

THE MEANING AND (A BIT OF) THE HISTORY OF *quelque**

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Abstract

In this chapter, we pursue the hypothesis that *quelque* is an indefinite that relies on inference and ignorance, elaborating on our previous work. The form *quelque* N P, in which P is a property, means that the existence of an entity of type N satisfying P is a piece of information at which the epistemic agent got by inference (evidential aspect) and that the exact identity of such an entity remains unknown (epistemic aspect). The main points discussed are the following. Intuitively, *quelque* may seem to belong to the group of free choice determiners, together with *n'importe quel* and *un quelconque*. We show that such an association is plausible, provided one includes the evidential aspect. Moreover, we propose that the limited tolerance of *quelque* to occurring in the immediate scope of negation should be analysed as a manifestation of its inner semantic organisation, composed of a main content—constituted by an existential value typical of indefinites—and a conventional implicature—constituted by its inferential and epistemic values. This analysis leads us to set aside a characterisation of *quelque* as positive polarity item, which would be an ad hoc stipulation. Finally, we set up some lines of analysis concerning the origin and the development of *quelque*. This gives us the opportunity to identify several important issues, among which we can recall the question of whether the concessive use is a byproduct of the ignorance component or the reverse, and the question of whether and how to reconcile the concessive meaning with the existential interpretation.

keywords: *quelque*, epistemic determiner, evidentiality, positive polarity items, diachronic study

1 Introduction

French speakers have a host of *free choice* items (FCIs) at their disposal, e.g. *n'importe quel* (no matter which), *un quelconque* (one whichever), *tout* (all), *quiconque* (whoever), Pronoun/NP + *que ce soit* (-ever), etc. (Jayez and Tovena, 2005, 2006). How close to each other are they and how strong are their similarities? In this paper, we are going to discuss the determiner *quelque*. This determiner has attracted interest from semanticists due to its particular combination of properties (see Culioli, 1982; Van de Velde, 2000; Jayez and Tovena, 2002, 2006, 2008a; Corblin, 2004; Paillard, 2006), although it might be rather marginal in the group because it is felt to be somewhat literary or formal in many of its uses in modern French.

In short, three properties of *quelque* immediately bring a linguist beyond the zone of expected behaviour for a plain indefinite like *un* (a). First, *quelque* obeys a constraint of ignorance that shapes it as an anti-specific determiner. Broadly speaking, specificity corresponds to the possibility of identifying a particular individual as satisfying a given property. Specificity is a crucial feature in the typology of determiners (cf. Farkas, 2002a,b,c; Haspelmath, 1997), where it interact with the notion of free choice. In the case in hand, the NP formed by *quelque* N can be

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referential in the sense defined by Dekker (1998) and Jayez and Tovena (2005), but the speaker must not be able to identify the individual to whom the NP refers, which means that readings that contain reference and identification of the referent are barred.

Second, in their analysis, Jayez and Tovena (2008a) have shown that the determiner *quelque* implement a form of evidentiality in the nominal domain. The existence of the referent is not directly asserted, rather it is an interpretation that results from an *inferential* operation from the clausal content, see (1). This type of interpretation corresponds to a preference that may vary depending on the speaker, and presumably the variation is due to the fact that this determiner is not frequently used.¹ The contrast between (1b) and (2) illustrates the relevance of the role played by the source of information.

- (1) a. ?? Hier, j'ai rencontré quelque amie
yesterday, I met QUELQUE friend
b. Hier, Yolande a dû rencontrer quelque amie
yesterday, Yolande must have met QUELQUE friend
- (2) ? Yolande m'a dit qu'elle avait rencontré quelque amie
Yolande told me she met QUELQUE friend

This aspect cannot be predicted simply by characterising *quelque* as anti-specific, i.e. by imposing that the referent is not identified, see the contrast in (3). The sentence in (3a) is more natural if *commentaire* is in the plural, but the plural form *quelques* has a much more liberal distribution and will not be discussed in this paper.

- (3) a. ? Il a fait quelque commentaire, dont je ne me souviens plus
he made QUELQUE comment I no longer remember
b. Il a fait un commentaire quelconque, dont je ne me souviens plus
he made some comment or other I no longer remember

Finally, *quelque* is (very) marginal in the scope of clausemate negation, but not under higher clause negation nor when another downward monotone operator intervenes between negation and determiner. This behaviour suggests an analogy with *some* in English, see Farkas (2002c), and relates it to the issue of the interaction of negation with so-called *positive* polarity, see Szabolcsi (2004) on this point.

In this chapter, we carry on with the analysis of the epistemic properties of *quelque* primarily in two directions, on the one hand, we endeavour to clarify the impact that the conventional implicature of ignorance has on the distribution of the determiner in negative sentences; on the other hand, we initiate the study of its diachronic evolution. The text is organised as follows. We start by recalling the components of the base meaning of *quelque*, which is subject to two constraints, in section 2. Next, by comparing the properties we highlighted in this section with the notion of *free choiceness*², we can put the debate concerning *quelque* in the broader frame of a discussion about forms of epistemic determination that involve degrees of ignorance. The conclusion we reach in section 3 is less clearcut than in our previous work (Jayez and Tovena, 2008a,b), where we had rejected a characterisation of *quelque* as an FC item. The reason we are

¹This reason is hinted at also by Culioli in his paper.

²The definition of 'free choice' item is still in dispute in the community, although linguists tend to agree on the set of contexts that characterise its distribution. In this paper, we work under the hypothesis that a constraint requiring equivalence along one dimension can provide a minimal suitable characterisation for its semantic core.

revising our position is due to our current attempt to take into consideration the variation among judgements and their instability, and to account for it via the constraint of evidentiality that is the specificity of *quelque*. The opening towards the general theme of determiners sensitives to their environment is continued in section 4, where we present *quelque* in negative environment and we discuss of the relevance of the notion of positive polarity sensitivity that could be associated to it. In alternative to this type of association, we put forth an explanation that draws uniquely on the general constraints relative to the computation of conventional implicatures. In particular, we show that a conventional implicature introduced by a quantifier is treated at a level that is different from the level where a conventional implicature introduced by a sentential adverb is computed, and this has consequences for the interaction with operators such as negation. This concludes the synchronic part of the description of *quelque*. The second part of the chapter covers a number of features and issues concerning the diachronic evolution of *quelque*. Section 5 is much more exploratory than what precedes it, and it is also much richer in empirical data. These data are presented following the trace of the questions debated in the preceding sections.

2 The base meaning of *quelque*: the epistemic properties

This section presents the core analysis and the main constraints that *quelque* obeys, the Ignorance Constraint and the Inference Constraint introduced in (Jayez and Tovenà, 2008a). They are independent from each other, and have the status of conventional implicatures attached to the at issue content.

2.1 The Ignorance Constraint

The Ignorance Constraint *C-Ignorance* is the first of two constraints used for characterising the behaviour of *quelque*. It is recalled in (4) in an intuitive version.³ In the following, we use the term *epistemic agent* to talk about the bearer of some form of belief, who coincides with the speaker in the default case.

(4) C-Ignorance

Quelque is appropriate only if the epistemic agent does not know which individual satisfies the description contributed by the sentence.

Recall that the agent is ignorant about the identity of the referent, and this is not incompatible with being certain about its existence, as clearly shown by example (5), where the speaker is sure that a dumb people locked the door.

- (5) Le verrou ne coulisse pas; quelque idiot a fermé la porte avec un cadenas
The bolt does not slide; QUELQUE dumb people locked the door

The Ignorance Constraint *C-Ignorance* enables us to explain the marginality of example (1a), because it says that the epistemic agent *a* must in principle ignore which individual has the property of ‘being a friend of *a* and having been met by *a* yesterday’. This is not very probable, because the very same individual is presented as a friend of the speaker, who is the default epistemic agent in this sentence.

³For a detailed definition of ignorance the reader is referred to (Jayez and Tovenà, 2006).

2.2 The evidential constraint of Inference

The second constraint is the Inference Constraint *C-Inference* and it is about the nature of information that there exists a referent for the noun phrase *quelque* N. This issue belongs to the domain of evidentiality, but the content associated with this term is a delicate matter. We follow Aikhenvald, who considers evidentiality to be the linguistic marking of the *information source*. In her view, evidentiality ‘does not imply any reference to validity or reliability of knowledge or information’ (Aikhenvald, 2005, p. 5) in itself.

The hypothesis put forth by Jayez and Tovena (2008a) consists in assuming that *quelque* provides some indication on the source of information and, moreover, marks it as being of the *inferential* type. By her choice of using the determiner *quelque*, the speaker makes it plain that the proposition expressed is not grounded on knowledge obtained by direct perception or by hearsay. It is important to keep separate the sources of information and the processing of such information. In some cases, the type of processing constrains the type of source, for instance visual integration can work only on visual stimuli. On the contrary, inferential processing can apply to the output of other processes, for instance an agent may infer a proposition from what she ‘sees’, that is to say to the output of a previous application of visual integration to some visual stimuli. This is to say that the agent can use perceptual information or hearsay information to feed an inferential process that results in her asserting the proposition. In all these cases, *quelque* marks the fact that (at least) the last ring in a chain of sources of information, or the only source deemed to be relevant, is an inferential process put in by the agent.

The task of capturing the constraints that rule the behaviour of *quelque* is somewhat complicated by the fact that the sentence does not have to contain overt evidential information independently marked for this determiner to be acceptable. Its use is appropriate whenever it is possible to build an evidential inferential interpretation—see example (6) that is interpreted as meaning ‘some idiot or other must have forgotten to switch off’—but does not require that a modal marker be overtly present, be it a verb, an adverb or a mood marker.

- (6) Il y a de la lumière dans le bureau; quelque idiot a oublié d’éteindre
The light is on in the office. QUELQUE idiot forgot to switch it off.

The Inference Constraint *C-Inference* captures the intuition that one must get at the existential proposition that corresponds to the clause that hosts *quelque* via an inferential process, see (Jayez and Tovena, 2008a). We write *R* for the restriction (N’ in *quelque* N’) and *S* for the scope, i.e. the property expressed by the rest of the sentence.

(7) **C-Inference**

A form [*quelque* *x*] [*R*] [*S*] is appropriate only under interpretations where the epistemic agent *infers* that $\exists x(R(x) \ \& \ P(x))$.

Last, let’s mention the well known issue of the relation between evidentiality and modality. What is relevant for our discussion is the fact that the use of *quelque* does not forces the speaker to confine herself to a specific modal force. The lack of difference in acceptability between a sentence containing an existential modality, cf. (8a), or a universal modality, cf. (8b), vouches for it.

- (8) a. Yolande a peut-être rencontré quelque ami
Yolande may have met QUELQUE friend

- b. Yolande a nécessairement rencontré quelque ami
Yolande must have met *QUELQUE* friend

In both cases, the epistemic reading is the only modal reading that matters. The deontic one is never relevant.

2.3 On the link between the constraints

As we stated overtly, the issue of the existence of a referent should be kept apart from the issue of its identification. Ignorance and evidentiality, *C-Ignorance* and *C-Inference* presented in (4) and (7) respectively, are about the identification of an entity. This observation may prompt the question of whether there is a connection between these constraints, for instance an equivalence or of an entailment. Let's examine the issue taking *C-Ignorance* as our starting point first. If an agent *a* ignores which individual satisfies a property, generally she cannot have direct access to this piece of information. However, she could have indirect access to it, in a non-inferential way, for instance by hearsay. It follows that *C-Ignorance* does not entail *C-Inference*. Next, let's now consider the same situation but starting from *C-Inference*. If *a* is in a position to infer that some individual satisfies a property, she could also be able to infer *who* is such an individual in which case, the constraint *C-Ignorance* would be violated. Therefore, it is also the case that there is no entailment from *C-Inference* to *C-Ignorance*. The unavoidable conclusion is that there is no logical relation linking *C-Ignorance* and *C-Inference*.

However, there is a pragmatic relationship between the two constraints. Using an indefinite in a situation that conforms to *C-Inference* makes the ignorance interpretation most plausible, as evidenced by the contrast in (9). Sentence (9b) is not impossible, yet it is more difficult to interpret than (9a), that contains the run-of-the-mill indefinite *un*. The sentence in (9c) gives confirmation that inference and identification of the referent are not incompatible per se.

- (9) a. Yolande a rencontré une amie, Louise
Yolande met a friend, Louise
b. # Yolande a dû rencontrer une amie, Louise
Yolande must have met a friend, Louise
c. Yolande a dû rencontrer son amie, Louise
Yolande must have met her friend, Louise

One can guess that the inferential interpretation adds plausibility to an interpretation whereby the agent ignores the identity of the referent, and that the semantic configuration of *quelque* can be explained by supposing that the basic interpretation of this determiner is inferential and that this triggers an ignorance interpretation that dominates and subsequently grammaticises. At this stage, this is just a supposition. Furthermore, were one to take it up, she should also explain the interpretive preferences recorded in (9). At this stage of our research, we accept that ignorance is the default interpretation under an epistemic operator, but we do not venture down the slippery slope of a discussion on the scope of indefinites.

2.4 Extensions

Our analysis, based on the combination of the *C-Ignorance* and *C-Inference* constraints, allowed us in (Jayez and Tovena, 2008a) to cover two cases that, prima facie, are exceptions when the distribution of *quelque* is restricted to modal contexts.

The first case concerns habitual sentences. We have shown that such sentences satisfy *C-Inference* because the habituality qualification is a regularity which is not directly perceived (unlike a standard event or object). Rather, habituality is inferred by the speaker through a repetition of outcomes presented as non-accidental, see (10a). Habitual sentences still have to satisfy *C-Ignorance*, as evidenced by (10b), where the identity of the friend is made precise.

- (10) a. A l'époque, je voyais toujours Yolande avec quelque amie
 'At that time, I always saw Yolande with QUELQUE friend'
 b. ?? A l'époque, je voyais toujours Yolande avec quelque amie, Marie
 'At that time, I always saw Yolande with QUELQUE friend, Mary'

The second case concerns the fact that, when *quelque* combines with an abstract mass noun in episodic non-inferential sentences, the result is much better than with a count or mass concrete noun, see (11)⁴.

- (11) a. Yolande a montré quelque courage
 'Yolande showed QUELQUE courage'
 b. *Yolande a bu quelque eau [quantité d'eau]
 'Yolande drank QUELQUE water' [quantity of water]
 c. ? Yolande a quelque beauté
 'Yolande has QUELQUE beauty'

The abstract mass nouns that fit with *quelque* denote particularised properties, which have specific spatio-temporal manifestations and are often analysed as *tropes* (Williams, 1953; Campbell, 1990) in the philosophical literature. In order to account for the contrast in (11), Jayez and Tovenà (2008a) introduce a distinction between *internal tropes*, like *courage* or *hesitation*, which can combine with *quelque*, and *external tropes*, like *beauty* or *slowness*. Internal tropes correspond to internal states or events and can be observed only through their effects, which implies some sort of inference—a required ingredient in *C-Inference*. The satisfaction of *C-Ignorance* can more generally be explained by the properties of mass nouns, which allow for degrees or types, with some indeterminacy about which degree/type is referred to.

When *quelque* combines with an internal trope, it also triggers a 'downplaying' effect, see (Van de Velde, 2000; Jayez and Tovenà, 2002). For example, (11a) indicates that the speaker is not certain that Yolande showed great courage. This effect, which is also found with *un certain* ('a certain'), see (12), corresponds to a Q-implicature (Horn, 1989) triggered by the indefinite.

- (12) a. Yolande a montré un certain courage
 'Yolande showed some courage'
 b. Il y a une certaine hypocrisie à prétendre cela
 'There is some hypocrisy to alleging this'

The nature of the effect has to be clarified. The contexts where *quelque* has a downplaying interpretation are episodic sentences which often convey an existential scale (Hoeksema and Rullmann, 2000; Tovenà, 2003). Two points deserve to be mentioned. First, *quelque* and *un cer-*

⁴The taxonomic reading of concrete mass nouns—the preferred one in examples like (i)—is not relevant, because this use is similar to a form of count discretisation.

(i) # Yolande a bu quelque eau [type d'eau]
 'Yolande drank QUELQUE water' [kind of water]

tain underspecify the degree of the trope. This underspecification can be decreased by choosing some interval of the degree scale, either an inferior (13a,14a) or a superior one (13b,14b).

- (13) a. Yolande a montré quelque courage, mais pas tant que ça
 ‘Yolande showed QUELQUE courage, but no THAT much’
 b. Yolande a montré quelque courage, et même beaucoup de courage
 ‘Yolande showed QUELQUE courage, and even much courage’
- (14) a. Yolande a montré un certain courage, mais pas tant que ça
 ‘Yolande showed some courage, but no THAT much’
 b. Yolande a montré un certain courage, et même beaucoup de courage
 ‘Yolande showed some courage, and even much courage’

Second, since we assume that underspecification concerns the whole scale, including its median and higher regions, we must explain why we have a *downplaying* effect rather than a reinforcement effect and why the interpretation does not simply depend on context. In fact, we observe here a general phenomenon, intuited by Ducrot (1972). In his terminology, existential judgements have a positive ‘argumentative force’. More precisely, with scales, they facilitate inferences about the possibility of a specification with the median or higher region and render more difficult similar inferences using the lower region (see Jayez (2005), Jayez and Tovena (2008c) on this point). This accounts for contrasts like those in (15). For (15a), introducing the proposition that Paul graded some papers eliminates all cases where Paul graded no paper, which automatically renders more probable the proposition that Paul graded more papers than a certain numeric threshold t , whatever it could be. *Mais* (‘but’) expects an opposite orientation⁵ (the direction of variation of the probability) and is thereby compatible with ‘Paul did not grade many papers’. However, *mais* cannot invert the opposite argumentative direction, according to which the proposition that Paul graded some papers would render *less* probable the proposition that Paul graded a number of papers superior to some t . This orientation simply does not exist and (15b) remains opaque.

- (15) a. Paul a corrigé quelques copies, mais pas beaucoup
 ‘Paul graded some papers, but not many’
 b. ?? Paul a corrigé quelques copies, mais beaucoup
 ‘Paul graded some papers, but many’

This general configuration accounts for the presence of *mais* in (13a) and (14a), in order to signal the argumentative orientation. So, the downplay effect is a side-effect of inference facilitation (‘argumentation’ in Ducrot’s parlance), while underspecification derives from the ignorance implicature conveyed by *quelque* and *un certain*.

The final point we discuss is the *approximation* value that it is tempting to associate with *quelque* in view of examples like (16). One might assume that, in such examples, the speaker does not want to commit herself to a precise evaluation and only gives some rough indication. This is consonant with remarks by Farkas (2002c) about *some* and with the analysis proposed by Kagan and Spector (2008) for the Hebrew determiner *eyze*.

- (16) a. Dans la soirée, quelque deux cents personnes se sont réunies devant Spandau [*Le*

⁵Argumentative orientation corresponds to the fact that the proposition ‘Paul graded some papers’ renders more probable every proposition of the form ‘Paul graded a number of papers superior to t ’ for an arbitrary threshold t .

Monde, août 1987]

- ‘In the evening, QUELQUE two hundred persons gathered in front of Spandau’
- b. Villeneuve et les centres d’appels : quelque mille emplois au bout du fil [Internet]
 ‘Villeneuve and the call centers: QUELQUE one thousand jobs at the end of the (phone) line’

However, examples like (17) suggest that the situation is more complex. In some cases, *quelque* can be found with precise quantities. For instance, for (17a), there might exist a list counting the HBM lodgings and giving the sum of two hundred and twenty three.⁶

- (17) a. J’en veux pour preuve les quelque deux cent vingt-trois logements HBM qui vont être remis à la location en 1996 [Internet]
 ‘A proof of that is the QUELQUE two hundred and twenty three lodgings that will be for rent in 1996’
- b. Sacha Guitry fut renvoyé de onze lycées [...] et réalisa quelque trente trois films [Internet]
 ‘Sacha Guitry was expelled from eleven grammar schools and shot QUELQUE thirty three films’

However, even when there is no approximation, *quelque* does not present the exact quantity as just a measure but as the representative of a property. For instance, the two hundred and twenty three lodgings mentioned in (17a) instantiate a property like ‘being a significant number of lodgings’. In this respect, there is some fuzziness since the property admits several representative values and this use appears to be similar to the combination with abstract nouns presented above.⁷ When it introduces a numeral, *quelque* does not select a particular region (lower, median or higher), as the continuations for (17a) shown in (18) indicate. It is necessary to use the context in order to decide. In such cases, it is probably more interesting to take into account the argumentative role of *quelque*, in the sense made clear above, than to limit its interpretation to the reference to a particular region on a scale.

- (18) J’en veux pour preuve les quelque deux cent vingt-trois logements HBM qui vont être remis à la location en 1996, ce qui est peu / beaucoup / raisonnable /moyen ... etc.
 ‘A proof of that is the QUELQUE two hundred and twenty three lodgings that will be for rent in 1996, which is not much / much / reasonable / a moderate figure ... etc.’

3 Ignorance and free choiceness

The question arises whether *quelque* is a free choice (FC) item, because its properties are very similar to those of *un quelconque*, which (Jayez and Tovenà, 2006) show to be a FC item. This question makes sense only with regard to an explicit definition of FC items. Following Jayez

⁶The usual tests for approximation are not very reliable with *quelque*. For instance, **environ quelque deux cent vingt-trois* (‘about QUELQUE two hundred and twenty three’) and **exactement quelque deux cent vingt-trois* (‘exactly QUELQUE two hundred and twenty three’) are out. One can add *environ* and *exactement* as comments or rectifications: *Sacha Guitry ... fut renvoyé de onze lycées et réalisa quelques trente trois films, ou à peu près / très exactement* (‘Sacha Guitry was expelled from eleven grammar schools and shot QUELQUE thirty three films, or so/exactly’).

⁷Kagan and Spector (2008) also discuss the relationship between the Hebrew determiner *eyze* and properties.

and Tovena (2005), we define an element to be FC whenever it satisfies the constraints in (19).⁸

- (19) **Equity** A tripartite form [FC item] [*R*] [*S*] is compatible with an interpretation *I* only if :
- A. every member of *R* can be *S* under *I* (NO LOSER)
 - B. every member of *S* can be $\neg S$ under *I* (NO WINNER)

Constraint (19A) says that no member of the restriction is excluded. Constraint (19B) says that no member of the restriction is imposed. The joint effect of both constraints, metaphorically subsumed under the term *Equity*, accounts for the contrast in (20)–(23), for the FC item *un quelconque*.

- (20) Yolande a probablement rencontré une amie quelconque
 ‘Yolande probably met some friend or other’
 NO LOSER: Yolande may have met any one of her friends
 NO WINNER: no friend of Yolande’s must necessarily
 have been met by her

Let us start with constraint (19A). If an element that cannot be the referent of the NP is made precise, this violates NO LOSER and makes sentences like (21) awkward.

- (21) a. ? Yolande a probablement rencontré une amie quelconque, qui n’était pas Marie
 ‘Yolande probably met some friend or other, who was not Mary’
 NO LOSER is violated
- b. ? Prend une carte quelconque, mais pas celle du milieu
 ‘Pick some card or other but not the one in the middle’
 NO LOSER is violated

However, testing NO LOSER by expanding the sentence is not always a reliable method, because the added material may trigger an accommodation of a new, larger, restriction domain, *before* the application of NO LOSER. A safer strategy is to juxtapose two elements sensitive to NO LOSER but with two opposite indications. It can then be noted that sentences like (22a) sound contradictory or hardly interpretable when compared to sentences like (22b), which are fine. If *un quelconque* was not sensitive to NO LOSER, we should be able to restrict the freedom of choice without problem.

- (22) a. ?? Tu peux prendre une carte quelconque mais pas n’importe laquelle
 ‘You may pick some card or other but not (just) any card’
 NO LOSER is violated
- b. Tu peux prendre une carte mais pas n’importe laquelle
 ‘You may pick a card but not (just) any card’

Next, indicating an obligatory referent entails that NO WINNER is violated. *Un quelconque* is also sensitive to this constraint, as shown by (23).⁹

⁸(Jayez and Tovena, 2008d) contains a recent presentation of the debate on FC items with numerous pointers to the literature.

⁹If the indication of an obligatory referent is weakened, for instance by adding *par exemple* (‘for example’) after *Marie*, the violation of NO WINNER is not longer guaranteed.

- (23) ? Yolande a probablement rencontré une amie quelconque, Marie
 ‘Yolande probably met some friend or other, Mary’
 NO WINNER is violated

With examples like those in (24), we can check that non-FC indefinites are not subject to the two constraints. For instance, the *un* (‘a’) indefinite accepts that a particular individual is explicitly excluded or imposed.

- (24) a. Yolande a probablement rencontré une amie, qui n’était pas Marie
 ‘Yolande probably met a friend, who was not Mary’
 b. Prend une carte, mais pas celle du milieu
 ‘Pick a card, but not the one in the middle’
 c. Yolande a probablement rencontré une amie, Marie
 ‘Yolande probably met a friend, Mary’

As for *quelque*, while the NO WINNER constraint is clearly satisfied, as illustrated in (25), the observations are less clear for NO LOSER, see (26).¹⁰

- (25) ? Il y aura bien quelque raison / une raison quelconque, le chômage, pour justifier une grève ou deux
 ‘People will certainly find some reason or other—the unemployment—to justify a couple of strikes’
 NO WINNER is violated
- (26) a. ? Il y a une raison quelconque, et je sais que ce n’est pas le chômage, qui explique la grève
 ‘There is some reason or other—and I know it’s not unemployment—that explains the strike’
 b. % Il y a probablement une raison quelconque, et je sais que ce n’est pas le chômage, qui explique la grève
 ‘There is probably some reason or other—and I know it’s not unemployment—that explains the strike’
 c. % Il y a probablement quelque raison, et je sais que ce n’est pas le chômage, qui explique la grève
 ‘There is probably QUELQUE reason—and I know it’s not unemployment—that explains the strike’

Before deciding on the status of *quelque*, we need to clarify the possible reasons why judgments on free choiceness constraints are fuzzy in some cases. We hypothesise that the inferential evidentiality attached to *quelque* is a perturbing factor. From a set-theoretic point of view, there is no apparent difference between (26a) and (26b-c): in both cases, the proposition that unemployment is not the cause of the strike cuts down the possibilities opened by the proposition that there is probably some reason for the strike. In fact, there *is* a difference, which concerns the evidential status of propositions. On the one hand, with (26a), the speaker believes that there is some reason for the strike, that is, every possibility compatible with her beliefs satisfies the proposition that there is some reason for the strike. Using *un quelconque* favours an interpretation under which every conceivable reason holds in at least one possibility (NO LOSER). Moreover, the speaker believes that the reason in question is not unemployment, that is, no pos-

¹⁰The ‘%’ notation signals that acceptability varies across speakers.

sibility compatible with her beliefs satisfies the proposition that unemployment accounts for the strike. As a result, the no-unemployment restriction concerns the same possibilities as the existential proposition (there is some reason for the strike) subject to NO LOSER. A contradiction follows, since unemployment is considered both as a possible and an impossible explanation.

On the other hand, with (26b-c), this kind of contradiction does not arise. The speaker believes through some inference that some reason probably explains the strike, that is, every possibility compatible with what she believes probable through some inference satisfies the proposition that the strike has an explanation. Moreover, the speaker believes that unemployment is not an explanation, that is, no possibility compatible with what she believes satisfies the proposition that unemployment is the cause of the strike. This situation does *not* entail that the no-unemployment restriction concerns the same possibilities as those which define what she believes. What the speaker thinks probable by way of inference does not necessarily include what she believes tout court, because modal strength and information source (evidentiality) do not necessarily coincide. A belief that p does not entail that p is the result of an inference. For instance, the speaker may believe that unemployment is not a possible reason but remain unable to derive the same conclusion only by way of inference, because, say, she just accepted what she read in some usually well-informed newspaper. Under this perspective, the behaviour of *quelque* with respect to NO LOSER is a reflex of its evidentiality.

We conclude that the question whether *quelque* is a FC item or not deserves a complex answer: *quelque* can be considered as a FC item, but one whose evidentiality blocks or weakens the effect of NO LOSER.

4 Negative contexts and positive polarity

The last aspect of *quelque* that we are going to take into account is illustrated by example (27). When (27) is accepted, its most natural reading is that there is a file that Yolande probably did not find. In other terms, it is a reading where *quelque* has scope over negation. The other scoping hierarchy, leading to paraphrase the sentence by ‘Yolande did not find any file’ is hardly possible.

- (27) Yolande n’ a pas dû trouver quelque fichier
 Yolande expletive-neg has neg must find QUELQUE file
 Yolande probably missed QUELQUE file
 ?? [neg > *quelque*] vs. [*quelque* > neg]

So, *quelque* is not natural in the immediate scope of a negation under a narrow scope interpretation.

4.1 Licensing and anti-licensing

Examples like (27) can be seen as a case of anti-licensing similar to those described for the English determiner *some* in terms of sensitivity to positive polarity (see Baker, 1970; Szabolcsi, 2004). For items traditionally categorised as Positive Polarity Items (PPIs), the anomaly illustrated in (27) can be traced to an incompatibility between narrow scope and antiadditive operators, that is operators that obey de Morgan’s law that $\neg(p \vee q) = \neg p \ \& \ \neg q$.

The parallel between PPIs and *quelque* extends to the acceptability of *quelque* in cases like

(28), where negation is in the matrix clause, or like (28b), where there is an ‘intervener’¹¹ like *toujours* (‘always’). Baker (1970) had noted that the combination of an anti-licenser and a licenser rescues *some* (29a) and his observation can be replicated for *quelque* (29b).

- (28) a. Je ne pense pas que Yolande ait trouvé quelque fichier
 ‘I don’t think Yolande found QUELQUE file’
 b. Yolande ne trouvait pas toujours quelque excuse
 ‘Yolande didn’t always find QUELQUE excuse’
- (29) a. It’s impossible that Yolanda didn’t find some file
 b. Il est impossible que Yolande n’ait pas trouvé quelque fichier

Although this empirical parallel is interesting, one can wonder whether the notions it relies on are really explanatory. At the moment, there is no accepted theory about how anti-licensing can be defeated or about why anti-licensing is driven by negation alone and can be cancelled by a simple intervener. Moreover, the PPI label itself refers to the (partly) common behaviour of elements which remain highly heterogeneous with respect to their category (adverbs, determiners, verbs) and their semantic content. The situation is similar for Negative Polarity Items (NPIs). The strategy we follow here consists in trying to derive the PPI profile from semantic properties whenever it is possible.

4.2 A matter of implicature

In (Jayez and Tovena, 2008a), we proposed that the sensitivity to the status of information (evidentiality and ignorance) of *quelque* is a conventional implicature. Equivalently, it is not the result of a contextual inference (conversational implicature) or a presupposition, but a conventional part of the meaning of *quelque*, along with its main content, which is just existential quantification like *un* (‘a’). By using the quantification structure [*quelque*] [*R*] [*S*], the speaker signals that she has only indirect inferential information about the fact that an unknown individual satisfies the restriction and the scope. The meaning is divided into two parts, as shown in (30), as proposed by Potts (2005) in the spirit of Grice.

- (30) [*quelque*] [*R*] [*S*]:
- a. Main content = there is at least one individual *x* satisfying the restriction and the scope.
 b. Implicature = *x* remains unidentified and the fact that *x* satisfies the restriction and the scope is only inferred.

Before elaborating, let us show that the pattern we are going to analyse is not isolated. It is well-known that presuppositions tend to *project*, that is, are not cancelled by certain operators like negation or interrogation, see (Geurts, 1999) for a general introduction. For instance, (31a) presupposes that Paul smoked at some point in time and this presupposition survives in (31b,c).

- (31) a. Paul stopped smoking
 b. Paul didn’t stop smoking
 c. Did Paul stop smoking?

¹¹We borrow the term from Szabolcsi, who applies it to elements that seem to undo the anti-licensing relation.

We do not pretend to introduce here a specific proposal for representing presuppositions, but we can provide a minimal description that will suffice for our needs in the paper. Intuitively, a sentence like (31a) communicates that, for a certain point in the past, say t , Paul did not smoke after t and smoked before t , see (32).

$$(32) \quad \exists t(\text{past}(t) \ \& \ \neg \text{Paul smokes after } t \ \& \ \text{Paul smokes before } t)$$

The general form of this expression is $Qx(\text{MC}(x) \ \& \ \text{PP}(x))$, where MC is the main content and PP the presupposition. One can assume that the presupposition is ‘protected’, meaning that, if Q is existential, $\exists x\text{PP}(x)$ must be satisfied by any interpretation. For (31b), this constraint entails that (31b) is true if and only if there exists a point in the past such that Paul smoked before this point (the presupposition is protected) but no point in the past after which Paul did not smoke, which entails that there is a point in the past before which Paul smoked and after which he still smoked.¹²

Potts (2005) shows that, in many cases, conventional implicatures behave like presuppositions. One would therefore expect to observe an analogous result for *quelque*. In other terms, negating [*quelque*] [R] [S] would mean that there is not individual that satisfies R and S (negation of the main content) and, simultaneously, that some unknown individual satisfies R and S , which is contradictory.¹³

Why don’t we observe a systematic anomaly with negation in *every* sentence conveying a presupposition or an implicature? A detailed and principled answer is beyond the scope of this paper, but one can reasonably hypothesise that the end result, that is, our intuition of normalcy or anomaly, depends on the distribution of information within the sentence. In order to illustrate the problem, we consider two different cases. With aspectual verbs like *begin* or *stop*, we have a transition between states and the quantificational structure is unlike that for *quelque*, because the two pieces of information are independent. The fact that Paul has smoked (or does not smoke) does not entail that he does not smoke or continues smoking (or has been smoking or not). In contrast, the fact that some individual remains unidentified does not make sense for a non-existing individual.

Let us now compare with evaluative adverbs, which provide a well-known case of conventional implicature. For instance, *Unfortunately, Paul failed his exam* implicates that Paul’s failure is unfortunate. The negated version, *Unfortunately, Paul didn’t fail his exam*, cannot mean that Paul’s failure—a non-existing event—is unfortunate. Clearly, our intuition is that the adverb ‘sees’ the negation and bears on the proposition that Paul did not fail his exam. In contrast, in a tripartite structure where *quelque* acts as the quantifier, it cannot operate on the negation applied to the rest of the sentence unless it takes wide scope, a configuration that corresponds precisely to the non-problematic interpretation that some unknown object satisfies the restriction but not the scope.

¹²Quite generally, we have $\neg\exists x(\text{MC}(x) \ \& \ \text{PP}(x)), \exists x\text{PP}(x) \models \exists x(\text{PP}(x) \ \& \ \neg\text{MC}(x))$. The possibility of deriving just one formula and, as a result, to bind all the variables with just one existential quantifier is a model-theoretic property, independent from the treatment of presuppositions. The relevant point is that the existence of an entity that satisfies the presupposition is jeopardised by negation.

¹³An additional problem is the status of evidentiality. It should probably concern the negation of the main content, not the main content itself, because, otherwise, we would face a case of illocutionary suicide, the same proposition, i.e. the main content, say ϕ , being presented as false by the speaker in the main content of the negated form, i.e. $\neg\phi$, and presented as inferred in the implicature introduced by the very same speaker. A different possibility is that the implicature concerns $\neg\phi$, which leads to another kind of problem: the implicature then concerns both ϕ and $\neg\phi$ in two distinct dimensions (ignorance and evidentiality). Although this is not logically impossible, it remains to be shown whether an addressee can make sense of such a complicated situation.

Our analysis leads to four conclusions. First, it allows us to account for the remarkable parallelism between *quelque* and the complex determiner *je ne sais quel* ('I don't know which/what') (Jayez and Tovena, 2008a). The data in (33) show that *je ne sais quel* is awkward when in the scope of a clausemate negation, whereas the negation has no effect when it is in the matrix clause.

- (33) a. # Yolande n'a pas trouvé je ne sais quel fichier
'Yolande didn't find I don't know what file'
b. Marie ne pense pas que Yolande ait trouvé je ne sais quel fichier
'Mary doesn't think that Yolanda found I don't know what file'
= *Mary doesn't think that Yolanda found some unknown file*

This contrast is interesting because *je ne sais quel* is not mentioned in the list of PPIs or NPIs. If we assume that *je ne sais quel* has the same semantic structure as *quelque* and conveys an ignorance implicature, we have a simple explanation for their similarity. Moreover, this proximity between the two items lends support to our central intuition that it is difficult to imagine that a non-existing entity is 'unknown'.

Second, when the implicature is interpreted in situ, that is, independently from the application of an operator to the main content, no particular problem arises, even when this operator is negative. This is the case when the syntactic hierarchy allows one to construct a clear distinction between the clause containing *quelque* and a negative operator in some higher clause. In such cases, we recognise a standard configuration pointed out by Baker. This kind of situation echoes Chierchia's (2004) proposal that conversational implicatures are processed locally. In the present case, we have a *conventional* implicature of ignorance and we propose to extend Chierchia's idea in the following way. In a first stage, the tripartite form [*quelque*] [*R*] [*S*] is processed normally, without any contradiction coming from the interaction between ignorance and negation. Next, negation is applied, which amounts to negating the existence of a situation where some unknown individual satisfies *R* and *S*.

Third, the compatibility of interrogation with *quelque* is explained by the fact that interrogation scopes over the entire clause that hosts *quelque*, exactly like a negative operator in a higher clause. This can be shown by comparing to other conventional implicatures, which are not effected by interrogation. For example, (34a) and (34b) mean 'Did Paul fail his exam, which would be unfortunate/surprising', but not 'It is unfortunate/surprising that one wonders whether Paul failed his exam'. The scope of negation, which is an independent property, is convergent with our hypothesis: whenever an operator can embed the whole *quelque*-clause, the implicature of the determiner can be interpreted locally, without semantic conflict.

- (34) a. Est-ce que, malheureusement, Paul a échoué à son examen?
'Did Paul–unfortunately–fail his exam?'
b. Est-ce que, bizarrement, Paul a échoué à son examen?
'Did Paul–surprisingly–fail his exam?'

Finally, the strong similarity between *some* (Farkas, 2002c) and *quelque* is now less mysterious. Both determiners exploit a central epistemic value (ignorance). Given that they are not morphologically related, it would be strange that they happen to show very similar PPI empirical properties by pure chance.

One might object that *quelque chose* and *something* or *quelqu'un* and *somebody/someone* have, strictly speaking, no ignorance value, (see 35a), but still obey the same restrictions with respect

to negation. However, all these pronouns exploit a form of ignorance since they cannot be used to refer to an individual that would be categorised and identified by all the participants. For instance, (35a) is not natural if the speaker believes that the addressee has a precise idea about which lorry was unloading. Similarly, (35b) is not to be used if the participants mutually know who is coming, unless the speaker tries to be ironical.

- (35) a. J'ai vu quelque chose, un camion qui déchargeait des caisses
 'I saw something, a lorry which was unloading crates'
 b. Tiens, voilà quelqu'un
 'Look, someone is coming'

5 The evolution of *quelque*

The goal of the second part is to present a number of observations and questions related to the evolution of *quelque* in Old French (OF) and Middle French (MF). OF is considered to span the 11th-14th centuries and MF the 15th and 16th. The first occurrences of *quelque* are to be found at the beginning of the 12th century, about 1120.¹⁴ We used texts between 1100 to 1550, from the *Base du Français Médiéval* (<http://bfm.ens-lyon.fr/>), from the ELICO project quotation set (<http://elico.linguist.jussieu.fr/>) and from FRANTEXT (<http://www.frantext.fr/>). We will comment only examples from the BFM.

5.1 The origin of *quelque*

Quelque can be analysed as the result of merging the two elements of the *quel N que* construction. According to Buridant (2000, § 572, p. 670), the *quel + que* combination had initially two properties.

1. It belonged to a general system of relative-paired expressions (and it is called *relatif en emploi couplé* 'relative in a paired usage' by Buridant), where a relative pronoun has an indefinite-like form as antecedent. Together, they constitute an indefinite relative clause that tends to freeze into a fixed form (called *locution couplée à antécédent en 'quel'* 'paired expression with *quel* as antecedent' by Buridant).
2. It had a concessive reading.

The structure Buridant assigns to *quel que* is as in (36).

- (36) *quel N* *que S*
 antecedent rel. clause

The reason why *quelque* is categorised as a relative pronoun rather than as a complementiser in (36) is the existence of several forms in the texts, corresponding to the subject, direct complement and locative functions, see (37).

¹⁴We thank Christiane Marchello-Nizia for this precision.

- (37) et en quel lieu ou il soit en avroit il molt grant duel, s'il le
 and in QUEL place where he be-subj of that have-cond he very deep grief, if he that
 savoit
 knew
 'and, in whatever place he could be, he would be deeply sorry if he knew that'
 et, en quelque lieu qu'il puisse être, il en serait fort chagriné s'il le savait
 [BFM, Lancelot-Graal ou Lancelot en prose, unknown author, early 13th century]

The mode of presentation and the examples chosen by Buridant suggest that the *quel N que* structure has a universal interpretation. In *quel N, quel* is an interrogative or correlative element, which introduces a variable over a set of N-individuals.¹⁵

The *que* + S element is normally in the subjunctive, like in other similar constructions (Buridant, 2000, § 279, p. 350). This is not obligatory, though, as illustrated by examples (38) and (39), which were brought to our attention by Marchello-Nizia.

- (38) Quel part que la pucelle vet, Arranz est toz tens an agait, et toz garniz de
 Which place that the virgin goes, Arranz is every time on watch, and all ready of
 li ferir
 her strike-inf
 'Wherever the virgin goes, Arranz is watching her and all ready to strike her'
 Où que la vierge aille, Arranz la surveille et se tient prêt à la frapper
 [Eneas 7157-8, 12^e siècle]
- (39) Il li dit : "Or choisissiez des deus le quel que il vos plect"
 He him said : "Now choose of the two the which that it you pleases"
 'He told him "Now, choose which one of the two you prefer"
 Il lui dit: "à présent choisissez celui des deux qui vous plaît"
 [Le chevalier de la charrette, v. 289, Chrétien de Troyes, written ca. 1180]

Quer (1998, p. 202) proposes that the subjunctive in free relatives can express domain widening, like FC items. Although the comparison with FC items remains an issue (see section 3), we keep the general idea that the subjunctive indicates that the set of N-individuals under consideration includes members that occupy an extreme position on a scale of typicality, relevance or appropriateness. One may conjecture that the concession interpretation is facilitated by the subjunctive mood.¹⁶

The last point to note is that OF has at least three structures containing *quel* or *quelque*.

- a. *quel* + *qui/que/où* relative pronoun, as in (37) repeated below,
- b. *quelque*+ N + *qu-* relative pronouns, as in (40),
- c. *quelque* N, as in (41).

- (37) et en quel lieu ou il soit en avroit il molt grant duel, s'il le
 and in QUEL place where he be-subj of that have-cond he very deep grief, if he that
 savoit
 knew

¹⁵Foulet (1919) notes that combining interrogative words with *quel* in order to convey indeterminacy was very frequent in OF.

¹⁶Whether the concession interpretation was grammaticized or felt as an implicature in OF is still an open question.

‘and, in whatever place he could be, he would be deeply sorry if he knew that’
 et, en quelque lieu qu’il puisse être, il en serait fort chagriné s’il le savait
 [BFM, Lancelot-Graal ou Lancelot en prose, unknown author, early 13th century]

- (40) qui tant a meffait que jamais n’est digne de estre amé, quelque
 who so much has misdne that never deserves of be-inf loved, QUELQUE
 vaillance qui soit en lui
 courage that be-subj in him
 ‘who has done so much wrong that he does not deserve any love, no matter how valiant
 he might be’
 qui a tellement mal agi qu’il ne mérite pas d’amour quel que soit son courage
 [BFM, Chroniques et conquêtes de Charlemagne, David Aubert, 1458]
- (41) car il n’est pas hon qui ne peche, tourjorz a chascuns quelque teche
 for there is no man who not sins, always has each one some stain
 ‘for there is no man without sin, everybody has always some stain’
 car il n’est d’homme qui ne pêche, chacun a toujours quelque souillure
 [BFM, Roman de la rose, Jean de Meun, entre 1269 et 1278]

Concerning the direction of the scale, the *quel que* et *quelque que* forms are compatible with high or low values.

5.1.1 Intermediate conclusion

It is highly probable that *quelque* and *quel + que* have similar meanings, but the details of their evolution are somewhat unclear. Combettes (2004), agreeing with Foulet (1919), mentions for *quelque* an analogy with *qui que*, *que que*, etc. However, as noted by Foulet, the reasons why a correlative construction evolved into a regular determiner like *quelque*, like in (41), remains to be understood.

According to Foulet, *quelque* as a determiner originated in an idiom *à quelque paine* (lit. with QUELQUE pain) = *à quelle peine que ce soit* (lit. with what pain that it be-subj) = ‘whatever pain it might cause’, ‘with much pain’.¹⁷

An evolution along these lines is indeed possible in view of the high frequency of *à quelque paine* in our corpus, at a period (before 1350) where *quelque* does not seem to exist as a determiner. Still, the reasons why the expression itself emerged and became so frequent are not known.

Under the hypothesis of a transition from concession to indetermination, and given that *quelque* as a determiner appears as ‘weaker’ in a sense, since it is neither concessive nor universal, as explained in the next section, expressions such as *à quelque paine* might have undergone a form of weakening themselves and come to mean ‘with some pain’, rather than ‘with much pain’.

More generally, it is not always possible, in particular in the older texts, to decide whether *quelque* is concessive and intensive rather than epistemic or affective. For instance, how should one paraphrase *à quelque paine*: ‘with much pain’, ‘with some, undetermined, degree of pain’,

¹⁷This paraphrase is not a retrospective fantasy, since an equivalent expression can be found in OF texts, for instance, *Non obstant Helsis se sauva, a quelque paine que ce fust, et entra dedens Brunebier* (‘In spite of that Helsis escaped, however difficult it was, and entered Brunebier’) (BFM, Chroniques et conquêtes de Charlemagne, David Aubert, 1458). Other similar expressions can also be found, but occur much less frequently, for example *à quelque ennui* (lit. with QUELQUE worry) or *à quelque meschief* (lit. with QUELQUE misfortune).

‘with some, irrelevant, degree of pain’? Should one assume that the three interpretations were simultaneously available at some point in time? Combettes (2004) clearly defends the first (intensive) interpretation, which he sees as the most probable in a number of contexts. However, the intuitions are sometimes difficult to justify and it is not clear that one must assign a unique and constant meaning to the expression.

5.2 Main uses

In the present section, we try to convey a feel of the role of *quelque* between 1200 and 1550, by listing its main uses.¹⁸ We mention five points, which echo the questions raised in the previous sections.

Concession use It is well represented and is not very different from what is to be found in subsequent stages of the French language, including the present one. Occurrences are more frequent after 1450, but can be found also in older texts, as in this excerpt from Joinville.

- (42) et encore ferons nous pis se nous ne tuons le roy, quelque asseurement
 And even do-future we worse if we not kill the king, QUELQUE assurance
 que nous li aions donné
 that we him have-subj given
 ‘And we will do even worse if we do not kill the king, whatever assurance we gave to him’
 Et nous ferons encore pire si nous ne tuons pas le roi, quelque assurance que nous ayons donnée
 [BFM, Mémoires ou Vie de saint Louis, Jean de Joinville, 1307].

Use as a determiner *Quelque* as a determiner is more and more frequent as time goes by but is already present in older texts. Interpretations are usually habitual, generic, or intensional (under the scope of a modal operator).

- (43) Male Bouche qui riens n’esperne trueve a chascune quelque herne
 Bad Mouth who nothing neg spares finds to each one QUELQUE fault
 ‘Bad Mouth, who pardons nothing, finds a weakness in everybody’
 Mauvaise Bouche, qui ne pardonne rien, trouve à chacun quelque défaut
 [BFM, Roman de la rose, Guillaume de Lorris, 1227].

Iteration and habituality

- (44) au temps que Fortune est amie de quelque homme et qu’ elle l’ a mis en
 at the time that Fortune is friend of QUELQUE man and that she him has put in
 aucun estat, alors il trouvera de faulz amis sans nombre
 some state, then he find-future of false friends without number
 ‘As soon as Fortune makes friend with some man and establishes him in some social position, he will find innumerable false friends’
 Lorsque le sort prend quelque homme en amitié et le place dans une certaine position, alors il trouvera de faux amis sans nombre

¹⁸Within this time span, there is no significant grammatical change for *quelque*, apart from the emergence of the new morpheme *quelqu’un* (lit. QUELQUE + indefinite determiner, ‘somebody’), in the 13th century, with a raise in frequency in the 15th. In contrast, the determination system undergoes major changes, including the loss of specificity for *un* (‘a’). We are grateful to Marchello-Nizia for this precision.

[BFM, Jean de Saintré, Antoine de la Sale, 1456].

Interprétation générique

- (45) Qant ce vint au quatrime jour, et que euls et lors cevas furent tout
 When it came to the fourth day and that them and their horses were all
 rafresqi et en grant volenté de ceminer avant pour trouver quelque
 refreshed and in strong will to travel forward in order to find QUELQUE
 aventure, il se departirent
 adventure, they left
 ‘When the fourth day came and they and their horses had rested and they desired to
 move forward in order to go through some adventure, they left’
 Quand le quatrième jour arriva et qu’eux et leurs chevaux furent reposés et très désireux
 d’avancer pour trouver queleque aventure, ils se mirent en route
 [BFM, Chroniques, Jean Froissart, 1385]

Purpose clause

- (46) a. et fault que malgré moi je me tiengne en ce lieu jusquez j’
 And is necessary that in spite of me I remain-subj in this place until I
 aye quelque bonne nouvelle
 have-subj QUELQUE good new
 ‘And, unwillingly, I have to remain here until I have some good news’
 et je dois malgré moi rester en ce lieu jusqu’a ce que je reçoive quelque bonne
 nouvelle
 [BFM, Chevalier de la Charrette ou Lancelot, Chrétien de Troyes, 1176]
- b. Encores veul et vous commande que tous les jours de quelque Pater
 Moreover want and you order that all the days of QUELQUE Pater
 noster ou autre oroison vous servez
 Noster or other prayer you use
 ‘Moreover, I want and command that you say some Pater Noster or some other
 prayer everyday’
 De plus je désire et ordonne que vous disiez quelque Pater Noster ou autre prière
 chaque jour
 [BFM, Jean de Saintré, Antoine de la Sale, 1456].

Future possibilities

- (47) si vous l’ apportez en quelque lieu
 If you it bring to QUELQUE place
 ‘If you bring it somewhere’
 si vous l’apportez en quelque lieu
 [BFM, *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*, auteur inconnu, 1462]

Conditionals

In view of these and many similar examples, already available around mid-12th century, *quelque* N was not necessarily concessive but rather anti-specific, i.e. used to refer to an indeterminate individual satisfying the description expressed by N. If the concession use was really prior in time, one can plausibly conjecture that anti-specificity is based on the equivalence associated with concession. In a concession use, the individuals that satisfy a given property *P* are ordered along a scale according to their probability of causing or facilitating some particular effect. So, their equivalence derives from a pragmatic implicature: if the *P*-individual that is the less likely to trigger the effect triggers it anyway, the other individuals probably trigger it too.

Anti-specificity entails presenting all the *P*-individuals as equivalent with respect to a property or a proposition. For equivalence, one needs a modal structure, consisting of a set of equivalent possibilities containing one individual per possibility.¹⁹ Some examples show that, from the 1400 period on, the ignorance value is salient, which amounts to using the epistemic states of an agent as nodes for the modal structure. (48) illustrates this value.

- (48) Si s'en va et fait mauvese chiere, dont sa femme cognoist bien
 However goes away and makes bad face, from which his wife knows well
 qu' il y a quelque chose
 that there is some thing
 'However, he goes away and makes a face, hence his wife realises that there is something wrong'
 Mais il s'en va en faisant la tête, ce qui fait que sa femme se rend bien compte qu'il y
 a quelque chose
 [BFM, Quinze joies de mariage, unknown author, 1400].

The epistemic reading If one assumes a transition from concession to ignorance, it remains to explain why the endpoint of the evolution is rather epistemic than referential or affective (indifference, etc.).

The existential value Why is the determiner mainly existential? The concession structure allowed for a universal interpretation. For instance, in (49), the preferred interpretation is clearly a universal one.

- (49) Franceis furent mult orgueillos, mult cruels e mult damagos, par quel que
 Frenchmen were much proud, much cruel and much obnoxious, by QUELQUE
 leu que il passoent
 place that they passed
 'Frenchmen were very arrogant, cruel and obnoxious, whatever place they went through'
 Les français se montrèrent extrêmement arrogants, cruels et nuisibles, en quelque lieu
 qu'ils traversaient
 [BFM, Roman de Rou, Wace, ca. 1170]

This interpretation does not seem to be available for the determiner without a modal operator. For instance, a sentence like *Fortune est amie de quelque homme* ('Fortune is friendly to QUELQUE man'), adapted from (44), cannot mean that chance is friendly to every man. In (44), one finds a conditional modal operator, which is known to give rise to a universal reading for wide-scope indefinites, as in donkey sentences and similar structures. For example, *If chance favours a man and establishes him in some social position, he will find innumerable false friends* can be paraphrased by 'for every man, if chance favours him and ... etc.'. Assuming an ignorance value, the absence of a universal interpretation is expected, since the truth of the generic sentence would entail the truth of the sentence for each individual, an interpretation which conflicts with ignorance.

However, one can also observe that it is difficult to find a universal interpretation with the *quelque N que ce soit* construction. This points to a general problem. The literature on FC items shows some variation as to the existential or universal status of those items, see (Dayal, 2005; Giannakidou, 2001; Horn, 2001; Jayez and Tovena, 2005). In the case of *quelque*, it seems that, for the universal value to be salient, an iteration is needed, that is, a sequence of

¹⁹This is not a strictly necessary assumption, but it simplifies the presentation.

similar situations that each host a particular individual.²⁰ There is no example of a generic or episodic use in our corpus, which suggests that *quelque* is an existential indefinite, even in the concessive construction *quelque N que*.

Summarising, our hypothesis is that *quelque* probably originated as a concessive item signalling that all the degrees or modes of a property have to be considered, and that it evolved into an existential epistemic indefinite signalling the epistemic equivalence (ignorance interpretation) of all the individuals in a domain.

Negative environments At this stage, the problem of negative environments resurfaces. In a number of examples, *quelque* combines with negation as a standard existential indefinites ($\neg\exists \Rightarrow \forall\neg$). The concessive examples (50a) illustrate this possibility and have exact counterparts in modern French (50b).

- (50) a. sans estre empeschiés, arestés ou molestés en quelque manière que ce
Without be held, delayed or troubled in QUELQUE way that it
soit
be-subj
‘Without being held, delayed or troubled in whatever way’
[BFM, Chronique, Enguerrand de Monstrelet, 1441]
- b. sans être retenus, retardés ou importunés de quelque manière que ce soit

One can also find examples with *quelque* alone (51) and they also have modern counterparts in French (52).

- (51) a. onques en nul sens ce n’ avint qu’ en si biau vergier n’ eüst huis
never in any way this neg happened that in so beautiful orchard neg was door
ou eschiele ou quelque pertuis
or ladder or some opening
‘It absolutely never happened that so beautiful a garden had no door, no ladder or
no opening whatsoever’.
[BFM, Roman de la rose, Guillaume de Lorris, 1227]
- b. adviser que ne soiés devant quelque seigneur ou dame
to take care that neg be-subj before QUELQUE lord or lady
‘to avoid putting oneself before any lord or lady’
[BFM, Jean de Saintré, Antoine de la Sale, 1456]
- (52) a. il n’est absolument jamais arrivé que, dans un si beau jardin, on ne trouve (pas)
quelque porte, ou quelque échelle ou quelque ouverture
- b. veiller à ne pas se placer devant quelque seigneur ou quelque dame

(52a) is not problematic if we assume that analyses such as Baker’s (1970) or Szabolcsi’s (2004) for *some* can be extended to *quelque*, since both authors predict that the simultaneous presence of two antilicensers—two negations in (51a) and (52a)—rescues *some*. The situation is different in (51b) and (52b), where we have only one negation and *quelque* has narrow scope. Our intuition on examples of this kind is that they get a semantic structure that can be roughly paraphrased by ‘make sure that one is not in a situation where one stands before some lord or lady’. In this respect, *quelque* (‘some’) is not in the immediate scope of negation. However, we have no explanation to offer as to how to derive such a licensing semantic structure.

²⁰It is precisely the interpretation of (49), where *passoent* has an imperfective morphology.

Finally, one can find examples which cannot be directly adapted for modern French.

- (53) a. il se trouva tout sain et haillié de son corpz, sans avoir
 He himself found all sound and healthy of his body, without have-inf
 quelque essomte
 QUELQUE injure
 He realised that he was entirely untouched and in good health, without any injure
 [BFM, Roman du Comte d'Artois, auteur inconnu, 1460]
- b. *Il s'aperçut qu'il était entièrement intact et en bonne santé, sans avoir quelque
 blessure

Such examples raise several questions, for which we cannot provide answers in our present state of knowledge. Should we interpret (53) as concessive, in which case *sans quelque essomte* means 'without having any injure, whatever it is'? If this interpretation is correct, why did this interpretive option disappear at subsequent stages, since *quelque* became incompatible with a clausemate negation? Should we separate more sharply *quelque* as an epistemic determiner and as a concessive item? Should we consider that *quelque* is epistemic but is not a PPI in cases like (53a), which entails under our approach that it did not convey an ignorance implicature.

6 Concluding remarks

The work presented in this chapter develops our hypothesis (Jayez and Tovena, 2008a) that the form *quelque* N P, in which P is a property, means that the existence of an entity of type N satisfying P is a piece of information at which the epistemic agent got by inference (evidential aspect) and that the exact identity of such an entity remains unknown (epistemic aspect). The epistemic component of meaning, and the concessive component that can be associated to it, tell us to put *quelque* in the family of FC and epistemic items, provided one includes the evidential aspect. We have clarified the impact that the conventional implicature of ignorance has on the distribution of the determiner in negative sentences. Finally, we have laid the foundations for the study of the origin and the development of *quelque*. This has given us the opportunity to identify several important issues, among which we can recall the question of whether the concessive use is a byproduct of the ignorance component or the reverse, and the question of whether and how to reconcile the concessive meaning with the existential interpretation.

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