

Coffee Break **French**

Season 4, Episode 20

Email: Matthieu to Gabrielle



CoffeeBreak
French

SEASON 4

Mark: Yes, we have indeed reached the mid point of our season. This is the middle episode and it's the episode when everything happens.

PB: Oh!

Mark: [Bonjour à tous et à toutes, moi c'est Mark.](#)

PB: [Et moi c'est Pierre-Benoît, comme d'habitude.](#)

Mark: [Et nous sommes très contents d'être ici avec vous encore une fois avec encore un épisode de Coffee Break French.](#) If this happens to be the first ever episode of Coffee Break French you are listening to then you may be wondering what we are all about. Coffee Break French is a series in which we will help you build your knowledge of French and Coffee Break length episodes starting from the absolute basics on the beginnings of French right up to now when were dealing with really quite complex stuff.

We're following the story of four people, Sylvie, her mum, Monique, Matthieu and his friend Gabrielle. And this episode is where we

find out what finally happens with Matthieu
and Sylvie on the station, on the [quai du RER](#).

PB: Oh!

Mark: On the platform of the RER train in Paris. OK,
it's time to listen to our passage.

PB: Let's go for it!

Mark: So this is the email from Matthieu to Gabrielle.

Salut Gabrielle, j'ai reçu ton message ce matin
sur mon téléphone. J'étais sur le quai du RER
quand j'ai remarqué que j'avais un nouveau
mail. Tu es bien matinale dis donc !

Au même moment, la jeune fille du RER
arrivait sur le quai. J'ai donc pris mon courage
à deux mains et je suis allé lui parler. Elle est si
jolie ! Elle est plutôt grande, je dirais environ
1m70, elle a les yeux noisette en amande. Elle
a les cheveux longs ondulés. Elle a l'air très
sympa mais assez réservée. Elle semble être
très simple et naturelle. Elle n'est pas de Paris,
mais ça je m'en serais douté ! Elle vient des
Vosges et plus précisément d'Epinal. Cela fait
environ un mois qu'elle a emménagé à Ivry.
Elle travaille chez Pressa, une boîte de Presse à
Levallois, c'est pour cette raison que nous
nous croisons tous les matins à la station de
RER !

Nous avons discuté le temps que le RER arrive
et nous avons continué notre conversation

Information

Further notes on the text will be
provided in the transcript of the
Language Study episode.

jusqu'à ce que je descende à St Michel-sur-Orge pour aller au bureau. Nous nous sommes quittés en nous échangeant nos numéros de téléphone. J'espère que tu es fière de moi car, tu sais, ce n'était quand même pas facile de parler à une inconnue sur le quai du RER ! J'espère maintenant qu'elle va me rappeler !

Bon sinon dis-moi comment vas-tu?

Effectivement je ne suis pas enchanté par ta nouvelle histoire avec Thomas. Je trouve qu'il est trop prétentieux, que ce n'est pas le genre de gars qui te correspond et surtout il t'a fait du mal une fois, il est tout à fait capable de recommencer. D'un autre côté, je peux aussi comprendre qu'il est dur de tourner la page si facilement après tout ce que vous avez vécu ensemble. Je n'ai qu'un mot à te dire, attention. A mon tour de te dire de me tenir au courant. Bien sûr que je ne t'en veux pas, tu es mon amie. J'ai juste peur pour toi. Je ne souhaite pas te ramasser encore une fois à la petite cuillère. Bon si tu penses qu'il a changé il n'y a peut-être pas de soucis à se faire.

Coté boulot, la situation s'améliore légèrement, j'ai bien avancé sur le dossier avec les Canadiens donc j'ai un peu plus de temps à moi. Je pense même pouvoir

retourner au cinéma ce week-end. Et pourquoi pas prendre la carte illimitée? Cela pourra me pousser à sortir un peu plus. Bon je suis à ma pause déjeuner donc je vais devoir te laisser. A très vite ! Bises, Matthieu

Mark: OK, an interesting episode here. An interesting text from Matthieu to Gabrielle. And at this point, as usual, I am going to explain the text in English.

As we know in this episode, Matthieu is responding to Gabrielle's latest email. You'll remember that she was encouraging him to find the right moment to go and speak to Sylvie on the station platform. And she also told him about the latest developments in the rekindling of her relationship with Thomas and there's more on both of those stories in this email.

Matthieu starts by telling Gabrielle that he received her email on his phone just as the **fille du RER** was arriving on the platform. He took a deep breath and went to speak to her. Matthieu describes her, and of course we are talking about Sylvie here as so pretty, **si jolie**. She's quite tall and has hazel eyes and long wavy hair. She's not from Paris but he was

already sure of that. She's been living in Paris for a month and as we know already, but as Matthieu has just found out, she works for Pressa, a publishing house in Levallois, close to where he gets off at the RER every morning. Things went quite well in their initial conversation, they chatted in the platform while waiting for the train and then they continued their conversation on the train until he had to get off at St Michel-sur-Orge. He then says that they said their goodbyes but not without exchanging phone numbers.

PB: *Nous nous sommes quittés en nous échangeant nos numéros de téléphone.*

Mark: Matthieu hopes that Gabrielle is proud of him since he has now taken the opportunity to speak to Sylvie. He just hopes that Sylvie gets back in touch with him. He goes on to say that he's not very enamoured with Gabrielle's latest announcement that she's back with Thomas. Matthieu does not like Thomas, he doesn't think he's right for Gabrielle and, as he explains, if Thomas has been nasty to her once he's quite capable of doing so again.

PB: *Il t'a fait mal une fois, il est tout à fait capable de recommencer.*

Mark: However, he does understand that it's difficult to move on given everything that has happened in the past. So he simply asked Gabrielle to be careful and to keep him

posted. He finishes by talking about his work, his Canadian project is going well and he has a little more time to himself as a result. He even thinks he may have time to go back to the cinema this weekend and he's considering the unlimited card which Gabrielle spoke about last time. Indeed, if he has this card maybe it will encourage him to use it more often and get out and about a bit more. He's emailing on his lunch break so he finishes the email by saying he must get back to work. And that's the summary of this week's email [en anglais](#).

PB: [Très bien](#).

Mark: [Comme d'habitude, Pierre-Benoît, tu as choisi quatre expressions](#).

PB: [Oui, quatre nouvelles expressions](#).

Mark: [Et on va écouter la première maintenant](#).

Elle n'est pas de Paris, mais ça, je m'en serais douté.

Mark: So here Matthieu is talking about Sylvie and he says [elle n'est pas de Paris](#), she's not from Paris. [Mais ça je m'en serais douté!](#) Now this really is quite tricky from a grammatical point of view because it's quite difficult to explain. In fact it doesn't really seem to make sense. Let's

take it back to the base level and let's look at that verb **douter**.

PB: Yes.

Mark: **Douter** means...

PB: To doubt.

Mark: To doubt. So it's a... it's a cognate, it sounds the same in English and in French, they both come from the same root. So **douter** at a basic level is 'to doubt'.

PB: Yeah, you are not sure about something.

Mark: Okay.

PB: You are **not** sure.

Mark: You are not sure, yes, this is where the complications come in. So **douter** in it's basic form - let's put it into a sentence. And when we put it into a sentence, we do need think about what's coming next. So for example if I said, **je doute que tu viennes ce soir...**

PB: Yes, were using the subjunctive and we need to because it tells us a doubt and that's fine.

Mark: And the subjunctive is one of the key things used for doubts so **je doute que tu viennes ce soir**. However...

PB: Here it's reflexive Mark.

Mark: Yeah.

PB: So its **se douter**.

Mark: And it's even **se douter de quelque chose** because there's an **EN**.

PB: **Je me doute de quelque chose**, I'm thinking about it: there's something going on here. So

you're actually not doubting, you are sure about it! So it's like the inverse, the opposite.

Mark: Yeah, so *je m'en doute...* in that situation is "I don't doubt it at all".

PB: No, *je m'en doute, par exemple...*

Mark: I'm absolutely sure!

PB: Yeah! This is crazy, isn't it?

Mark: So for example if I said: *tu ne viens pas ce soir*, you're not coming this evening, *pff je m'en doutais!*

PB: *Ouais, je m'en doutais parce que tu as trop de travail, parce que tu es arrivé en retard*, so because of all these reasons, I'm saying *je m'en doutais* but I'm not doubting it. There's just no trace of a doubt, if you want. It's obvious.

arriver en retard
to arrive late

Mark: And there's no real logic to this, it's just something we need to know.

PB: No, yeah.

Mark: So when it's *je m'en doute* it means you are sure of something: *je m'en doutais*. I could have told you so, I was absolutely sure.

PB: I knew it!

Mark: I knew it, yeah that's the one.

PB: Yeah, I knew it!

Mark: So here *je m'en serais douté*, that is a conditional perfect. Were using the conditional of the auxiliary verb *être*: I **could have** told you so.

PB: Yeah.

Mark: So it's not "I knew it". It's "I should have known that"! I could have told you so.

PB: I could have told you so. I mean, put it in to the context of any competition, anything you are watching on TV and you are waiting to hear who's going to be the winner of some competition like a big... I don't know... any program on TV. And then the winner is just announced and you say: Ah! Je m'en doutais!

Mark: I knew that was going to happen.

PB: Yes. It's such a weird phrase in a sense that it means the opposite from [douter](#).

Mark: And that I assume is why you chose it.

PB: It's fantastic! Well yeah, because to me, I find it really strange because it means the opposite.

Mark: Yeah!

PB: It's wonderful!

Mark: [Bien! OK on va continuer avec notre deuxième expression.](#)

Et nous avons continué notre conversation jusqu'à ce que je descende à St-Michel-sur-Orge pour aller au bureau.

Mark: A nice one, with a subjunctive in there too.

PB: [Oui : jusqu'à ce que + subjonctif.](#)

Mark: OK so here, this is when Matthieu and Sylvie had got on the train and they were talking. In fact they talked until he got off at St Michel-sur-Orge. So we know [jusqu'à](#).

PB: Oui.

Mark: Until.

PB: Until.

Mark: And when 'until' is followed by a clause, until something happens, then it becomes **jusqu'à ce que** + the subjunctive.

PB: Until whatever fact **ce que**... OK, it's going to happen.

Mark: And in fact in spoken French, that become **jusqu'à c'que**.

PB: Oui.

Mark: Jusqu'à ce que + subjunctif. So if I were to say, "I'm going to study French until I know how to speak it fluently": **je vais étudier le français jusqu'à ce que je sache le parler couramment**.

PB: **Très bien, très bien** and we've got a subjunctive.

Mark: **Sache** coming from **savoir**. If I were to say, 'until I speak it fluently': **jusqu'à ce que je parle**.

PB: **Je parle ou je le parle couramment**.

Mark: Yeah, well we can't really hear the subjunctive that's why we put in the **savoir**.

PB: That's why sometimes you can show off and put the subjunctive of **pouvoir** and then put **parler, faire** whatever as an infinitive after it.

Mark: Exactly.

PB: I tend to teach that a lot. **Jusqu'à ce que je puisse le parler, le connaître** here, **mieux**.

Mark: This really is very nice.

couramment
fluently

PB: Oh, it's nice! And I love this expression *jusqu'à ce que* + a fact and we are going to have to wait until this is being achieved, the idea of time. And we don't control time therefore this is why we've got a subjunctive. So it's a wee bit philosophical, you know the temporal battle of time against whatever...

Mark: Oh! he's getting carried away now.

PB: Oh, I love it! I love it!

Mark: I think here also the fact we don't control time therefore there is the element of doubt, we don't know that is actually going to happen.

PB: So therefore subjunctive.

Mark: So it's just like *je doute que tu viennes ce soir* there there is doubt and *jusqu'à ce que tu viennes ce soir* until you get here were not convinced that you are actually going to come.

PB: Yes, exactly, exactly.

Mark: *Très bien, OK nous avons une troisième expression je suppose.*

PB: *Ah ! oui.*

Je peux aussi comprendre qu'il est dur de tourner la page si facilement après tout ce que vous avez vécu ensemble.

Mark: There's quite a lot in this sentence. So, *je peux aussi comprendre*, I can also understand, *qu'il*

est dur de tourner la page , qu'il est difficile de "turner", de "turner" ? De **tourner**.

"turner"

Mark mispronounces the word **tourner** and corrects himself.

PB: De turner, même tourner oui.

Mark: ...qu'il est difficile de tourner la page si facilement. So I understand that it is difficult to turn over that new leaf. Tourner la page, we've talked about that before. But il est dur de faire quelque chose, it's difficult to do something so we need that **de** in there after, **il est** + an adjective **de** + infinitive.

PB: Plus infinitive, yes. That's quite nice, a nice structure.

Mark: Give us some other examples.

PB: Oh ! Il est important de parler une ou plusieurs langues étrangères.

plusieurs
several

Mark: Oui, that is indeed important to speak one or more foreign languages. OK, what about another example?

PB: Un peu plus triste, mais il est triste de savoir qu'il y a peut-être une personne ou deux dans le monde, qui n'a ou qui n'ont jamais écouté un épisode de Coffee Break French.

Mark: Oh la ! c'est bien triste ça.

PB: Eh oui ! c'est très triste Mark... excusez-moi.

Mark: It's sad to know that there is maybe one or there maybe are two people in the world who have never heard an episode of Coffee Break French. This is interesting because it's **il est** + the adjective **de** + the infinitive. However, if we

were to say here 'it is sad that you are not here'.

PB: Ah ! là c'est différent.

Mark: Because here we need to use the subjunctive of course. Il est triste que tu ne sois pas là.

PB: Oui. Ou il est triste qu'une personne ou deux personnes n'aient jamais écouté... I could even say n'aient jamais écouté un épisode de *Coffee Break French*. How would you spell « n'aient » n'...?

Mark: Well, if it's une personne it would be A-I-T. And if it were deux personnes it would be A-I-E-N-T.

PB: Il est fort, il est fort ce Mark, il est très fort !

Mark: It's becoming the Coffee Break Subjunctive show so maybe we should move on to our final, final expression.

PB: Yeah, you know what's pretty nice Mark at the same time is that we've seen those, those kind of expression with the subjunctive before. But I think it's important, it's so important to stress the fact that French people use the subjunctive a lot in those... what we call us basic expressions that, they're basic to me, to French people, but are not natural to foreigners when they learn French and that's crucial.

Mark : And the most important thing is that we get a lot of exposure to this kind of language. Hence, our text here on Coffee Break French.

PB : Bah oui, bien sûr.

Mark : OK quatrième expression s'il te plaît.

Je ne souhaite pas te ramasser encore une fois
à la petite cuillère.

Mark : Oh ! une belle expression.

PB : It's an idiomatic one, it's a lovely one.

Ramasser une personne, ramasser quelqu'un à
la petite cuillère.

Mark : Now ramasser is to pick up.

PB : Yeah.

Mark : OK, or to gather up. And the la petite cuillère is
the...

cuillère (f)
spoon

PB : Using your wee teaspoon

Mark : Teaspoon! yeah

PB : So ramasser quelqu'un, someone, right?

Mark : Yeah.

PB : Add à la petite cuillère is using a wee
teaspoon. So you would be in bits and pieces.

Mark : Yeah.

PB : So how would you translate that Mark?

Mark : I don't think we would be using the idea of
spoons in English but we would definitely be
using the idea of pieces because in this
situation, if someone was in... was in pieces,
then yes, we would have to pick them up with
small, small tools be it spoons or tweezers or
something else.

PB : Yup yup.

Mark : But if somebody had gone to pieces, or someone was in pieces, we could use this expression in French.

PB : And it's interesting that in English, you would actually put the accent on the person: I don't want to be the one', 'I'm not going to be the one', 'I'll have to be the one'.

Mark : To pick you up, yeah or to gather.

PB : To pick up the pieces.

Mark : To pick up the pieces, yeah.

PB : It's interesting, it's a lovely expression. It's an idiomatic expression and I think it's great: you've got *je ne souhaite pas*.

Mark : Yeah *souhaiter* from the verb, 'to wish'.

PB : Yeah *te ramasser* you hear the pronoun before but really is *ramasser à la petite cuillère*. And you got the *encore une fois* let's just say it doesn't want it to happen again.

Mark : Absolutely!

PB : But I love that *ramasser quelqu'un, ramasser une personne à la petite cuillère*.

Mark : *Et voilà ! Quatre expressions très intéressantes...*

PB : *Oui un épisode très riche Mark, très très riche.*

Mark : *Je suis d'accord.*

PB : *Avec bien sûr des exemples montrant le subjonctif, utilisant le subjonctif, et puis surtout la dernière expression, the last expression, a very good idiomatic expression and I think it's*

montrant
showing

a very good episode.

Mark : Absolutely! Now, if you would like to access our transcript of this session, then you can do so from coffeebreakfrench.com and there indeed you can access all our bonus materials for the premium version of this show where you get this show, the transcript, but you also get our language study show. And in our language study show, we spend probably around 35 or 40 minutes going through every single phrase in French in this passage and help you understand exactly what it all means. Giving you lots of practice, lots of further examples and lots of interesting grammatical points. Head over to coffeebreakfrench.com to find out how to access all of that content.

PB: [Super !](#)

Mark: For now, thank you once again for listening. Please do feel free to head over to iTunes and leave us a review on iTunes or indeed on Stitcher Radio if that's where you found us or just on our website at coffeebreakfrench.com.
[Pour le moment, merci beaucoup comme d'habitude et à la prochaine !](#)

PB: [Oui à très bientôt, salut !](#)