

Lesson 3

In this video, we are going to learn about each other, by asking questions.

There are a couple of ways to ask questions in Guernsey French, but the most straightforward method is to put "Est-ch' que" in front of a statement. This turns it into a question. The words mean "Is it that". Here's an example:

"Tu es la" = "You are there", so "Est-ch' que tu es la?" means "Is it that you are there?" or "Are you there?" in short.

Another example is

Est-ch' tu d'meure ichin? (Is it that you live here?)

Keywords: So far we've used: la (there); ichin (here); d'meure (live)

Below we will use: oimes (like); marchier (to walk); cachier (to drive); moto (car);

Alan to Alex: Est-ch' que tu oimes a marchier?"

Alex: Oue, j'oime a marchier.

Alan to Julie: Est-ch' que tu oimes a cachier ton moto?

Julie: Nen-nin, j'oime a marchier

Things to point out:

1) The construction of the question seems a little clumsy, but that's because we're saying everything in full --- which is what we should do when learning a new language. In practice things are abbreviated. "Est-ch' que tu es la?" would sound like only three words: "Estchque tes la?"

2) We've mentioned that anyway we wouldn't say "Is it that you are there?" in English, we'd say "Are you there?". We can also use this form in Guernsey French, and we'll discuss this later.

Let's try out some more questions and answers:

Keywords: cafi (coffee); thee (tea); beis (drink); viande (meat); paissaon (fish); manges (eat)

Alan: Est-ch' que tu beis du cafi? (Do you drink coffee?)

Alex: Oue, je beis du cafi. (Yes, I drink coffee).

Alan: Est-ch' que tu beis du thee? (Do you drink tea?)

Julie: Oue, je beis du thee. (Yes, I drink tea).

Alan: Est-ch' que tu mange d'la viande? (Do you eat meat?)

Alex: Nen-nin, je mange des legeumes. (No, I eat vegetables).

Alan: Est-ch' que tu mange d'la viande? (Do you eat meat?)

Alex: Nen-nin, je mange du paissaon. (No, I eat fish).

Things to point out:

We've seen the word for "I" is "je" and for you is "tu", but there is also a plural form of "you" if we are talking to more than one person. The word for you in this case is "vous".

CULTURAL CHAT ABOUT THE APPARENT USE OF ENGLISH WORDS IN GUERNSEY FRENCH

Non-Guernsey French speakers often say that English words seem to be used in Guernsey French quite often, rather than a French word. They might give examples like "tchaire" rather than "chaise" or "coupe" rather than "tasse". Other examples might be "ice-cream" rather than "glace".

There are several different effects at work here, but let's start with "tchaire" and "coupe". The point here is that modern English derives from a mixture of the Anglo-Saxon spoken by the natives of England when the Normans invaded in 1066 and the Norman-French which the conquerors spoke. Guernsey-French, as one of the forms of Norman French, still retains these words, whereas standard French now uses other forms. The English words "chair" and "cup" come from the Norman-French forms, so it is English following Norman-French, rather than the other way around. I should say, before any experts get too agitated, that the reality is far more complex, for example "tchaire" and "coupe" are still used in standard French in different contexts, but the essential point that the Guernsey-French use predates the English use is essentially correct.

Other use of English words such as "ice-cream" or "internet" obviously don't fall into this class. First of all one should say that English is so dominant now, that many languages will use "internet", rather than a word constructed in their own language. The most famous example is "le weekend" in French. So Guernsey French is no exception here. However, since the proportion of Guernsey people who stopped speaking Guernsey French starting to decline quite

a while ago, even such items as "ice-cream" or "washing machine" were frequently referred to in English. There are perfectly good words that can be used for these items, such as "enne machaenne a lavair" for "washing machine" (which incidentally appears in Marie de Garis' dictionary), and we will try to use these when appropriate.

Finally, because many Guernsey French speakers speak English far more than Guernsey French, they may just find it easier to remember the English word, and give it a fake ending to sound like Guernsey French. So for example, one hears "knitair" for "to knit" --- the "air" ending being a common verb ending in Guernsey French. But there is a perfectly good verb for "to knit" in Guernsey French, "ouvrair", which probably the speaker knows, but could not find it quickly enough in rapid speech. Here, we'll try to avoid these pitfalls when possible, but some English inspired words are now part of Guernsey French. An example we've used already is "moto" for "car".