THE (IN)FAMOUS ITALIAN SUBJUNCTIVE

Feeling baffled and stressed-out by the Italian subjunctive mood *(il congiuntivo)*?

Il congiuntivo is used to talk about hopes, fears, doubts and other vague quirks. To make matters even more hazy, it's quite a subject fraught with frustration — even for Italians!

So what are you – the typical language learner – to do when it comes time to approach this beast called *il congiuntivo*?

Should you even bother? I mean… if Italians are so flummoxed over this, why should you be?

Honestly, you could skip over *il congiuntivo* and still have a fine time in Italy… chatting up locals at the caffè-bar, enjoying fine seafood, pasta and pastries, followed by *la passeggiata.*

If people ever look to change venue by moving to Italy, where they might even fall in love, get married and live out the remainder of their lives *without ever using the subjunctive,* should they so choose. Italians would understand their *congiuntivo*-free Italian just fine in almost every case.

Unlike in sister languages such as Spanish and Portuguese, the Italian use of the subjunctive is a bit more limited (as in French), and Italians are tending to use it less and less over the generations. In particular, younger generations and the less "educated" speakers hardly use it.

Nevertheless, *il congiuntivo* does remain in use by all speakers in at least a few situations, so using it yourself will help you sound more like a native speaker, while helping you communicate a bit more accurately.

And the rest of the time, using the subjunctive correctly makes you – as a foreigner – seem 'smart' and 'savvy'.

As for my own situation - having been home-schooled by my mother in *il congiuntivo* and other Italian grammar - I can't tell you how many times my own occasional correct use of *il congiuntivo* has led to compliments on my Italian over the years, considering that I, as an ex-patriate, have lived in America most of my life.

So, just for fun and challenge – and for the inevitable kudos – consider mastering ***il congiuntivo presente*** and ***il congiuntivo passato*** as a starting point, as we will in our course at the *Scuola di Italiano.*

APPUNTI