

Podcast Chingu

Ep 01. 리센느 아-호!



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Hey, everyone!

It's Garam from Korean Booster! I've been living abroad for seven years now, but I still don't have many people to chat with, so here I am again, looking for someone to talk to. Yay! I'm so happy you're here! Starting today, why don't you and I just hang out and chat like friends? Since this is the very first episode of the podcast, I thought I'd start by introducing myself, talking about the three things that make this podcast unique, and giving you a little preview of the kinds of topics we'll be chatting about in future episodes.

First of all, my name is Garam Kim. I was born and raised in Gwangju, South Korea, and I've been living in Galicia, Spain, for the past seven years. These days, I teach Korean through my own website, Korean Booster, and I also teach both Korean and English on italki. Now, let me introduce the three key features of this podcast.

The first one is casual Korean (banmal). As you probably already know, most Korean learning materials focus on polite speech. Even in my own classes—whether I'm teaching grammar or conversation—I almost always speak in polite Korean. Because of that, my students rarely get the chance to hear casual Korean used naturally.

That's exactly why I decided to make this podcast entirely in casual speech. Once you become close to Korean people, you'll quickly notice that we naturally switch to casual speech when we feel comfortable with someone. It's just part of how we build closer relationships. My goal is to help you not only understand casual Korean but also learn when and how to use it naturally.

The second feature of this podcast is friendliness. I know most of you are probably listening while you're busy with your daily life. Whether you're commuting, cooking, cleaning, working out, or just relaxing, I want this podcast to feel like you're simply chatting with a Korean friend. Hopefully, that'll make you want to come back and listen more often.

The last feature is natural conversation. Since I'll be speaking casually, there will definitely be moments when I hesitate, stumble over my words, speed up, slow down, or even stop and rephrase something I've just said. Those little mistakes happen all the time in real conversations, and you'll probably hear plenty of them here too.

That's just how it is because I'm recording these episodes without a script. Nobody speaks perfectly all the time in real life, right? Well... maybe someone does. If that's you, then congratulations—you must be a genius. I definitely can't do that. So I think speaking casually like this and simply chatting makes the whole podcast feel much more natural. I hope you'll see those little imperfections as part of what makes this podcast special.

Next, let me tell you about the kinds of topics I want to talk about on this podcast. To be honest, I don't really have many hobbies. My one and only hobby is lying in bed and scrolling through YouTube Shorts. Even though I don't live in Korea anymore, I still keep up with what's happening there really well. I'm especially interested in K-pop, Korean society and culture, and even politics and the economy. So I'll probably spend a lot of time talking about Korea, especially for those of you who don't live there—or even if you do, but the language barrier makes it difficult to keep up with what's going on.

On top of that, I'd also like to share some of my own personal experiences that I think you can relate to. Honestly, my life isn't all that exciting these days. But back in the day, I had a lot of fun and went through some pretty unforgettable experiences, so I think I'll have plenty of entertaining stories to tell.

So, today's topic is a K-pop girl group that's absolutely blowing up right now: RESCENE. Have you ever heard people saying, "Geoje, yay!" or "RESCENE, yay!" while watching YouTube lately? Just a few months ago, almost nobody knew who they were. Honestly, they were so unknown that I didn't even realize they had already debuted. But then the YouTube content they appeared in started getting more and more attention. Word spread quickly, and suddenly everyone was talking about them. The YouTube channel that's been featuring them is called "Hello, I'm Wonhee. Nice to Meet You." Pretty long name, right? Anyway, every single video they upload on that channel seems to go viral.

As for the group itself, RESCENE has five members: four Korean members and one Japanese member. The Korean members are Woni, Zena, Liv, and May, and Woni is the leader. The Japanese member is Minami. By the way, have you ever watched the audition show *My Teenage Girl*? Minami was actually a contestant on that show. If you see her face, you might remember her.

So, you might be wondering, "Why is this girl group suddenly blowing up? Why have they become so popular?"

Well, the first reason is that their story is exactly the kind of underdog story Koreans love. If you look at most of today's popular K-pop groups, both girl groups and boy groups, they usually come from one of the big entertainment companies that everyone knows. Those companies have huge marketing budgets and know exactly how to get people talking about their artists. It's obviously much easier for them to promote a new group and make people recognize their name.

RESCENE, on the other hand, debuted under a brand-new agency called THE MUZE. What's even more surprising is that the company reportedly has only five directors. Those same people run the company, plan everything, and even write and compose the group's songs themselves. Naturally, they didn't have many opportunities to promote the group, and even when they did, it was easy for people to forget about them. In the beginning, RESCENE couldn't even get invited to perform on Korean music shows. They had debuted, but they still couldn't get on TV. It's honestly kind of heartbreaking.

Because of that, the members had to work incredibly hard themselves. There were times when they literally begged event organizers just to let them perform for one minute on stage. They even performed at elementary school sports festivals whenever they had the chance. On top of that, the CEO of their agency is a former K-pop idol himself, so he understands exactly how difficult life can be for rookie idols. He personally contacted countless YouTubers and promoted the group himself, doing everything he could to help people discover them.

People didn't find out about all of this until much later, and when they did, they were genuinely moved. Of course, idols from the big agencies also work incredibly hard before they debut. I'm not saying they have it easy. But it's much rarer to see a group that starts from complete obscurity and slowly builds its success through pure determination and hard work. That kind of story really resonates with Korean audiences.

But that's not the only reason they're popular. Each member also has a very distinct personality. For example, Woni and Zena are both from the Gyeongsang region. Woni is from Geoje, so she speaks with a Geoje dialect, while Zena is from Gyeongju and speaks with a Gyeongju dialect. Even though they're both Gyeongsang dialects, they actually sound quite different. Normally, K-pop idols try to hide their regional accents because of their image. But Woni and Zena speak their dialects proudly and naturally, almost like friendly middle-aged locals chatting over a drink. Because of that, Woni has practically become Geoje's celebrity representative, while Zena has earned the nickname "the princess of Gyeongju."

And the biggest reason behind RESCENE's rise is definitely Minami. She's the group's Japanese member. Have you ever heard of the gyaru style that was popular in Japan? It's a fashion trend known for its bold makeup, dramatic eyelashes, and flashy outfits. Minami has fully embraced that character and ended up creating several viral catchphrases.

For example, there was an episode where the members visited Woni's hometown, Geoje. Both Woni and Minami were dressed in full gyaru style, and Woni said something like, "People are going to think we're crazy if we walk around dressed like this." Without missing a beat, Minami replied, "Really? Then... Geoje, ya-ho!" completely out of nowhere in her gyaru persona. It was so random that it instantly became a huge meme. Before long, practically everyone in Korea—even celebrities—was going around saying, "Ya-ho!"

Then there are the other two members, Liv and May. Watching Woni, Zena, and Minami go viral naturally made them a little impatient because they hadn't had their own moment in the spotlight yet. So the two of them started making these really awkward, ridiculous jokes, and somehow those ended up becoming popular too. Fans started saying that Liv and May remind them of Pat & Mat, the two clumsy cartoon characters, because they're always adorably awkward together. And now "Pat & Mat" has basically become their nickname. I mean... what kind of nickname is that for a K-pop girl group?

And finally, there's the music itself. Pretty much every song they've released has been gaining popularity again. Honestly, the quality of their music is way better than I expected. Their song Love Attack even climbed back up the charts and won first place on a Korean music show. I love that song too, but my personal favorites are Pinball, Deja Vu, and Run Away. They're the kind of songs that get more addictive the more you listen to them. I really hope even more people discover them. You should definitely check them out. I can't recommend them enough.

As for what they're up to now, after Love Attack went viral again and earned them their first music show win, they made a comeback by remaking Pretty Girl, the classic hit originally released by the legendary K-pop girl group KARA.

The response to this comeback has been really positive too. As more and more people started talking about them, they were finally invited to perform on a huge stage at COEX in front of a massive crowd. When you think about it... life is really unpredictable. They went from being a completely unknown girl group that nobody had ever heard of to becoming a group the whole country is cheering for. Who could have seen that coming? Honestly, who would have imagined it?

So I'd like to end today's episode by sharing something Woni said when RESCENE won first place on a music show for the very first time.

She said, "I hope this trophy can become a small source of hope for everyone chasing their dreams—a reminder that your hard work is never wasted."

That's exactly what I want to say to all of you who are learning Korean.

Right now, maybe you can't memorize vocabulary. Maybe you still can't understand what people are saying, and maybe speaking Korean feels impossible. But if you keep going and keep putting in the effort, one day you'll look back and realize how far you've come. You may

not win a trophy, but you'll be speaking Korean as naturally and fluently as you've always dreamed of. Just like RESCENE.

I really hope you'll remember that.

Anyway, thank you so, so much for listening to the very first episode of the Korean Booster Chingu Podcast. And if you get a chance, go listen to RESCENE's songs and let me know in the comments which one is your favorite.

I'll see you again in the next episode.

Take care until then.

Bye!