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The choice of mood indicates the speaker's degree of uncertainty: subjunctive implies the speaker doubts the existence or possibility of what is being described; indicative implies the speaker believes or is certain that what is being described is possible or does exist.

expressions of doubt and uncertainty

The subjunctive occurs in dependent clauses introduced by verbs and expressions of **doubt or uncertainty** whenever there are two different subjects in the two clauses linked by the subordinating conjunction **que**.

-  **il est possible que**, it is possible that
- il est impossible que**, it is impossible that
- il est incroyable que**, it is unbelievable that
- il est douteux que**, it is doubtful that
- douter que**, to doubt that

Où est Edouard? Chez MacDo?


Oh non! **Il est impossible qu'**Edouard **soit** chez MacDo!

Where is Edouard? At MacDonald's?

Oh no! It is impossible that Edouard be at MacDonald's!

interrogatives and negatives

Doubt is commonly expressed by **questioning or negating** a statement.

-  **Crois-tu que** Corey **soit** chez MacDo?

Do you believe that Corey is at MacDonald's?


Oui, je crois que Corey est chez MacDo.

I believe Corey is at MacDonald's.

Mais Edouard? Non, je **ne crois pas qu'**Edouard **soit** chez MacDo.

But Edouard? No, I don't believe that Edouard is at MacDonald's.

The following expressions imply **certainty**, so when they are used in affirmative statements, they are followed by the **indicative**.

-  **croire que**, to believe that
- penser que**, to think that
- être sûr que**, to be sure that
- trouver que**, to find that
- se douter que**, to suspect that
- supposer que**, to suppose that
- avoir l'impression que**, to have the impression that
- il est vrai que**, it is true that
- il paraît que**, it appears that
- il est probable que**, it is probable that
- il (me) semble que**, it seems (to me) that
- il est clair que**, it is clear that

il est évident que, it is evident that

il est certain que, it is certain that

However, when these expressions are used in either the **interrogative** or the **negative**, **doubt** is introduced. Consequently, in the subordinate clause, the **subjunctive** is used. On the other hand, when expressions of doubt are negated, they indicate certainty and thus are followed by the indicative: **Je ne doute pas qu'Edouard est un escargot distingué** (I do not doubt that Edouard is a distinguished snail = I am certain that ...).

In the following dialogue, the subjunctive is highlighted in blue and the indicative in orange.



Tammy: Je suppose que nous **allons** nous marier. Il est clair que tu m'**aimes**.

Tex: Mais Tammy, euh, je ne crois pas que tu **sois** prête pour le mariage. Et puis, je ne suis pas sûr que tes parents **soient** d'accord. Non, non, vraiment, je ne trouve pas que ce **soit** une bonne idée.

Tammy: Te semble-t-il que je **sois** trop jeune? Tu n'es pas certain que je **sois** la femme de ta vie?

Tex: Oh, chérie, je ne doute pas que tu **es** la femme de ma vie. Mais il est évident que nous **sommes** trop jeunes pour le moment. En plus, il est certain que je n'**ai** pas encore assez d'argent.

Tammy: I suppose that we are going to get married. It is clear that you love me.

Tex: But, Tammy, uh, I don't think that you are ready for marriage. And then, I am not sure your parents would approve. No, no, really, I don't think this is a good idea.

Tammy: Does it seem to you that I am too young? You're not sure that I am the woman of your life?

Tex: Oh, my dear, I do not doubt that you are the woman of my life. But it is obvious that we are too young right now. Also, it is certain that I don't have enough money yet.

relative clauses

When **relative clauses** express **uncertainty**, they also trigger the use of the **subjunctive**. If the existence of the antecedent, or referent, is not certain, then the subjunctive is used to highlight this uncertainty. On the other hand, if the existence or possibility of the antecedent is likely and/or definite, then the doubt is removed and the indicative is used.

In the following dialogue, the subjunctive is highlighted in blue and the indicative in orange.



Tammy: Je cherche un tatou qui **est** intelligent, bilingue et intéressant. Mais à vrai dire, je l'ai déjà trouvé!

Tex: Existe-t-il une seule fille qui ne **soit** pas obsédée par le mariage? N'y a-t-il rien qui **puisse** la détourner?

Tammy: Y-a-t-il quelque chose qui **puisse** le convaincre?

Tammy: I am looking for an armadillo who is intelligent, bilingual and interesting. But, actually, I have already found him!


Tex: Is there one girl who is not obsessed with marriage? Isn't there anything that can divert her?

Tammy: Is there anything that might convince him?


superlatives

The use of a **superlative** can influence the choice between the subjunctive and the indicative. The subjunctive is used after superlative expressions that contain a **subjective** opinion. On the other hand, if the superlative expression contains a **fact** or a completely **objective** opinion, then the indicative is used since the idea is devoid of any sort of doubt.

The following list contains a group of common expressions that are superlative-like in their use.

-  **le seul**, the only
- l'unique**, the only
- il n'y a que**, there is only
- le dernier**, the last
- le premier**, the first
- le meilleur**, the best

In the following dialogue, the subjunctive is highlighted in blue and the indicative in orange.

-  Tex: Tammy est la plus belle tatou que je **connaisse**. Mais quand même, j'ai, j'ai peur du mariage.
- Tammy: Tex est le seul tatou français que je **connais**. Il est vraiment unique.

- Tex: Tammy is the prettiest armadillo that I know. But even so, I'm, I'm afraid of marriage.
- Tammy: Tex is the only French armadillo that I know. He is truly unique.



exercices

fill in the blanks

Complete each sentence with either the present subjunctive or the present indicative of the verbs in parentheses.

1. Tex est certain que ses poèmes _____ excellent. (être)
2. Il est impossible que Bette _____ honnête avec Tammy.(être)
3. Bette croit que Tex _____ quitter Tammy. (vouloir)
4. Ne pensez-vous pas que Tammy _____ un peu naïve? (être)
5. Corey est-il le seul cafard qui _____ le français? (comprendre)
6. Corey: 'Au secours! Y a-t-il quelqu'un qui _____ m'aider? (pouvoir)
7. Il est évident qu'Edouard _____ bien cuisiner. (savoir)
8. Tex trouve que Tammy le _____ bien. (connaître)
9. Je ne crois pas que Joe-Bob _____ prêter sa voiture à Tex. (vouloir)
10. Il est possible que Joe-Bob _____ des difficultés. (avoir)
11. Bette a l'impression que Tex _____ de plus en plus beau. (devenir)
12. Sais-tu que le fleuve le plus long du monde _____ (être) l'Amazone?