

Lesson 4

In this video, we'll learn how to describe people other people using Guernsey French. But before this, let's discuss how we say things like "What does this that mean?" or "How do I say that in Guernsey French?", and other questions that learners of a language are liable to ask.

Keywords: tchi que (what); coum tchi que (how); chena (that); nous (we); dire/dit (say); veurt (want), Guernesiais (Guernsey French)

Alan: Coum tchi que nous dit `house' en Guernesiais? (How do we say `house' in Guernsey French?)

Julie: Nous dit `maison' en Guernesiais (We say `maison' in Guernsey French).

Alan: Coum tchi que nous dit `glass' en Guernesiais? (How do we say `glass' in Guernsey French?)

Alex: Nous dit `verre' en Guernesiais (We say `verre' in Guernsey French).

Alan: Vacque. Tchi que chena veurt dire? (Cow. What does that mean?).

Julie: Chena veurt dire `cow' (That means `cow')

Alan: Tchian. Tchi que chena veurt dire? (Dog. What does that mean?).

Alex: Chena veurt dire `dog' (That means `dog')

Things to point out:

1) "mean" is expressed as "veurt dire", which literally means "wants to say", so `Tchi que chena veurt dire?' is `What does that want to say'.

2) `dire' and `dit' are just different versions of the verb "to say".

Now let's go on to discuss how we talk about other people.

Keywords: ch'est (it is); garcaon (boy); fille (girl); faumme (woman); haomme (man)

(photo of a young boy) Alan: Est ch' que ch'est aen garcaon? (Is it a boy?)

Alex: Oue, ch'est aen garcaon? (Yes, it is a boy).

Alan: Or we could say "Oue, il est aen garcaon" (Yes, he is a boy).

(photo of a young girl) Alan: Est ch' que ch'est enne fille? (Is it a girl?)

Julie: Oue, ch'est enne fille? (Yes, it is a girl).

Alan: Or we could say "Oue, alle est enne fille" (Yes, she is a girl).

(photo of a woman) Alan: Est ch' que ch'est enne faumme? (Is it a woman?)

Alex: Oue, alle est enne faumme (Yes, she is a woman).

(photo of a man) Alan: Est ch' que ch'est en haomme? (Is it a man?)

Julie: Oue, il est en haomme (Yes, he is a man).

(photo of a woman eating) Alan: Est ch' que a mange (Does she eat?)

Alex: Oue, a mange (Yes, she eats).

(photo of a man drinking) Alan: Est ch' que i mange (Does he eat?)

Julie: Nen-nin, i beit (No, he drinks).

Things to point out:

1) To say "a boy" we use the word "aen" for "a" since "boy" is a masculine word and "enne" for "a girl" or "a woman" since this is a feminine word. Before "haomme" we used "en" which sounds like the feminine form, but is in fact the form used before a vowel sound.

2) To say "him" we use "i" and to say "her" we use "a". But before a vowel sound we use "il" and "alle". This is because it's difficult to say "i est" or "a est" --- there are two vowels together. It's much easier to say "il est" or "alle est".

CULTURAL CHAT ABOUT SOME OF THE DIFFERENT WAYS WE EXPRESS CONCEPTS IN GUERNSEY FRENCH AND IN ENGLISH

In this video we've used the word "sais" for "know": "tu sais coum tchi que nous dit" (you know how we say), but there is another word for "know" which is "counnis", as in "je counnis mes voisins" (I know my neighbours). The first means to know a fact and the second means to know, in the sense of be acquainted with, a person. We should not be surprised that a word in one language covers more than one meaning, but that in another different words are used for the different meanings. Those of you who know some other languages may know about this example and others as well.

It's not always obvious when "sais" and when "counnis" should be used. As we've said the first means to know a fact and the second to be acquainted with. But what if we want to say "I know the way". Do we say "Je counnis le ch'min" or "Je sais le ch'min"? Here "ch'min" means "path" in the sense of "way". You might guess it's "Je sais le ch'min", since you know a fact, but actually the correct form is "Je counnis le ch'min", presumably because you are acquainted with the path.

Another example where English usage differs from Guernsey French (and standard French and many other languages) is how we refer to someones age. In English we say "She is ten", but in Guernsey French we say "She has ten". The first uses the verb "to be" --- you are ten years old, but the second uses the verb "to have" and says "You have ten years".

A third example is how we refer to the weather. In Guernsey French the weather seems to have a will of its own. So we say "I fait fre" for "it is cold", but the literal translation is "it does cold", fait is the word for "does" and "fre" is the word for "cold". We also say "I fait caoud" for "it is hot". Here "caoud" is "hot", and we are again saying "it does hot". We also say "I fait bael" for "it is fine". There are many other examples: if it starts to rain we do not say "it has started to rain", but "it has put itself to rain", again giving the weather a life of its own.