

## Hypothetical or Real?

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The following revision is taken from a text by a Korean-speaking student of Theology:

Original	Revisions
In the event Korea abandoned her traditions and ethics in a blind imitation of the system of others, not only would Korea have become spiritually and culturally subservient, she would even have risked beng deprived of her own soil on which to nurture democratic institutions	If Korea had abandoned her traditions and ethics in a blind imitation of the system of others, not only would she have become spiritually and culturally subservient, she would even have risked being deprived of her own soil on which to nurture democratic institutions.
	In the event Korea abandoned her traditions and ethics in a blind imitation of the system of others, and so became spiritually and culturally subservient, risking even being deprived of her own soil on which to nurture democratic institutions.

For students with languages such as Chinese and Korean, with only a weak, or no, grammatical system for expressing hypotheticality, English, with its clearly marked options for expressing what is hypothetical presents special difficulties. Typically, those difficulties result in one of the following:

1. The student develops strategies for avoiding hypothetical statements.
2. The student overemploys hypothetical statements, using them in places where they are not appropriate.
3. The student mixes hypothetical and real statements indiscriminately.

This extract shows an extreme case of the last difficulty, the sentence starting as a statement about the Real world, and then suddenly changing into one about a Hypothetical world. With the student we worked out what the sentence might be if it were entirely about a Hypothetical world (1st revision) or entirely about the Real world (2nd revision). The student immediately saw that what was intended was the second version, and not the first.