The Definition of the Future Subjunctive

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1. When we define the use of IF-SHOULD using the so-called future subjunctive, a commonly accepted theory says that it implies an assumption, by the speaker, in which the happening described may not take place. The definition mentioned above is, however, not complete enough to explain it because we have some more questions, for instance: (1) In spite of referring to the future, why are such expressions in the past tense as SHOULD, WERE TO, or WAS TO used? (2) The future subjunctive implies unreality, impossibility or doubt in the future, which means imagination, therefore, we must decide who imagines and what situation he imagines, (3) and what does he wish? (4) Is it really possible to find out the difference between IF-SHOULD and IF-WERE TO?

2. 1.  Past Tense symbolizes unreality

We usually use SHOULD or WERE TO(WAS TO) to describe unreality in the future, but the question is why the past tense is used in spite of referring to the future. Nishizava (pp.174-182) already claims that every description except for present implies unreality as seen in the following. The function in the past, by the speaker, expresses no longer reality, it expresses unreality, because it simply expresses a represented image though it's called the fact in the past, and so the past tense always refers to unreality. He continues, from this point of view, as long as a happening is imaged in the mind of the speaker, it shows a symbol of unreality, it's nothing to do with a fact in the distant past, supposition about a fact in the past, in the present or imagination in the distant future. He claims that every representation of unreality including a fact in the past, a supposition against a fact in the present, or a supposition or expectation in the future is originally expressed using past tense verbs. He proposes this hypotheses, and also explains the theme under consideration here from the view point of the preterit present verb: such auxirialies as SHOULD, CAN, MAY, DARE which serve to express the future come from the old predicative method, and OUGHT and MUST have developed from the subjunctive past, that is, he emphasizes that the future tense is based on past verbs. In short, according to Nishizava, since the past tense expresses unreality, we can use it in the subjunctive.
2. 2. However, I've a few questions; for instance, in sentences containing such thinking verbs as think, suppose and doubt etc., and certain exclamations expressing a wish or hope, and optative sentences, we use the bare infinitive (present subjunctive). These sentences describe unreality in spite of being in the present tense, but it's untheoretical to say this is why SHOULD is omitted because SHOULD does mark a symbol of unreality.

I think my wife be honest. (Sh.) It's necessary he pass the test. God bless you!
2. 3 Nakajima and Kojima (p.145) say that in subordinate clauses containing such verbs as wish, pray, advise and order, we can make use of the infinitive instead of the subjunctive, which, partly, caused the decay of the subjunctive. This mention suggests that a past verb does not necessarily represent subjunctive unreality.

I wished them to always be at that place.

cf. I wished that they always at that place were.
2. 4 Palmer (5.5.4) claims that there is a special use of SHOULD which occurs in if clause:

If I should see him, I'll tell you.
Should I see him, I'll tell you.

These two are real conditional, as the present tense form of the main clause shows -. SHOULD here is not to be explained in terms of an unusual conditional. So, though we should note that past tense form doesn't always symbolize unrealistic conditionals wholly, apart from these constructions, unreality can be expressed based on the past tense. Thus, the assignment here is to illustrate the theory mentioned above by means of some examples from famous novels.

3. 1 First of all, it is necessary to review the doctorines about IF-SHOULD. Nakajima (pp. 234-237) introduces those of Curme, Poutsma, Onions, Wyld and Crusina.

According to them we can find those mainly suggesting improbability in the future. My own research quotes are follows as:

1) Leech (p.115), SHOULD is sometimes used as if it were a marker of unusual condition, rather than of tentative real conditions.
2) Swan (552.1) ... it makes an event sound less probable.
3) Thomson & Martinet (218-E), IF-SHOULD can be used to indicate that the action, though possible, is not very likely.
4) New English J.D., SHOULD shows the realization is very difficult.
5) A Dictionary of English Word Grammar on Verbs, The event depends on the fact which can't be expected or chance factors.
6) Hornby (5.110. (1)), If supposition refers to future time... the conditional clause may contain SHOULD or WERE TO.
7) Quirk et al. (3.46), ... tentative condition in conditional clause.
8) Jespersen (10.3.2), ... indicating a vague possibility in the future.
9) Palmer (5.5.3), ... there is an indication of unlikeliness.

Here, also, most of them are quite definite that SHOULD is used in the case of unreality or improbability. But because the subjunctive belongs to the imaginative field, we should study it subjunctively, that is, in psychological states, and since each definition quoted above gives us only very short examples, makes it difficult for us to understand its psychological state.

3. 2. To solve the problem mentioned above, we should see the sentence or example in the whole context; only by seeing example sentences in their context will enable us to solve the problem. Such as they are, the following examples are to be considered from this point of view.

4. 1. The following 6 examples are quoted from the Merchant of Venice by Shakespeare.

1. If I should marry him, I should marry twelve husbands.

Portia (I), a rich heiress, is talking to Nerissa, her waiting maid, about some candidates to be her bridegroom. Here we must take account of the situation that when a candidate happens to choose the right casket she must marry him obeying her father's will. In those days a father's will had compelling force. Portia talks about Le Bon, a French aristocracy, whom she hates as: "If he would despise me, I would forgive him, for if he love me to madness, I shall never requite him." We can see she wishes never to marry him.

USE. In this case IF-SHOULD is used as: in common-sense terms, even supposing there is a very high possibility of realization, the subject wishes the matter never to be realized.

2. If he should offer to choose, and choose the right casket, you should refuse to perform your father's will, if you should refuse to accept him.

These are Nerissa's words after hearing Portia's comment about Saxson, a German Duke: "... most vilely ... little better than a beast ...". It's very difficult in this case, also to refuse the marriage, which the speaker (Nerissa) speaks for the subject (you) who eagerly desires not to marry.

USE. The subject wishes strongly to realize a matter which is very difficult to do, and the speaker speaks for the subject supposing to know his or her desire.

3. If he should break his day, what should I gain by the exaction of the forfeiture?

These are Shylock's words after hearing Antonio: "... within these two months, that's a month before this bond expire, I do expect return of thrice three times the value of this bond." It's true that Antonio is a rich merchant but it's not certain that he can clear off his his debts, and he actually can't pay them back
and we come to the climax of this story. But Shylock, naturally, does hope Antonio 
will not break his day.

USE. Originally, it's very difficult to realize a matter but the speaker wishes 
it never to be realized.
4. If they should speak, would almost damn those ears, which, hearing them would 
call their brothers fools.

This speech is preceded by "There are a sort of men whose visages and do a 
willful stillness entertain, with purpose to be dress'd in an opinion of wisdom..." 
That therefore only are reputed wise for saying nothing ... ." But the speaker 
wishes to have them speak something in order to prove them foolish.
USE. The speaker wishes the subject to do something that is very difficult to do 
in common sense terms for the purpose of his convenience.
5. The nightingale, if she should sing by day, when every goose is cackling, would 
be thought so better a musician than the vren.

Hearing the melody from out of nowhere in a quiet night Portia is full of ad-
miritation. "Nothing is good, I see, without respect: Methinks it sounds much sweeter 
than by day." and she gives the example 5 above. A nightingale seldom sings in 
the daytime or a cock at night, nevertheless, Portia wishes her to sing in the day-
time to show how nice the melody at night sounds.
USE. The same as 4.

6. Why if two Gods should play some heavenly match and on the wager lay two 
earthly women ...

These are Jesica's words, Shylock's daughter, who quotes the example above. Ad-
miring how wonderful Portia is, she continues, "And Portia one, there must be some-
thing else payn'd with the other for the poor rude world hath not her fellow."
USE. The same as 4.

7. If it should thunder as it did before, I know not where to hide my head ... "
- Shakespeare: The Tempest

These are Trinculo's words, who plays a clown. Judging from "... and another 
storm brev'ing; I hear it sing i' the wind: yond same black cloud ... looks like a 
foul bombard that would shad hs liquor ...", it's certain that storm will strike 
and he does wish the storm not to strike him.
USE. The actualization is objectively, certain but the speaker desires the sub-
ject never to realize it for the reasons of his own convenience.
8. If in Naples, I should report this now, would they believe me? If I should say, 
I saw such islanders ... - ibid.

One of those who reached with difficulty a remote and lonely island happened 
to see strange shapes and expresses it as unbelievable but true. Naples is their 
own country, and "now" here is very effective. To report is absolutely impossible
but he wishes to believe the happening by using such expression as above.
USE. The speaker eagerly desires the matter to be realized, which is normally impossible, for reasons of his own convenience.

9. If he should become hopelessly confused, he might not find it (his house) at all but wander out on the open prair to perish. - Wilder: The First Four Year

Manly went to the farm animal pen to feed, on the way back home, though the storm struck him, he came back home safely by dint of his cool thought and activity. Since he was very calm, the description "If he should become hopelessly confused ..." makes us imagine something unreal.
USE. IF-SHOULD here is used to describe the way that the speaker, by making the readers imagine something unreal even by falsifying the facts, desires to express his intention.

10. This (a single candle) she afterward placed in the open window as a sign and welcome to the hunter if he should approach from that side.

- Bierce: The Eyes of the Panther

It's clear that the husband who went hunting never to return because of the description in the preceding sentence "... he left the house and closed ..." The wife without knowing what has happened to her husband is waiting for him with the fear of being attacked at any moment by wild beasts.
USE. The speaker eagerly desires the subject to realize a matter or a situation that is ordinarily impossible.

11. I suspected that Sonia meant to follow him to the north if he should be established there ... - Spark: The Curtain Blown by the Breeze

Sonia, a nurse, loves Richard and she plans to obtain for him the job of Chief Medical Officer. It seems impossible for Sonia, a mere nurse, to realize such an important decision, so, if IF-SHOULD expresses unreality, it's certain that "I" can't believe in the full force of Sonia's abilities. But the example 11 follows episode in which Sonia tempted an important member of the Medical Board to make a disagreeable chief transfer to another district, therefore, I, the speaker, knows her real power very well. So the possibility of Richard's promotion is very certain and actually he was promoted to the job of Chief Medicen. But to tell the truth, "I", the speaker, is Richard's fiancee, thus, we should perceive the speaker never wants his promotion.
USE. Even though the possibility of realization is, normally, very high, the speaker desires the matter or the state never to be realized.

12. There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree... What if the devil himself be at my very elbow! - Hawthorne: Young Goodman Brown

A faithful young Brown is repeating these words to himself on his way to a witch meeting while suffering from a guilty conscience. we can't guess why he wants to attend the meeting. There, normally, are no devils in the actual world

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but he firmly believes in devils given his view of life. But it's clear that he desires no devils around him judging from the context.

USE. There, objectively, are some matters which are absolutely impossible to realize but from the speaker's religious, or superstitious view, they may appear realizable with a high probability. In this case IF-SHOULD may be used.

13. ... and what if nature, ... should break the mould of their succession? ... if, for instance, the house should fall and imprison him beside the body of his victim. - Stevenson: Markheim

Markheim dropped in at a shop to get a Christmas present but the insulting attitude of the clerk made him get angry and he killed the clerk involuntarily, and now he is frightened of being found and arrested in the shop, thinking even natural laws(nature seldom breaks the mould of the succession) and commonsense laws(a house seldom falls down) have exceptions, he desires that nature and the laws of commonsense will not have exceptions and expose his crime.

USE. Normally, though something is in a situation that is very difficult to realize, the speaker, nevertheless, desires it never be realized in his own case.

4. 2. The examples quoted above can be classified as follows:

(1) Who supposes the possibility?   i) The subject, the first person, does. (1.8)
   ii) When the subject is the second or third person, the speaker does(others).

(2) Possibility of realization is, i) very high judging from the religion or superstitious beliefs of the speaker or the subject, not to mention matters of social common-sense (1.7.11.12), ii) very difficult (2.3.4.5.15), iii) impossible (6.8.9.10).

3) Who wishes the matter to be realizable or unrealizable?   i) The subject in the sentence (1.2.8). When the speaker knows what the subject is thinking, the second or third person subject can also wish (2).   ii) The speaker (3 - 13). Most of the speakers wish the subject to realize or not to realize a certain matter.

4) As far as the realization is concerned, the subject or the speaker eagerly wishes the matter i) to be realized (2.4.5.6.8.9.10), ii) never to be realized (1.3.7.11.12.13). Such as it is, when each example viewed in the whole context, has a characteristic common to all, that is, strong desire, and though IF-SHOULD is normally used to express unreality, impossibility or doubt about a matter or a situation, we find some examples in IF-SHOULD construction in which the possibility of realization is very high (1.7.11.12).

4. 3. The definition of IF-SHOULD, according to the analyses above, may be given, thus; from the view of social commonsense, the speaker or the subject, who supposes about the matter or something that is very difficult or impossible to realize, can use IF-SHOULD in order to describe his strong positive or negative wish.
about it. On the one hand, in case where there is a high possibility of realization, it stresses a negative wish. Such as it is, since a very strong desire is included in the IF-SHOULD construction, we should accept the common sentence "If he should die, what would become of his family?" contains a strong desire for a longer life.

5. 1. Next, IF-SHOULD should be compared with similar IF-WERE TO. According to Nakajima(pp. 234-237), Mesfield, Onions, Wyld, Jespersen, Sweet and Crusinga don't admit or refer to difference between them. Curme and Poutsma admit, especially, Poutsma (p.192) claims that SHOULD mostly implies that the contingency is one whose fulfilment is thought improbable, and mostly undesirable ..., WERE TO mostly implies that the supposition is regarded as the merest fancy, sometimes with the secondary notion that its fulfilment would be viewed with some considerable surprise and would cause some annoyance or dismay. Nakajima brings forward a counter argument to Poutsma's above statement quoting some examples. In the sentence "If I were to buy the bottle, and get no schooner after all, I should have put..." -Stevenson: The Window Imp, the supposition is fulfilled to perfection. And the sentence "...if faires, or still better, if angelechildren were to come from paradise, and play with ..." -Hovthorne: The Snow Image, is used even in the case of what is desirable.

5. 2. My own research quotes are as follows:
(1) Thomson & Martinet (219), WERE TO ... is better ... when the supposition is contrary to fact. (2) Swann(307-3), This makes a future possibility sound less probable, it can also be used to make a suggestion more tentative. (3) Palmer (p.45), A form sometimes used in the if clause is WERE TO with greater unreality. (4) Hornby (5.110. i). If supposition refers to future time ... The conditional clause may contain either SHOULD or WERE TO. (5) Jespersen (10.3. 21). ... indicating a vague possibility in the future. (6) A Dictionary of English Word Grammar. It implies imaginative supposition or estimate. (7) New English J.D. It expresses strong desire.

Though each theory has its own point to make, they all draw attention to the unrealities or difficulties about something. Jespersen (10.3. (3)), especially, says "If he were to call has come to be a mere variant of if he should call." Hornby (5.110. i) also claims, "The conditional clause may contain either SHOULD or WERE To." Therefore, in trying to make the difference in the constructions quoted clear both Curme and Poutsma may be quoted, or Ueki (p.34), who places fulfilment in the following order. (1) If I see a girl go in thence, I shall be surprised: (2) If I say ... (3) If I should see ... (4) If I were to see ... . Some instances or sentences, however, can't always be ruled by such standards. We may face the same problems as SHOULD. Considering the above, in the same ways of thinking about IF
- SHOULD (considering the context whole), I’ll try to define IF-WERE TO.

6. 1.

14. It was past six, and nearly dark. Twice before, he had come back on the third
days, about this time. If he were to come back now. - Galsworthy: Once More

A lazy husband is missing but the wife is accustomed to his being absent, but
this time she happens to see him sitting with a woman in a bus. She is consumed
by jealousy because of the woman, though it seems she does not hate her husband.

Next day, after wandering from place to place she comes back home exhausted and
murmurs. Now he’s not at home, she, the speaker, desires his coming back home, which
cannot be realized.

USE. A situation or a matter which is impossible or difficult to realize and
which is described by means of IF-WERE TO expresses the speaker’s strong desire.
That night the husband comes back completely ruined, she kindly cares for him, but
it doesn’t matter whether the matter under consideration here is realized or not
after the utterance.

15. If I were to lay my stick across your back, you’d know it, my girl.

- Galsworthy: A Feud

These are Steers’ words. Without a previous appointment, called on Ned Bovden
who is engaged to Mally Winch, Steer’s niece, but he changes his mind and falls in
love with Pansy who is working for the Bowden family as a household servant.

Seeing Pansy at the gate, Steer mutters to himself hatefully. Objectively, it’s
impossible even for Steer who shot the Bowden’s dog which bit himself to death,
to lay his stick across her back, but he desires to beat her.

USE. The subject supposes a matter which is very difficult to realize, and yet
he eagerly desires to do it himself.

16. “They’d be rolling in agonies if they were to eat them. No.” she patted his
hand - “You must bring them something next.” - Mansfield: Marriage A La Mode

During a business trip, William bought some melons and pineapples for his
children. Isabel, his selfish wife, is at the station to meet him. On the way home
in the taxi, she insists on eating the fruit herself in stead of giving it to the
children, and after these words of hers, no description of the children eating the
fruit can be found anywhere in the story.

USE. It is ordinarily impossible to bring something about, and yet, the speaker
eagerly desires it never to be done for her benefit.

17. If you were to take him (a dog) out and shot him right in the back of the
head...right there, why he’d never know what hit him. - Steinbeck: Of Mice and Men

This dialogue is from the conversation between laborers in a bankhouse.
Carlson, throwing his weight around, is complaining about old Candy, who keeps an
old dog, which is enfeebled and giving off a bad smell, and he wants to take it
and kill it. Judging from the strong disobedience of Candy before these words, Carlson expects there will be little possibility of the old man obeying him.

USE. This IF-WERE TO is used to show that the speaker eagerly desires the subject to do something that it is very difficult to do for his benefit.

18. If they were to go with you it would make a great deal of difference. I suppose, to the profit? - Hardy: To Please His Wife

Joanna, who married a former sailor Shedrack without loving passionately, now has hopes about their two boy's future, but since her grocery store doesn't prosper, she is suffering from financial difficulty. He can't stand it any longer and goes to sea and brings some money back, but as it's not enough to please her, he pursades her to allow him to take the boys to the sea, suggesting he can bring back much more money. The wife strongly opposed the plan. "If they were to go ..." therefore, shows impossibility or difficulty. Though she allows them to go later, it doesn't matter whether the matter under consideration here is realized or not after the statement is once made.

USE. The speaker eagerly wishes the matter, which is ordinarily very difficult to bring about, never to be done so in view of his or her benefit.

19. But were I to go with thee, how should I meet the eye of that old good man, our minister at Salam Village? - Hovthorne: Young Goodman Brown

Goodman Brown is, by accident, on the way to a witch meeting in the forest, but he refuses to go on with his traveling companion, a devil, feeling the qualms of conscience. Ultimately, though "go with thee" is realized, in the point of utterance he desires never to go. It doesn't matter whether the matter is realized later. This case is alike eg. 14, 15.

USE. The subject supposes something that is very difficult to realize, and although, he desires strongly it will never be realized, it has nothing to do with commonsense.

20. Ten to one, if I were so foolhardy to cut the Hispaniola from her anchor, I and coracle would be knocked clean out of the water. - Stevenson: Treasure Island

"I" am going to cut the hawser, but he recalls that a taut hawser, suddenly cut, is a thing as dangerous as a kicking horse, so it's almost impossible for him to cut the hawser.

USE. The action, ordinarily, is very difficult or impossible, nevertheless, the speaker wishes strongly it never to be realized to his benefit.

21. I saw I must lose no time if I were to find the boat that evening. - ibid.

Gin, "I", a hero in the story, slips out under cover of the night to cut the hawser of the Hispaniola which is now occupied by the rebel sailors adrift, and let her go ashore where she fancied. And she is lying at anchor in the offing. So, he is now looking for his coracle hidden in the hollow, but it's very diffi-
cult to get up with it in the dark on a strange island. He says these words to himself, being impatient.

USE. The subject supposes something that is, objectively, very difficult to do, nevertheless, he is anxious it never be done.

6. 2. The 8 examples quoted above can be classified as follows.


(2) What point of view does the speaker or the subject suppose? i) The speaker makes the supposition with a commonsensical view (14.16.17.18). ii) Sometimes the subject makes the supposition with a religious or superstitious view (19), as well as a commonsensical view (15.20.21).

(3) The possibility of the supposed realization is, i) very high (0), ii) very difficult (15.17.18.21), iii) impossible (14.16).

(4) What they wish the subject in the IF-WERE TO construction is, i) to realize the matter (14.15.17), ii) never to realize it (16.18.19.20.21).

6. 3. The definition of IF-WERE TO, according to the analyses above, may be given, as: IF-WERE TO may be used to express how eagerly the speaker or the subject in the story desires the matter to be fulfilled or never to be fulfilled, and the matter under consideration here means what is supposed to be very difficult or impossible of fulfilment or of not being fulfilled in the view of social common sense or his or her superstition or religion etc., but the difference between IF-SHould and IF-WERE TO is not so evident from both the definitions mentioned above. The only difference can be found in "supposed high possibility of realization in only IF-SHould constructions (1.7.11.12). But this standard also leaves something to be desired. A study of how the same writer uses IF-SHould and IF-WERE TO appropriately may suggest the difference between the constructions, but it's very difficult to find which is preferred in his or her works, that is, IF-SHould can be found but IF-WERE TO cannot, and vice versa. This may suggest there is not so clear difference between the two constructions. But we can study Hawthorne (12.19) and Stevenson (13.20.21). Stevenson: Supposing the matter which it is very difficult to realize (13.20), for all that, the subject or the speaker desires it never to be realized. In this point, 13 (should) and 20 (were to) are common, but IF-WERE TO is also used in desiring the supposed matter to be realized (21). Hawthorne: Both 12 and 19 are in a fantasy world. The speaker or the subject believes something, which is never realized in the real world or social common sense, will be realized from the view point of his superstition or religion, which may suggest one of the element to solve this problem we are now considering. IF-WERE TO (19) is used in the case in which the subject while making a supposition about the difficulty of realization, desires it never to be done, and
IF-SHOULD(12) is used in the case that the subject supposes that something may have a high possibility of realization, nevertheless, he desires it never be done. In short, Stevenson distinguishes between both the constructions in desiring. He uses both (18.20) when the subjects wish the matter never to be fulfilled, on the other hand, he uses only IF-WERE TO(21) when the subject wishes the matter to be fulfilled. But according to other writers IF-SHOULD is also used in many examples when the subject wishes the matter to be realized(15.17.18.19.21), therefore, as far as the examples given here by Stevenson are concerned, we can’t find any difference. Hawthorne distinguishes between both in realization. When the subject makes a supposition about a matter which it’s very difficult to realize, he uses IF-WERE TO(19), but when there is a high possibility of its realization, he uses IF-SHOULD(12). It’s clear, however, IF-SHOULD is also used when the matter is difficult of realization as well as IF-WERE TO, of which there are many examples, but we can’t find the use of IF-WERE TO when the matter has a very high possibility of realization. In this case IF-SHOULD is used in examples 1 and 7. Consequently Judging from the choice by Stevenson, Hawthorne and other writers, the difference between both the constructions may be defined as; IF-SHOULD can be used when the subject or the speaker makes a supposition about a matter which has a high possibility of realization, but he eagerly desires it never to be done. Poutsma (p.192) also says that IF-SHOULD is used in “mostly undesirable” but he premises “SHOULD mostly implies that the contingency is one whose fulfilment is that improbable”, but I premise the probability of fulfilment is very high.

6. 4. Next, I asked people in general how they perceive this question. I conducted a survey of this question on 12 people who are native speakers of English from England and America, and who teach English at universities or senior high schools in Japan.

Please encircle the right word or phrase in the brackets. If there are two or three right words and phrases in the same bracket, please encircle them.

22. Mr. Thompson is dead. His daughter is going to marry a nice young man. If he were alive and if he (were to, was to, should) hear of this news, he would be very glad.

23. Mr. Thompson is certain to be alive although he is now missing. His daughter is going to marry a nice young man. If he (were to, was to, should) hear of this, he would be very glad.

24. Even if the sun (were to, was to, should) rise in the west, I’d not change my mind.

25. We Japanese have learned a lesson from our failure in World War II. We hope there’ll be no more wars, but if war (were to, was to, should) break out, what should we do?
26. If I (were to, was to, should) win first prize in a public lottery, I could buy the expensive car I've wanted so long. The answers can be classified as seen in the following:

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<th>realization</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>were to</th>
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<th>should</th>
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<tr>
<td>impossible</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100 -88</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42 -55</td>
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<td>24</td>
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i) Both IF-SHOULD and IF-WERE TO are used having no relation to whether the realization is difficult or impossible. ii) In the examples in which it is impossible to realize what is hoped for, WERE TO(88%) is used more than SHOULD(55%). iii) In the examples in which it is difficult to realize what is hoped for, I feel difficulty in distinguishing between SHOULD(72%) and WERE TO(78%). iv) It is necessary to stress that in the case of impossibility of realization, WERE TO (100%) : SHOULD(42%) in example 22, on the other hand, WERE TO(75%) : SHOULD(67%) in example 24. We may contrast; in 22, there is considerable disparity between WERE TO(100%) and SHOULD(42%), on the other hand, in 24, there is not so considerable a disparity between WERE TO(75%) and SHOULD(67%). It's necessary to study the contents of 22 and 24. While 22 has the feature that there is an inevitable relation of cause(subordinate clause) and effect(main clause), that is, no one can be pleased hearing the news except him, 24 has no inevitable relation of cause and effect, because this case can be substituted by other ones, for example, "If the waters in the river were to flow from up stream to down stream, ..." can be used substitution for "If the sun were to rise in the west, ...". Consequently, (a) when there is an inevitable relation of cause(subordinate clause), which is supposed impossibility of realization, and effect(main clause), WERE TO may especially be used more than SHOULD, (b) when the relation mentioned above can't be found, either may be acceptable according to our preferences.

7. Conclusion

(1) Generally speaking, when the speaker or the subject supposes something that is impossible or very difficult of realization, and still, he desires strongly it to be realized affirmatively or negatively, we can use either of WERE TO or SHOULD.

(2) When the impossibility of realization is supposed in the subordinate clause and there is no an inevitable relation of cause and effect, WERE TO may often be
used more than SHOULD.
(3) It's preferable to use IF-SHOULD when the subject or the speaker supposes there's a high possibility of fulfilment from the viewpoint of his or her religion or superstition, yet still, desires the matter never to be realized.

References

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