

Unit 36 - Using indefinites (2) - *some, any*

1 Expressing *some*

1.1 Meaning an unspecified amount or number of something

1.1.1 When *some* is used as an adjective to express an unspecified amount of something it is translated by the partitive article (*du, de la de l'*) or, to express an unspecified number of something, by the plural indefinite article (*des*) :

I have **some** make-up / tissues in my bag
*J'ai **du** maquillage / **des** Kleenex® dans mon sac*

1.1.2 If it is a pronoun it is translated by *en* :

I have **some** in my bag - *J'**en** ai dans mon sac*

1.1.3 When *some* has the sense of *a few* it is translated by *quelque(s)* when it is an adjective and by *quelques-un(e)s* (with *en*) when it is a pronoun :

- I still have **some** apples left. Do you want **some** ?
- *Il me reste encore **quelques** pommes. **En** veux-tu **quelques-unes** ?*

1.2 Meaning *certain*

1.2.1 When *some* has the sense of *certain* (i.e. in contrast to others), it is translated by *certain* when both an adjective and a pronoun :

Some restaurants accept credit cards, while others don't accept them
***Certains** restaurants acceptent les cartes de crédit, alors que d'autres ne les acceptent pas*
Do you know his books ? I know **some**
*Tu connais ses livres ? J'**en** connais **certains***

1.2.2 *Some* is also often translated by *certain* when it is used as an adjective with the sense of *a measure of*:

The measures did have **some** effect though
*Les mesures ont quand-même eu un **certain** effet*

1.3 Meaning *a considerable amount of*

When *some* has the sense of *a considerable amount of* it is translated by *quelque* or *certain* :

I had **some** difficulty understanding him
*J'ai eu **quelque** difficulté à le comprendre*
It took **some** courage to carry on
*Il a fallu un **certain** courage pour continuer*

1.4 Referring to an unknown person or thing

When *some* refers to an unknown person or thing it is translated by *quelque* or by means of the adverb *quelque part* :

We'll have to find **some** other solution to the problem
*Il nous faudra trouver **quelque** autre solution au problème*
I bought it in **some** shop years ago
*Je l'ai acheté dans un magasin **quelque part** il y a bien des années*

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If the sense is more negative, indicating that the speaker is not particularly interested in the person or thing referred to, then the indefinite article is usually preferred :

She's gone out to meet **some** woman
*Elle est sortie pour rencontrer **une** femme*

1.5 Meaning an approximate number of something

When *some* is used as an adverb to indicate an approximate number, then *quelque* is used. Note that, being an adverb, it is invariable and therefore does **not** take an -s :

There were **some** two thousand people at the concert
*Il y avait **quelque** deux mille personnes au concert*

2 Expressing *someone, somebody*

For most contexts *someone* is translated by *quelqu'un* :

We need to find **someone** for the job
*Il faut que nous trouvions **quelqu'un** pour le poste*

Note that when *someone* is followed by an adjective, French uses the preposition *de* between *quelqu'un* and the adjective :

We need to find **someone** very experienced for the job
*Il faut que nous trouvions **quelqu'un de** très expérimenté pour le poste*

3 Expressing *something*

For most contexts *something* is translated by *quelque chose* (note that this is always **two** words) :

That reminded me of **something** she said to me
*Cela m'a rappelé **quelque chose** qu'elle m'a dit*

As with *quelqu'un*, when *something* is followed by an adjective, French uses the preposition *de* between *quelque chose* and the adjective :

There was **something** strange in the way he spoke to me
*Il y avait **quelque chose de** curieux dans la façon dont il m'a parlé*

Note that although the noun *chose* is feminine, the indefinite pronoun is neutral, and therefore takes masculine agreements (i.e. *quelque chose de bon* and not **quelque chose de bonne*).

4 Expressing *somewhere*

When *somewhere* is used on its own or with an adverbial, it is usually translated by *quelque part* (note that this is always two words). When *somewhere* is followed by an adjective, an infinitive or a finite clause, *un endroit* is generally used :

He's working **somewhere** in France
*Il travaille **quelque part** en France*
We are looking for **somewhere** to stay for the night
*On cherche **un endroit** où passer la nuit*

5 Expressing *sometimes* and *sometime*

5.1 The adverb *sometimes* can be translated by either *quelquefois* or *parfois*. Note that unlike *quelque chose*, *quelquefois* is always one word :

Sometimes we go to Spain for our holidays

Quelquefois / parfois nous allons en Espagne pour nos vacances

5.2 When used without another adverbial, *sometime* is translated by a range of idioms :

You are going to have to tell him **sometime**

Il va falloir que tu le lui dises un jour ou l'autre

I'd like to meet her **sometime**

Je voudrais la rencontrer un de ces jours

5.3 When used with another adverbial, *sometime* can be translated using *dans la journée* or *dans le courant de* or else is not translated :

Can I see you **sometime** this afternoon / tomorrow / next week ?

Je peux vous voir cet après-midi / demain dans la journée / dans le courant de la semaine prochaine ?

6 Expressing *somehow*

6.1 When *somehow* has the sense of *in some way*, it is generally translated by *d'une façon / manière ou d'une autre* when referring to a future action, or by *je ne sais comment* when referring to past actions :

I must do it **somehow**

Je dois le faire d'une manière ou d'une autre

I **somehow** managed to get there on time

J'ai pu y arriver à l'heure je ne sais comment

6.2 When *somehow* has the sense of *for some reason*, it is generally translated by *pour une raison ou pour une autre* :

Somehow she never managed to meet him

Pour une raison ou pour une autre elle n'a jamais réussi à le rencontrer

6.3 Note the following alternatives :

You'll manage **somehow** ! - *Tu te débrouilleras !*

It seems strange **somehow** - *Cela paraît un peu bizarre*

7 Expressing *any*

7.1 Meaning *some*

7.1.1 When *any* has the sense of *some*, it is translated by the partitive article (*du, de la, de l'*) if it is an adjective :

Do you have **any** money ?

Est-ce que vous avez de l'argent ?

In the negative this reverts to *de* :

I don't have **any** money

Je n'ai pas d'argent

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7.1.2 If it is a pronoun it is translated by *en* :

Do you have **any** ?

*Est-ce que vous **en** avez ?*

7.2 Meaning *no matter which*

7.2.1 When *any* has the sense of *no matter which*, it is translated by *n'importe quel* (or derivatives) if it is an adjective :

Any bag will do

N'importe quel sac fera l'affaire

Open **any** newspaper and you'll see the same thing

*Ouvrez **n'importe quel** journal, on voit la même chose*

When the noun qualified by *any* is perceived as hypothetical rather than real, *tout* is preferred :

I would be glad of **any** information on this subject

Tout renseignement sur ce sujet me serait utile

Any complaints should be addressed to customer services

Pour toute réclamation, s'adresser au service clientèle

In many contexts, however, these differences are blurred and either translation is acceptable :

Any mother will tell you the same thing

N'importe quelle / toute mère vous dira la même chose

Note also the following idioms :

I don't want to put you out **in any way**

Je ne veux pas te déranger de quelque façon que ce soit

He might arrive **at any time**

Il peut arriver d'un moment à l'autre

If **at any time** you want to speak to me, just phone

Si à un moment ou à un autre tu veux me parler, tu n'as qu'à téléphoner

Like any self-respecting Englishman, he has tea with his breakfast

Comme tout Anglais qui se respecte, il prend du thé au petit déjeuner

7.2.2 If it is a pronoun it is translated by *n'importe lequel* (or derivative) :

- Which one would you like ? - **Any**

- *Lequel veux-tu ? - N'importe lequel*

8 Expressing *anyone, anybody*

8.1 In negatives *anyone* is translated by *ne...personne* :

I'm afraid there isn't **anyone** in the office who can help you

*Je regrette qu'il n'y ait **personne** dans le bureau qui puisse vous aider*

8.2 In questions *anyone* is translated by *quelqu'un* :

Is there **anyone** in the office who can help me ?

*Y a-t-il **quelqu'un** dans le bureau qui puisse m'aider ?*

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- 8.3** Where *anyone* means *no matter who*, this can generally be translated by either *n'importe qui* or *tout le monde* :

Anyone could tell you
N'importe qui / tout le monde pourrait vous le dire

As with the English word *anyone*, the French word *n'importe qui* can have a slightly negative connotation in some contexts :

I don't want to give it to just **anyone**
Je ne veux pas le donner à n'importe qui

Where *anyone* is followed by the relative pronoun *who*, *tout ceux* is used :

Anyone who wants to can come
Tout ceux qui le veulent peuvent venir

When the sense is closer to *someone*, as in questions, *quelqu'un* is used :

If **anyone** arrives early, could you let them in ?
Si quelqu'un arrive en avance, tu peux le faire entrer ?

- 8.4** Note also the following idioms :

Anyone but him ! - *Tout le monde* sauf lui !
Bring **anyone** you like - *Amène qui tu voudras*

9 Expressing *anything*

- 9.1** In negatives *anything* is translated by *ne...rien* :

I'm afraid there isn't **anything** I can do to help
Je regrette qu'il n'y a rien que je puisse faire pour vous aider

- 9.2** In questions *anything* is translated by *quelque chose* :

Is there **anything** I can do ?
Y a-t-il quelque chose que je puisse faire ?

- 9.3** Where *anything* means *no matter what*, this can generally be translated by either *n'importe quoi* or *tout* :

He would do **anything** to please her
Il ferait tout / n'importe quoi pour lui plaire
I would give **anything** to know what happened
Je donnerais tout / n'importe quoi pour savoir ce qui s'est passé

As with the English word *anything*, *n'importe quoi* can have a slightly negative connotation in some contexts :

I don't want to give her just **anything**
Je ne veux pas lui donner n'importe quoi
He eats **anything** [i.e. any old thing]
Il mange n'importe quoi

If *tout* were used in this last example, the connotation would be more neutral :

Il mange de **tout** - *He eats anything* [i.e. he's not fussy]

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Where *anything* is the antecedent of a relative clause, *tout ce* is used :

You can have **anything** you like

*Tu peux avoir **tout ce que** tu veux*

9.4 Note the following idioms :

Oh no - **anything** but that !

*Ah non - **tout** sauf ça !*

- Was he upset ? - **If anything** he was relieved

- *Est-ce qu'il était affecté ? **On dirait plutôt qu'il** était soulagé*

10 Expressing *anywhere*

10.1 In negatives *anywhere* is translated by *ne...nulle part* :

We didn't go **anywhere** for our holidays this year

*Nous **ne** sommes allés **nulle part** pour nos vacances cette année*

10.2 In questions, where *anywhere* is used on its own or with an adverbial, it is usually translated by *quelque part* :

Have you seen Marie **anywhere** ?

*Est-ce que tu as vu Marie **quelque part** ?*

Where *anywhere* is followed by an adjective, an infinitive or a finite clause, *un endroit* is generally used :

Did you go **anywhere** nice for your holidays ?

*Etes-vous allés dans **un endroit** agréable pour vos vacances ?*

10.3 Where *anywhere* has the sense of *no matter where*, it can generally be translated by either *n'importe où* or *partout* :

He would go **anywhere** to see Manchester United play

*Il irait **n'importe où** / **partout** pour voir jouer Manchester United*

Where the sense is more akin to *everywhere*, then *partout* is generally preferred :

You can buy them **anywhere** in France

*Vous pouvez les acheter **partout** en France*

10.4 Note also the following idioms :

You can go **anywhere**

*Tu peux aller **où** tu veux*

Anywhere you go you'll see the same thing

***Où que vous alliez**, vous verrez la même chose*