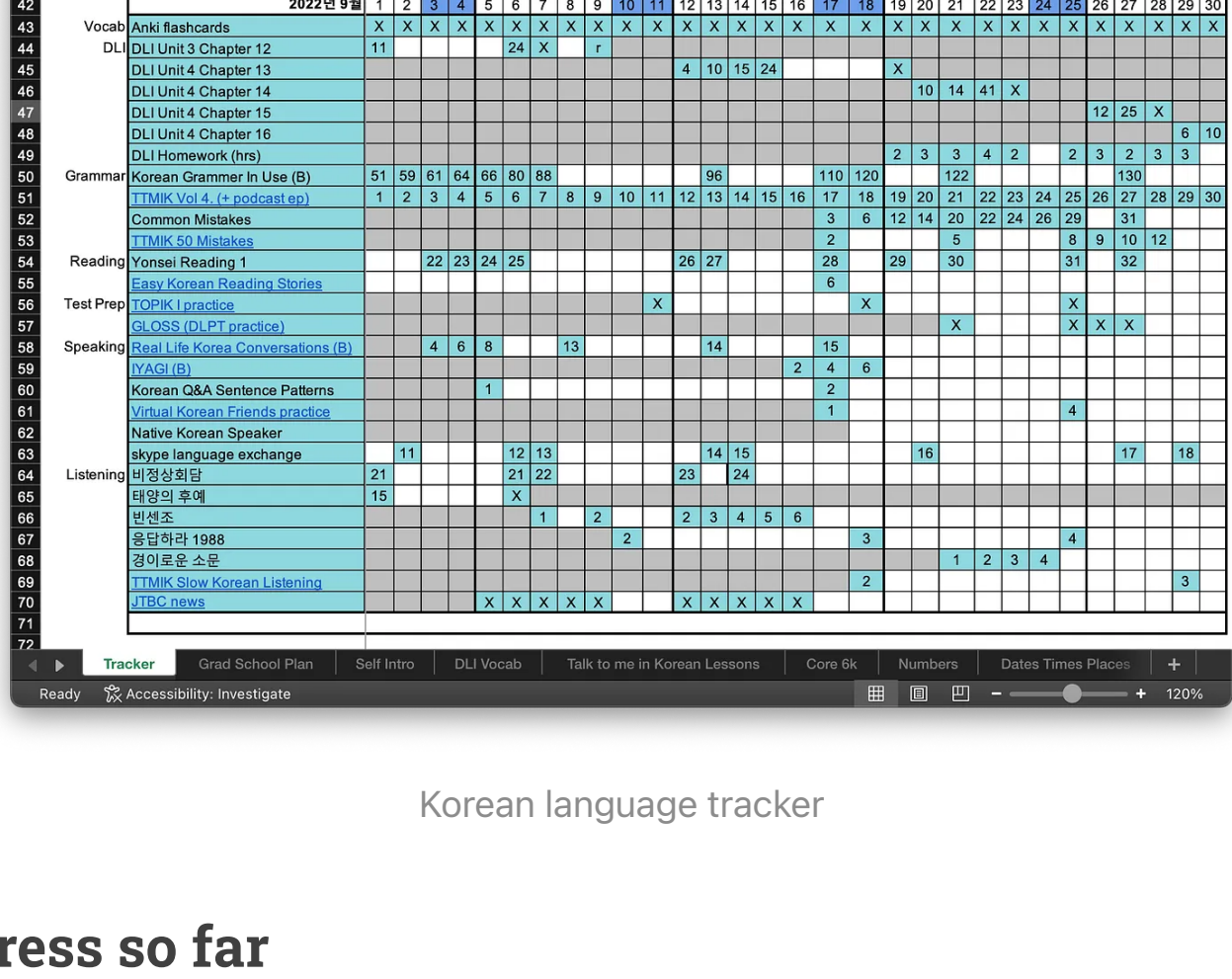
When the class starts, instead of just asking if I had any issues with the homework and moving on, we spend ~2 hours doing a deep dive on the homework. For example, at home, I'll have to listen to a passage and answer a few questions in English about what happened in the clip. I'm also able to pause, rewind, and listen as many times as I need to. But in class, we'll listen to it again and I have to summarize the passages in Korean on the spot in my own words without looking at my notes or answers from the previous night. That doesn't sound too bad, but it's a lot harder to keep track of all the details in my head this way, so I'm going to adjust how I do my homework to get better at this.

This is all goodness though, and if I had the choice, I think I'd continue with her instead of my easier, more relaxed teacher, even if that means I'm more stressed and feel real external pressure now.

As for vocabulary in Anki, I'm now up to 1,635 words 'learned.' My new teacher has been giving me her own custom Quizlet decks each night as part of my homework too, so I haven't put as much time each day into my Anki reviews as I'd like, but it's still helping to keep old words in working memory.



The screen cap below shows my September tracker to document what resources I'm using in and outside of class. Essentially the only consistent things are doing my Anki reviews each day, one lesson from Talk To Me In Korean's grammar textbooks (and accompanying podcast episode for that grammar point), my DLI work in class, and keeping a short Korean journal. Anything else I do in the evening just depends on how fried my brain is.



Korean progress so far

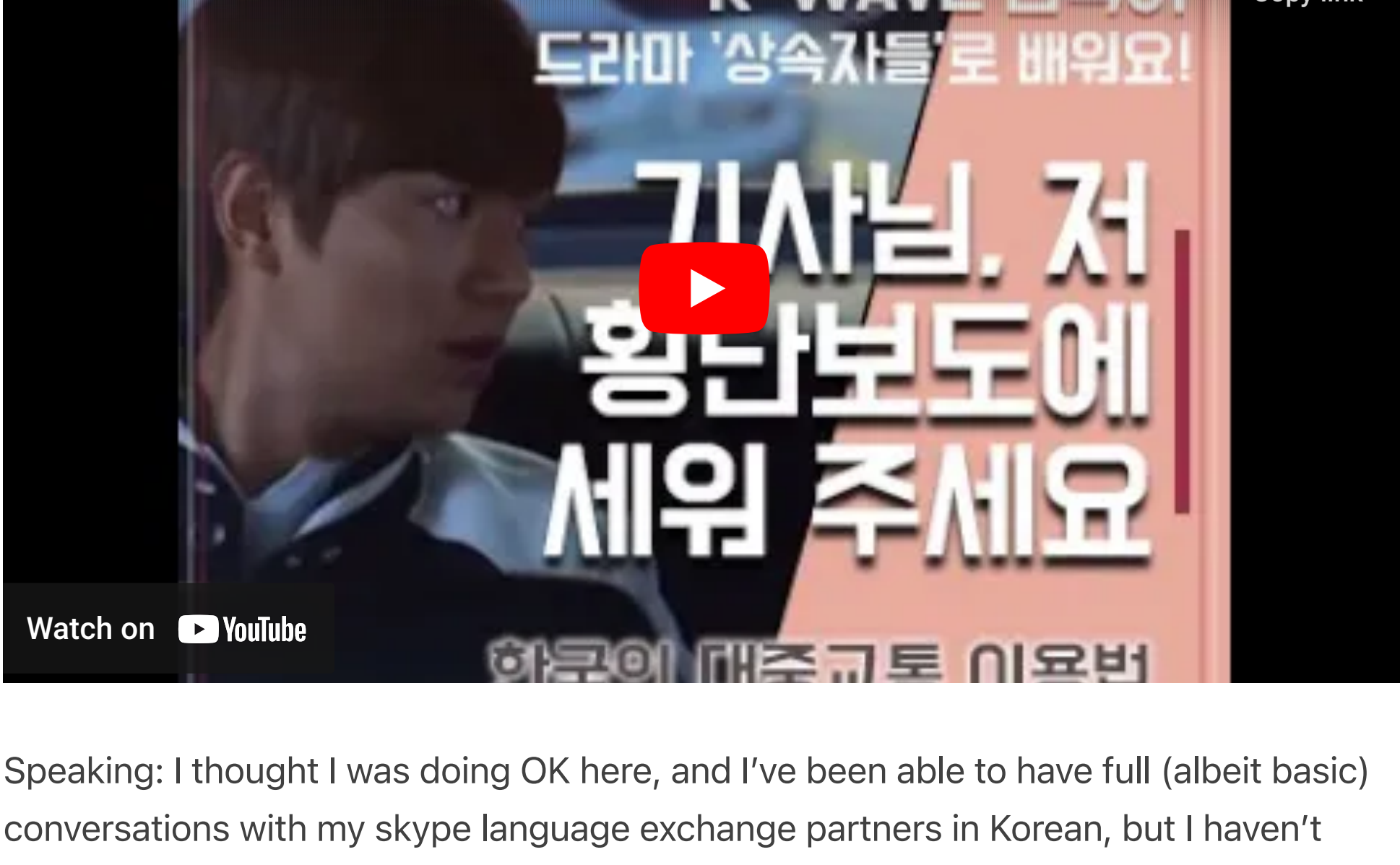
I had two big tests this month. First, I did an Online Diagnostic Assessment (ODA) through DLI that put me at a 1 in reading and a 1+ in listening. This test is supposed to approximate the scores you'd get on the official DLPT, but we'll see how representative it really is later on. I also took a Unit 1-3 official exam which was very stressful. This past Wednesday, my instructor informed me that I'd have to take this (new to me) exam on Friday to make it into my monthly report card, so I had no time to actually prepare or practice for this test. I did very well on the 50 minute reading exam, OK on the listening exam (no rewinding, just 50 minutes of short listening tracks with questions to answer), and terribly on the oral interview. A different Korean instructor did my interview and I totally dropped the ball. I had to role play a specific scenario and hit a bunch of key grammar points and vocabulary examples, but without knowing the test structure or being able to see the rubric, I had no clue and didn't hit the hidden checkboxes. I felt terrible for the rest of the day and I'm taking today off to reset and figure out what to change to be prepared for the next multi-unit interview.

Writing: Starting a Korean journal has been fantastic for my writing speed and spelling ability! No concerns here at this point.

Reading: Still my strongest area, and I was able to finish the reading exam with time to spare, so I think I'm reading quickly and accurately enough for where I should be right now.

Listening: Listening is still tricky at times, but I'm getting better at not getting stuck on words I don't know. The hard part is answering questions about very specific details since taking rapid notes in Korean is still hard for me. If I start writing down dates or numbers from the listening track, I fall behind and miss other important details.

I am at the point where I can start learning Korean using Korean though, which feels like a big step. For example, I can understand almost everything in the YouTube video below, which taught me a few things about the “-아/어 주세요” grammar form and some interesting things about public transportation in Korea. It's frustrating though that while I can understand full conversations in Korean in this video, I still sometimes had zero clue what my interviewer was asking in my interview test 🤔



Speaking: I thought I was doing OK here, and I've been able to have full (albeit basic) conversations with my skype language exchange partners in Korean, but I haven't done adequate preparation for test-style speaking. Going forward, I'm going to practice role-plays by myself for the different scenarios I'm learning about in class. For example, in my current unit, we had a chapter all about the North Korean border areas, notable buildings, and the history of the North and South Korea division since World War II. A future speaking exam could ask me to role play as a travel agent trying to sell a tour package to 판문점 (Panmunjom), so I should already be preparing the kinds of questions or statements a travel agent might say.

North Korea

Good news! I got accepted to a special [North Korea program](#) at George Washington University starting in October. I heard it was worthwhile from a previous Korea Olmsted Scholar who participated last year, and this year, it's in person at the GWU campus right down the street from me. They even provide food! In attendance will be previous ambassadors, six-party talk negotiators, and accomplished researchers from Korea and the US. Attendance was competitive, so it felt like a nice little win to get into this program and I'm excited to meet the cohort and to learn about and discuss each topic. I'll write a little about the experience in the next two monthly updates.

Shabu Shabu and Kimchi

I didn't do much Korean cooking this month besides a few days of kimbap for lunch and a new batch of kimchi at home. We did get to go on a “field trip” for a day though which was fun! We went to a Korean shabu-shabu restaurant in my local “Koreatown” to practice interacting with Korean restaurant staff in Korean and then went to a local Korean coffee shop. I wish I lived closer to this coffee shop because all you could hear was people speaking in Korean. I ordered my coffee and some sweetbread in Korean and got to overhear all the different Korean groups around us talk amongst themselves. It almost felt like I was in Korea for a day!



I also bought a few key ingredients for making kimchi at H-Mart and made a big batch to last me a while. I vary it up a little each time I make it, and it's interesting to see how the flavors change over time from the same batch. This time was a lot spicier than usual and I added a lot more radish and some carrot ribbons to see if they'd ferment in a good way.



4-Character Idiom (사자성어) of the month

동고동락 (*dong-go-dong-nak*), from 同苦同樂

동 appears twice and means “to be the same.”

“고” and “락” are opposites and mean “to be bitter” (same hanja as last month's idiom!), and “to enjoy,” respectively.

Altogether, it conveys the meaning of “sharing one's sorrows and joys together.” I think this is a nice idiom to quickly convey that you've been through a lot with someone. An example usage:

제 반려견 아폴로와 저는 10년째 둘이서 동고동락 중이에요.

~ My companion animal Apollo and I have lived together for ten years going through a lot together.

Thanks for reading! Feel free to leave a comment or question below :)

그럼 이만 안녕히 계세요.

-Sean