SUBJUNCTIVE SELECTION IN QUEBEC FRENCH AND THE EMOTIVE ATTITUDE [*]

Lena Baunaz (lena.baunaz@univ-cotedazur.fr)
Joanna Blochowiak (joanna.blochowiak@uclouvain.be)
Cristina Grisot (cristina.grisot@uzh.ch)

1. INTRODUCTION

In many languages that overtly mark mood on the verb, the primary distinction is between the indicative and the subjunctive. However, as Grisot, Blochowiak, and Puskás (2022) note among others, French is characterized by significant morphological erosion, such that many verbs no longer distinguish between these two moods, making it challenging to determine mood selection based solely on verb morphology. In their 2022 study, they also highlight cross-linguistic patterns in mood selection, where certain predicate classes exhibit systematic preferences. For instance, verbs of saying and cognitive verbs typically select the indicative, while future-referring predicates and directive verbs tend to favor the subjunctive. This paper builds on these observations to explore how mood selection in French is influenced by contextual and syntactic factors, particularly in relation to alternating verbs.

Mood distinctions are often analyzed in terms of the modal opposition realis vs. irrealis (see Giorgi & Pianesi 1997) or veridical vs. non-veridical (Giannakidou 1998, 2009; Giannakidou & Mari 2021, inter alia; see Baunaz & Puskás 2022 for a general overview). These oppositions are reflected in the mood selection patterns of semantically defined predicate classes. Broadly speaking, evaluative predicates (e.g., *want*, *prefer*) govern the subjunctive, whereas doxastic predicates (e.g., *say*, *believe*) govern the indicative. For example, a complement clause expressing desire selects the subjunctive, whereas one expressing belief selects the indicative. This distinction, however, runs into difficulties when Romance emotive factives are considered: although they involve realis or veridical contexts, they nonetheless select the subjunctive mood. Another complication arises from the fact that some predicate classes allow for mood alternation (see Baunaz & Puskás 2022 for examples in Romance, Balkan, and Hungarian; see also Grisot, Blochowiak & Puskás 2022 for French, and Giannakidou & Mari 2021 for Modern Greek, among others).

In the context of subjunctive mood use in Romance languages, Quebec French presents an interesting case. In their oral corpus study, Poplack et al. (2013) found that spoken Quebec French is significantly more restricted than Hexagonal French with respect to subjunctive use, because only a limited set of subjunctive-selecting predicates in Quebec French are both productive and frequent. As a result, Quebecois speakers often do not use the subjunctive mood where Hexagonal French speakers still do—or they do so only with a subset of verbs, such as *falloir*, *aimer*, and *vouloir* (see example (1)):

---

(1)   a.   Moi je suis dans le ghetto, fait que là il faut que tu sois (SUBJ, *être*) tough. (21C.103.561)
         'I'm in the ghetto, so there, you have to be tough.'
     b.   Fallait que moi j'aille (SUBJ, aller) espionner chez le voisin. (21C.113.131)
         'I had to go spy on the neighbor.'
     c.   Bien, ils aiment mieux que je fasse (SUBJ, faire) du sport que je fasse (SUBJ, *faire*) des niaiseries. (21C.116.325)
         'Well, they prefer that I do sports than make mischief.'
     d.   Elle veut que j'aie (SUBJ, avoir) une peine d'amour. (21C.007.676)
         'She wants me to have a broken heart.'
         (Poplack et al. 2013: 170, (24))

The present study investigates whether the limited use of the subjunctive observed in spoken Quebec French extends to contemporary written Quebec French, thereby offering a more comprehensive perspective on the status of the subjunctive in this variety. To this end, we conducted a production experiment designed to test Quebec French speakers' ability to use the subjunctive mood with mood-alternating verbs in specific contextual environments.

2. BACKGROUND

A recent cross-linguistic approach to mood selection, initiated by Baunaz & Puskás (2014), emphasizes the central role of grammatical semantics—specifically, the syntactically encoded aspects of meaning—in determining subjunctive mood marking (see also Baunaz 2017; Baunaz & Puskás 2014, 2022; Baunaz, Blochowiak & Grisot 2024). Within this framework, clause-embedding verbs are analyzed not merely as lexical items but as syntactically and semantically structured elements whose features directly impact mood selection in embedded clauses. This approach offers a fine-grained account of subjunctive licensing, integrating both the syntactic configurations and the semantic properties of matrix predicates that govern subordinate mood. A central claim of this model is that *emotivity*—an abstract feature encoded in certain predicate classes—functions as a key determinant in the cross-linguistic distribution of the subjunctive mood. By identifying emotive contexts as a core trigger for subjunctive selection, the framework provides a unified explanation for observed patterns of mood alternation across a range of languages. However, it is crucial to recognize that emotivity is just one component of a broader phenomenon known as subjectivity, which encompasses a range of linguistic features that reflect the speaker's personal perspective or stance. In addition to emotivity, subjectivity includes elements such as expressives, viewpoint, deixis, and other markers that signal the speaker's subjective involvement or evaluation of the proposition (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1999). As such, subjectivity represents a key aspect of how meaning is constructed in language, influencing the way speakers convey not just factual information, but also their emotions, attitudes, and interpretation of the world around them.

2.1. Alternating verbs

Certain classes of predicates exhibit systematic patterns in mood selection. Verbs of saying and cognitive verbs typically select the indicative mood (see (2)), while emotive factives (3a), future-oriented predicates, (3b), and directive verbs, (3c), tend to favor the subjunctive. In contrast, other predicate classes permit mood alternation (see (4)).

(2)   Joanna dit/pense/croit/sait que Genoveva est/*soit une super collègue.
               J. says/thinks/believes/knows that G. be.IND/SUBJ a great colleague
               'Joanna says/thinks/believes/knows that Genoveva is a great colleague.'

(3)   a.   Lena est contente que Genoveva *a/ait visité la Thaïlande.
               L. is happy that Genoveva   has.IND/SUBJ visited the Thailand
               'Lena is happy that Genoveva visited Thailand'
       b.   Lena souhaite que Genoveva *est/soit heureuse dans sa nouvelle maison.
               L. wishes that G.   be.IND/SUBJ happy in her new house
               'Lena wishes that Genoveva be happy in her new house.'
       c.   Lena suggère que Genoveva *part/parte en vacances.
               L. suggests that G. leave.IND/SUBJ in holidays
               'Lena suggests that Genoveva leave for holidays.'

(4)   Cristina comprend que Genoveva a /ait acheté ces belles chaussures.
               C.   understands that G.   have.IND/SUBJ bought these beautiful shoes
               'Cristina understands that Genoveva bought these beautiful shoes.'

The first key observation concerning these alternating verbs is that they do not constitute a homogeneous semantic class. Some display semi-factive properties, while others do not, and the cross-linguistic variation in the set of alternating verbs further indicates the absence of a unified semantic feature governing their behavior. Consequently, such verbs are currently treated as a heterogeneous set, lacking a clear, coherent lexical or semantic classification. However, as argued by Baunaz & Puskás (2014, 2022) and Baunaz, Blochowiak & Grisot (2024), these verbs do share a previously overlooked semantic property—one that is closely tied to the emotive dimension. This insight provides a novel theoretical explanation for their behavior with respect to mood selection and it leads to a second key observation: mood alternation is systematically associated with interpretive differences. This suggests that mood selection in such contexts is not arbitrary, but instead reflects deeper semantic and/or pragmatic distinctions, reinforcing the idea that the subjunctive is licensed through interaction with emotive features encoded in the matrix clause.

2.2. The emotive attitude

Blochowiak (2014) develops a semantico-pragmatic framework for analyzing emotive propositional attitudes—such as *regret*, *fear*, and *hope*—and distinguishes them from doxastic attitudes like *know*, *believe*, and *think*. According to this framework, emotive attitudes are semantically rich and structurally complex entities. Specifically, sentences expressing emotive attitudes are argued to involve a multi-layered relational structure comprising four key components: (i) the subject's emotive state, conveyed by the matrix verb; (ii) the intentional object of that state—namely, the eventuality described by the embedded proposition; (iii) the subject's bouletic attitude toward this eventuality, reflecting a judgment of its desirability; and (iv) an axiological evaluation that situates the eventuality within a broader system of values. Emotive propositional attitudes, then, encode not only the emotional stance of the subject but also the desirability of the embedded eventuality. Within this framework, such eventualities are semantically linked to a bouletic operator [wish], which captures the subject's desire for a given eventuality to occur along a desirability scale.
        Building on this, Baunaz & Puskás (2022: 106, 148) argue that "the holder of an emotive attitude has some (positive or negative) expectation with respect to an eventuality based on an evaluation of other comparable eventualities." In other words, emotive predicates introduce a

subevent structured by a bouletic operator, conceptualizing *desirability* as a state in which the experiencer evaluates the potential realization of an eventuality in terms of preference. Crucially, this model treats *desirability* as a scalar phenomenon, ranging from positive (e.g., *desire*) to negative (e.g., *fear*, construed as a negatively oriented wish). This theoretical perspective provides a nuanced semantic foundation for understanding the role of emotivity in mood selection, particularly in contexts where mood alternation is observed.

2.3. Subjunctive licensing

Baunaz & Puskás (2022) argue that the subjunctive mood is licensed by predicates that are, at a minimum, associated with a bouletic operator, thereby encoding some degree of emotivity or desirability toward the proposition *p*. Building on this view, and in collaboration with Baunaz & Lander (2024, in press), they propose that an [EMOTIVE] feature is encoded at the syntactic level, formally capturing the subject's affective stance toward the eventuality described in the embedded clause. This proposal is encapsulated in the *Embedded Subjunctive Licensing Mechanism* (ESLM), which posits that subjunctive mood is licensed by a predicate minimally linked to a bouletic operator, syntactically realized as a feature [EMOTIVE] on the embedding verb (Baunaz & Puskás 2022: 113). By integrating this syntactically encoded emotive feature, the framework offers a more precise and formalized account of mood selection, tying it directly to the subject's emotive commitment. Crucially, this approach reinforces the syntax–semantics interface, positioning emotivity as a central factor in the grammatical licensing of the subjunctive mood.[1]

2.4. The role of pragmatics

While both semantics and syntax are crucial in subjunctive mood licensing, another module of grammar—pragmatics—may also interact with these components to facilitate subjunctive selection. Baunaz & Puskás (2022) observed that emotive predicates often require emotive external arguments, though this relationship is not strictly obligatory, as contextual factors can also establish the subject's emotive state (as in impersonal constructions). Given this fact, it is crucial to recall that, emotivity, as part of the broader phenomenon of subjectivity (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1999), interacts with other elements such as expressives, viewpoint, deictics, and evaluative meaning. This suggests that the choice of embedded mood is not solely determined by the lexical properties of the main predicate but also interacts with pragmatic factors that shape the discourse-level interpretation.

We therefore propose that the activation of the [Emo] feature triggers subjunctive mood selection in embedded clauses. However, the precise conditions under which [Emo] is activated remain an open question. The following hypothesis has been formulated and already tested for Hexagonal French: when dealing with verbs that alternate between indicative and subjunctive mood, the broader pragmatic context of the utterance—including its emotive tone—influences the choice of mood. Specifically, emotive contexts increase the likelihood of subjunctive selection, whereas non-emotive contexts increase the likelihood of indicative selection. In sum,

---

[1] The framework in which Baunaz & Puskás 2022 formulate their analysis—Nanosyntax (cf. Starke 2009, 2011, 2014; Caha 2009; Baunaz & Lander 2018)—adopts a Late Insertion approach to morphology. A central tenet of Nanosyntax is the idea that a universal grammatical structure underlies all languages, with cross-linguistic variation arising from differences in how this structure is lexicalized—i.e., which lexical entries happen to exist in a given language's lexicon. Within this framework, Baunaz & Lander 2024, *in press* develop Baunaz & Puskás 2022 and argue that the feature [Emo] can be situated on the verbal functional sequence, as in French and in Modern Greek (MG) with the particle *na*, or it can be realized on the complementizer, as in MG, which possesses a dedicated 'emotive' complementizer *pu*. Crucially, [Emo] licenses the subjunctive mood in both languages only when it is lexicalized on the verbal spine.

we hypothesize that in cases of ambiguity—where neither morphological nor semantic cues provide clear guidance—pragmatic factors play a role in activating the [Emo] feature. This perspective suggests that mood selection operates at the interface of syntax and pragmatics, with both domains jointly shaping the form of embedded mood.

3. PREVIOUS EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATIONS ON FRENCH SUBJUNCTIVE

Experimental investigations into mood selection in complement clauses in contemporary French remain relatively scarce. Below, we briefly summarize four key studies in this area: Amsili and Guida (2014); Gudmestad and Edmonds (2015); Grisot, Blochowiak, and Puskás (2022); and Baunaz, Blochowiak, and Grisot (2024).

Amsili and Guida (2014) explored the influence of epistemic verbs that select the indicative in affirmative contexts on mood selection in negative contexts. They observed that factive and semi-factive predicates that typically take the subjunctive (e.g., *réaliser* 'realize', *savoir* 'know') do not show alternation under negation. In contrast, some epistemic verbs such as *penser* 'think', *considérer* 'consider', and *croire* 'believe' exhibit variation, alternating between the indicative and subjunctive in negative constructions. Their elicitation experiment, which involved a verb conjugation task, revealed that verbs appearing under negation were followed by the subjunctive in 75% of cases (or 80% under a stricter analysis), and by the indicative in 25% (or 20% under stricter criteria). These results suggest that although negation promotes the use of the subjunctive with certain epistemic verbs, other factors are also at play.

Gudmestad and Edmonds (2015) conducted two elicitation experiments to examine three variables: the distributional tendencies of matrix verbs, their temporal reference (past, present, future), and the degree of hypotheticality. They found that the subjunctive was used in 78.2% of cases when the matrix verb referred to future time, in 53% of cases for present time, and in 50.3% for past time—highlighting the significant role of temporality in mood selection.

Grisot, Blochowiak, and Puskás (2022) focused on Hexagonal French and investigated three properties of matrix verbs: their distributional pattern (indicative-selecting, subjunctive-selecting, or alternating), their tense (present vs. past), and their grammatical aspect (perfective vs. imperfective). Their aim was to evaluate whether the classifications proposed in traditional and non-variationist linguistic models align with actual usage. They conducted two elicitation experiments using a 2×3 mixed design, where participants were asked to conjugate the embedded verb. In Experiment 1, they manipulated the tense (present vs. past) of the matrix verb; in Experiment 2, the grammatical aspect (perfective vs. imperfective) was manipulated. Results showed that both tense and aspect significantly influenced mood selection. Notably, the probability of subjunctive use increased with alternating verbs in the present tense, whereas it decreased for subjunctive-licensing verbs in the same context. Similarly, the likelihood of using the indicative decreased for alternating verbs in the imperfective aspect, and for subjunctive-licensing verbs in the perfective aspect.

Finally, Baunaz, Blochowiak, and Grisot (2024) empirically tested the hypothesis that is also central to the present paper—namely, that emotive contexts favor the subjunctive mood, while non-emotive contexts favor the indicative. In an elicitation experiment on Hexagonal French, participants were asked to conjugate embedded verbs under two conditions: emotive and non-emotive contexts. For verbs that allow mood alternation, the prediction was that the subjunctive would be more frequently chosen in emotive contexts, and the indicative in non-emotive ones. Control verbs with fixed mood selection (indicative-only or subjunctive-only) were also included. The results supported their hypothesis for Hexagonal French, with a significantly higher rate of subjunctive usage in emotive contexts.

4. THE EXPERIMENT

The present study aims to examine whether the hypothesis tested by Baunaz et al. (2024) also holds for Quebec French. Of particular relevance to this variety is the claim that the subjunctive is undergoing attrition in spoken language, with its use largely confined to "a very small stereotyped repertoire of more or less frozen constructions" (Poplack et al. 2013: 141). The present experimental investigation explores whether that tendency extends to written Quebec French, thereby offering a more comprehensive view of the subjunctive's status in this linguistic variety.

4.1. Participants

53 native speakers of Quebec French were recruited (age range 22–55) on the Prolific platform between December 2023 and February 2024. There was no time constraint, and the average completion time was approximately 15 minutes. Participants received financial compensation for their participation.

4.2. Experimental Design

Using the protocol from Baunaz, Blochowiak and Grisot (2024), we conducted an elicitation task in which participants from Quebec French were asked to conjugate embedded verbs presented in their infinitive forms. The study employed a 2×3 experimental design, manipulating two factors: (i) the presence or absence of the emotive feature (emotive vs. non-emotive contexts), and (ii) the type of matrix predicate, distinguishing among three verb classes:

(i)   Verbs that exclusively select the subjunctive
(ii) Verbs that exclusively select the indicative
(iii) Verbs that permit mood alternation (alternating verbs)

The alternating verbs formed the experimental condition, as their mood selection was expected to vary depending on the emotive context. Verbs that exclusively selected the subjunctive or the indicative served as control conditions, ensuring that participants' responses were consistent with established mood-selection patterns.

4.3. Materials

The verb stimuli were selected based on prior theoretical and experimental studies on mood selection in French (see Grisot et al. 2022, Baunaz et al. 2024). Using these verbs, we constructed a total of **30 experimental items**, with **10 items per verb category (see Table 1)**.

Alternating verbs	Indicative taking verbs	Subjunctive taking verbs
s'assurer 'ensure'	trouver 'find'	vouloir 'want'
accepter 'accept'	affirmer 'affirm'	préférer 'prefer'
comprendre 'understand'	dire 'say'	proposer 'propose'
se plaindre 'complain'	raconter 'tell'	souhaiter 'wish'
admettre 'admit'	déclarer 'declare'	apprécier 'appreciate'
rêver 'dream'	croire 'believe'	regretter 'regret'
prévoir 'forsee'	penser 'think'	désirer 'desire'
concevoir 'conceive'	remarquer 'notice'	ordonner 'order'
espérer 'hope'	constater 'observe'	exiger 'demand'
impliquer 'imply'	observer 'ascertain'	attendre 'expect'

Table 1. List of verbs tested and their corresponding mood

To examine the effect of the emotive feature, we designed short narratives that embedded either emotive or non-emotive contexts. Each experimental item followed a three-sentence structure:

1. An **introduction sentence**, which was identical across both conditions and served to establish background context.
2. A **biasing sentence**, designed to orient participants toward either an emotive interpretation (Condition 1) or a non-emotive interpretation (Condition 2).
3. A **target sentence**, containing the embedded verb in its infinitive form, which participants were asked to conjugate.

This design allowed us to isolate the influence of emotive context on mood selection while controlling for background information.

(5)   An example of experimental item per condition

    a.   ***Condition 1***
        Introduction : Jean et sa femme Marie habitent ensemble depuis 2 ans.
        Emotive biasing sentence: Ce matin, Jean a été très méchant avec Marie et
                         maintenant il le regrette.
        Target sentence: Il comprend que sa femme (être) partie sans lui dire au revoir.

b.   ***Condition 2***
Introduction : Jean et sa femme Marie habitent ensemble depuis 2 ans.
Non-emotive biasing sentence: Jean appelle Marie pour savoir si elle est encore
là, mais elle ne lui répond pas.
Target sentence: Il comprend que sa femme (être) partie sans lui dire au revoir.

To ensure that the emotive manipulation was effective, the biasing sentences were constructed according to specific criteria. Emotive biasing sentences included affective linguistic cues indicative of subjectivity, such as emotion-descriptive vocabulary and intensifiers. Half of these sentences conveyed a positive emotional tone (e.g., *très heureuse* 'very happy'), while the other half conveyed a negative emotional tone (e.g., *très stressée* 'very stressed'). In contrast, non-emotive biasing sentences were carefully formulated to avoid any subjective or affective cues, thereby promoting a neutral interpretation.

Because the biasing sentences had already been pretested to confirm the effectiveness of the emotive manipulation in the Hexagonal French experiment, no additional pretesting was conducted for the present study. Three independent coders had evaluated whether each sentence elicited the intended emotive or non-emotive reading. All items were indeed confirmed to align with their designated categories.

4.4. Procedure

The experiment consisted of 30 experimental items, each presented in two conditions (emotive vs. non-emotive), resulting in 60 variants. Additionally, 12 filler items with the same narrative structure as the experimental items were included. The full set of items was distributed across two experimental lists, ensuring that each participant saw only one list, which contained 42 short narratives (30 experimental and 12 filler items). Both experimental conditions (emotive and non-emotive) were represented within each list. The order of presentation was randomized. Twelve yes/no comprehension questions were randomly embedded in each list to monitor participants' attentiveness.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Results for verbs that exclusively select the subjunctive

The results for verbs that exclusively select the subjunctive mood are consistent with those reported for Hexagonal French. When Quebec French speakers were asked to conjugate a verb following a matrix predicate that obligatorily selects the subjunctive, they consistently provided subjunctive forms for the embedded verb. Participants produced subjunctive forms at near-ceiling levels, regardless of whether the preceding context was emotive or non-emotive/objective (see Figure 1).
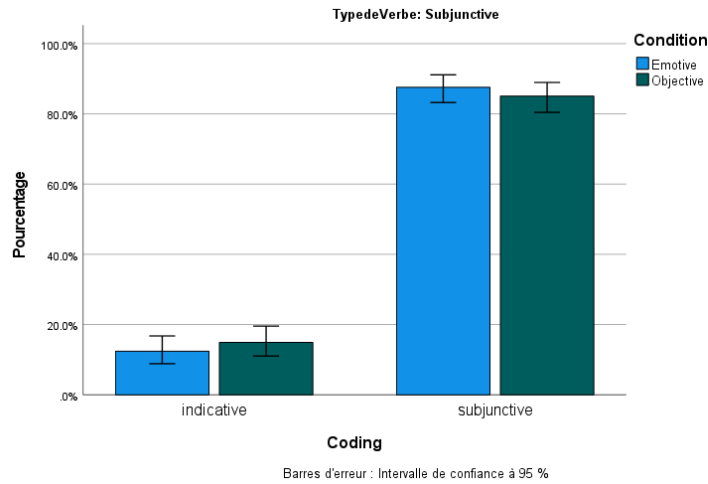
Figure 1. Results for the verbs selecting only the subjunctive mood

This finding indicates that for verbs that categorically select the **subjunctive**, mood selection is not influenced by context.

5.2. Results for verbs that exclusively select the indicative

The results for verbs that exclusively select the indicative mood align with our predictions. Participants produced indicative forms of the embedded verb in nearly 100% of cases, regardless of whether the preceding context was emotive or non-emotive/objective (see Figure 2).
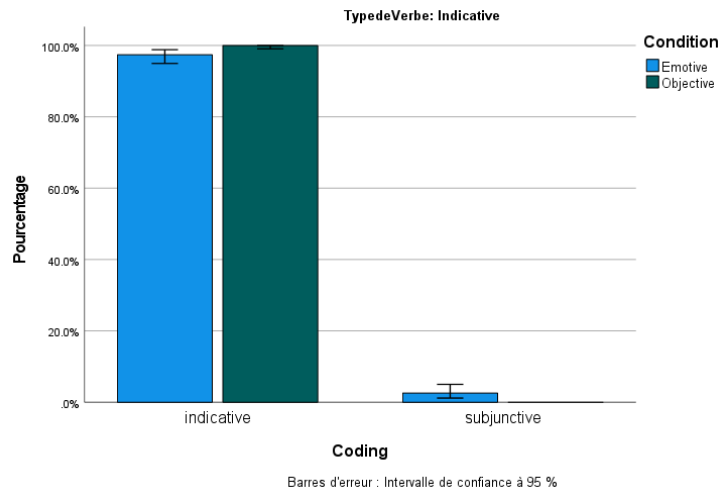

Figure 2. Results for the verbs selecting only the indicative mood

This finding confirms that mood selection for this class of verbs is categorical and remains unaffected by the manipulation of the emotive feature, further supporting the robustness of mood-selection constraints associated with indicative-only predicates.

5.3. Results for alternating verbs

In contrast to the categorical patterns observed for subjunctive-only and indicative-only verbs, the results for alternating verbs reveal a clear effect of contextual emotivity on mood selection. Participants produced more subjunctive forms in emotive contexts (57%) than in non-emotive

contexts (43%). Conversely, they produced more indicative forms in non-emotive contexts (58%) than in emotive contexts (42%). This difference is statistically significant, as confirmed by a Pearson chi-square test (χ^2, $p < .05$), indicating that the emotive feature plays a meaningful role in mood selection for alternating verbs (see Figure 3).
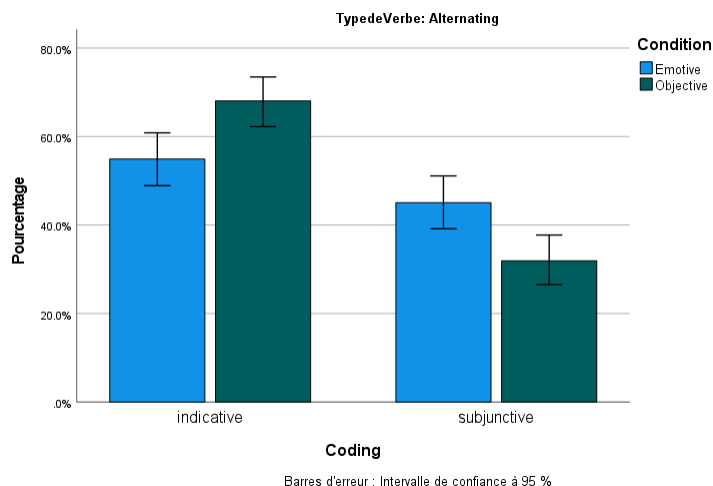

Figure 3. Results for the alternating verbs

In other words, Quebec French speakers use the subjunctive mood in embedded contexts similar to those observed among Hexagonal French speakers. This finding suggests that the claim that the subjunctive is disappearing from Quebec French does not hold for its written form.

6. DISCUSSION

The main finding of our study indicates that mood selection in Quebec French, much like in Hexagonal French, is sensitive to the contextual features of the utterance. Our results thus support the predictions of our hypothesis: namely, that emotivity aligns with the use of the subjunctive, such that emotive contexts favor the subjunctive mood, while non-emotive contexts favor the indicative.

We also observed some variability in participants' responses, consistent with findings from Hexagonal French. Specifically, variation emerged among alternating verbs in their mood-selection patterns (see Figure 4 for the non-emotive/objective condition and Figure 5 for the emotive condition). While most verbs exhibited a relatively balanced distribution between indicative and subjunctive forms, some showed a clear preference for one mood over the other. This was particularly evident for *accepter* 'to accept' and *concevoir* 'to conceive', which tended to favor the subjunctive, and *admettre* 'to admit', *espérer* 'to hope', and *impliquer* 'to imply', which leaned toward the indicative.

This variation suggests that, although contextual emotivity plays a significant role in mood selection, verb-specific lexical properties may also influence the observed distribution. It is also noteworthy that, with the exception of *admettre*, all of the verbs listed above (*accepter*, *concevoir*, *espérer*, and *impliquer*) exhibit mood-selection patterns consistent with their counterparts in Hexagonal French.
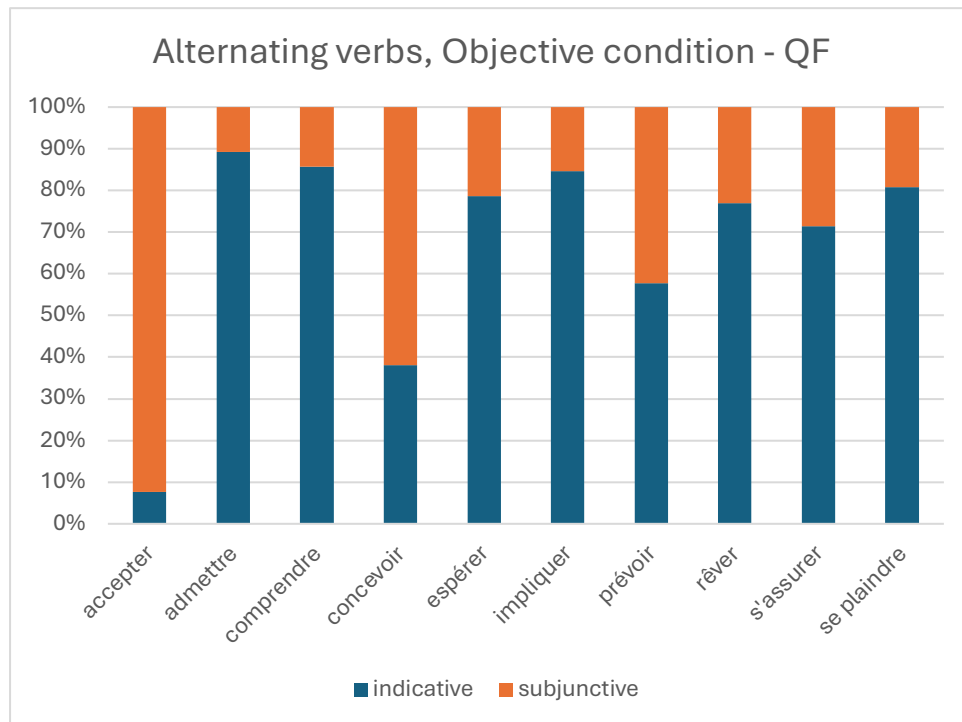
Figure 4. Frequency of mood choice verb by verb for alternating verbs in non-emotive contexts
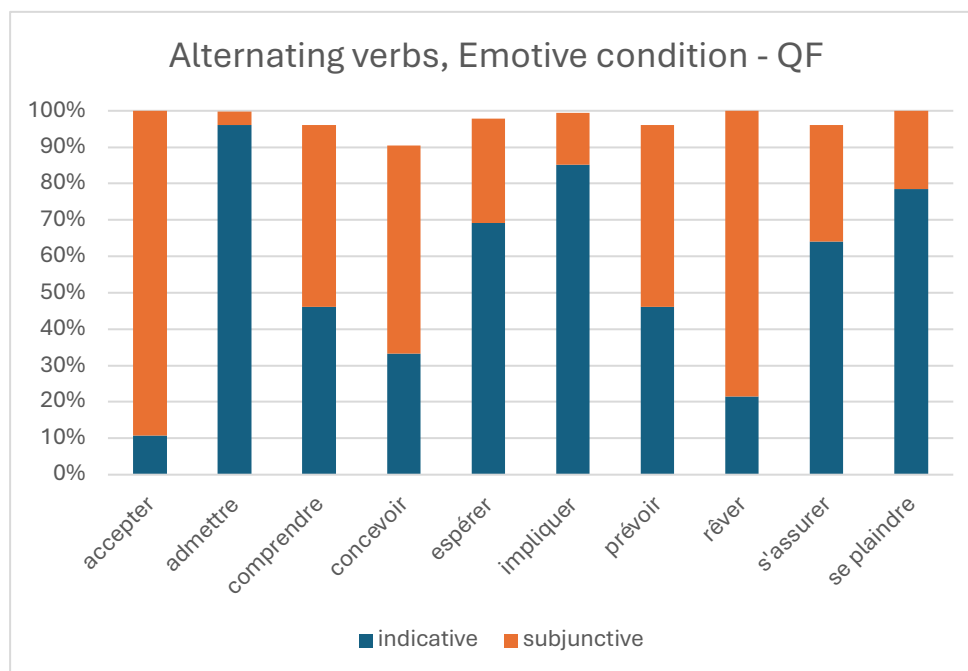

Figure 5. Frequency of mood choice verb by verb in emotive contexts for alternating verbs

Our experiment revealed a systematic relationship between contextual cues and participants' interpretation of mood. Specifically, when the context indicated that the subject of the matrix clause was in a non-neutral bouletic state with respect to the eventuality described in the embedded clause, participants were more likely to select the subjunctive mood. Conversely, when the context did not support such an interpretation, participants tended to opt for the indicative. These results suggest that participants actively inferred the bouletic

dimension from contextual information, interpreting the experiencer as holding a wish-like or emotionally invested attitude toward the embedded proposition.

However, our results also show that a given context does not categorically determine mood selection; rather, it biases the choice toward one structure over the other. This raises a key question: what determines the selection of one structure over the other—or more precisely, what triggers the activation of the emotive feature?

We propose that mood selection with alternating verbs operates at the syntax-pragmatics interface. Emotive contexts favor the activation of the emotive feature, leading to the selection of a more complex syntactic structure. In some cases, mood selection may also be influenced at the semantic level, for example, when a degree adverb modifies the main predicate. Morphological cues, when present, signal which syntactic structure has been realized.

7. CONCLUSION

This study examined mood selection with alternating verbs in Quebec French, focusing on the role of emotive contexts. Building on the hypothesis that the presence of an emotive feature is the primary trigger for subjunctive mood selection, we replicated the elicitation protocol from Baunaz, Blochowiak, and Grisot (2024), originally designed for Hexagonal French. Our results confirm that the emotive feature significantly influences mood choice: participants produced markedly more subjunctive forms in emotive contexts than in non-emotive ones.

We argued that this variation is best accounted for at the syntax-pragmatics interface, where the emotive feature is pragmatically activated on the matrix verb, subsequently triggering the subjunctive in the embedded clause. Despite this variability, lexical selection remains intact, even in cases of apparent optionality.

Overall, our findings reveal a parallel pattern in Hexagonal and Quebec French: while alternating verbs are sensitive to contextual emotivity, non-alternating verbs remain unaffected. Moreover, contrary to claims of subjunctive attrition in Quebec French (Poplack et al. 2013), our data suggest that, at least in written language, the subjunctive remains a productive and context-sensitive grammatical option. These observations align with nanosyntactic accounts of mood selection (Baunaz & Puskás 2022; Baunaz & Lander 2024, *in press*), where lexical items may realize multiple structural configurations without being ambiguous (or homophonous), but rather syncretic, meaning that they can lexicalize different structures within one lexical item (Starke 2009, 2011, 2014; Caha 2009; Baunaz & Lander 2018). We propose that the same mechanism is at work in Quebec French.

REFERENCES

Amsili, P. & F. Guida (2014) "Vers une analyse factorielle de l'alternance indicatif / subjonctif", in *Actes du 4e Congrès Mondial de Linguistique Française*, vol. 8, 2313–2331. https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20140801249.

Baunaz, L. (2017) "Embedding Verbs and Subjunctive Mood: The Emotive Factor", in S. Perpiñán et al. (eds.) *Romance Languages and Linguistic Theory 11*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 9–31. https://doi.org/10.1075/rllt.11.01bau.

Baunaz, L. & E. Lander (2018) "Nanosyntax: the basics", in L. Baunaz et al. (eds.) *Exploring Nanosyntax*, Oxford University Press, New York, 3–56. https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-167406.

Baunaz, L. & E. Lander (2024) "Same Syntax, Different Lexical Entries: Mood Selection in Romance and Balkan", in R. Pinsonneault & Y. Léveillé (eds.) *Actes du colloque 50 ans de linguistique à l'UQAM: Regards croisés sur les enjeux de la linguistique*, Montréal, 20–32. http://archipel.uqam.ca/id/eprint/17529.

Baunaz, L. & E. Lander (in press). Lexical structure and subjunctive selection. In P. Caha, K. de Clercq & G. Vanden Wyngaerd (eds), *Nanosyntax and the Lexicalisation Algorythm*. OUP.

Baunaz, L. & G. Puskás (2014) "On subjunctives and islandhood", in M.-H. Côté & E. Mathieu (eds.) *Variation within and across Romance languages*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, 233–253. http://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.333.16bau.

Baunaz, L. & G. Puskás (2022) *A Cross-linguistic Approach to the Syntax of Subjunctive Mood*, Springer Nature, Cham. http://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-04540-0.

Baunaz, L., J. Blochowiak & C. Grisot (2024) "Emotivity matters for mood licensing: Experimental evidence from French", *Isogloss. Open Journal of Romance Linguistics* 10(1), 1–34. https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/isogloss.465.

Blochowiak, J. (2014) *A Theoretical Approach to the Quest for Understanding: Semantics and Pragmatics of Whys and Becauses*, PhD dissertation, University of Geneva.

Grisot, C., J. Blochowiak & G. Puskás **(**2022) "Predicting verbal mood in complement clauses: the role of the semantic category, the tense and the grammatical aspect of the matrix verb", *Glossa* 7(1). https://doi.org/10.16995/glossa.5798.

Caha, P. (2009) *The Nanosyntax of Case*, PhD dissertation, University of Tromsø.

Giannakidou, A. (1998) *Polarity Sensitivity as (Non)Veridical Dependency*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia. https://doi.org/10.1075/la.23.

Giannakidou, A. (2009) "The dependency of the subjunctive revisited: Temporal semantics and polarity", *Lingua*119(12), 1883–1908. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2008.11.007.

Giannakidou, A. & A. Mari (2021) *Truth and Veridicality in Grammar and Thought: Mood, Modality, and Propositional Attitudes*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago. http://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226763484.001.0001.

Giorgi, A. & F. Pianesi (1997) *Tense and Aspect: From Semantics to Morphosyntax*, Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1075/sl.24.1.11gel.

Gudmestad, A. & A. Edmonds (2015) "Categorical and variable mood distinction in Hexagonal French: Factors characterising use for native and non-native speakers", *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 18(1), 107–131.

Kerbrat-Orecchioni, C. (1999) *L'énonciation : de la subjectivité dans le langage*, 4e édition, Armand Colin, Paris.

Poplack, S., A. Lealess & N. Dion (2013) "The evolving grammar of the French subjunctive", *International Journal of Latin and Romance Linguistics* 25(1), 139–195. https://doi.org/10.1515/probus-2013-0005

Starke, M. (2009) "Nanosyntax: A short primer to a new approach to language", *Nordlyd* 36(1), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.7557/12.213.

Starke, M. (2011) "Towards an elegant solution to language variation: Variation reduces to the size of lexically stored trees", Ms., University of Tromsø. LingBuzz/001183.

Starke, M. (2014) "Cleaning up the Lexicon", *Linguistic Analysis* 39, 245–256.