'We don't say it like that': language ownership and (de)legitimising the new speaker

Julia Sallabank and Yan Marquis

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In Guernsey (Channel Islands) there is a distinct lack of fluent new speakers of the indigenous language, Giernesiei. Examination of debates and unstated ideologies surrounding language teaching and revitalisation reveals that there is a degree of unpreparedness to share the language, since effective learning of Giernesiei might undermine traditional speakers' language 'ownership' and introduce unwelcome language change. Yet older speakers express a desire for younger people to learn Giernesiei, and there is increasing desire among younger people to learn Giernesiei.

Learners and new speakers have problems finding native or fluent speakers to practise with. If they can, and they try to use phrases they have learnt, speakers' reaction is likely to be along the lines of 'we don't say it like that'. To an extent this hegemonic model has been internalised by (prospective) new speakers; it demotivates them and thus exacerbates the pressing problem of the lack of new speakers progressing beyond beginner level. Nevertheless, by no means all speakers agree with the 'traditionalist' view and there are examples of productive partnerships between older speakers and learners/new speakers.

This chapter first reviews our previous findings on language ideologies in Guernsey before presenting a taxonomy of reactions to variation and change in Giernesiei. It then relates the mismatch between ideologies and practices to our research into the motivations, goals and experiences of prospective new speakers. The idealised 'traditionalist' perception of Giernesiei conflicts with the unexpectedly rich and complex variation (both dialectal and diachronic) revealed by our documentary research, as well as affecting the prospects for new speakers to develop fluency.

1.1 Language vitality and status

The island of Guernsey lies in the English Channel, in the Gulf of St Malo near Normandy and Brittany. Politically it is a self-governing dependency of the British Crown which has strong links to Britain despite not being part of the United Kingdom (UK). It has its own directly elected legislative assembly, administrative, fiscal and legal systems and courts of law. In theory Guernsey has considerable internal autonomy in terms of domestic policy (e.g. education, language policy). Its indigenous language, a variety of Channel Islands Norman, is now highly endangered: through our efforts at language documentation, the authors have estimated that at the time of writing there may be as few as 200 fluent speakers, mainly over 80 years of age (out of a total population of over 63,000). In the only census to survey speaker numbers (in 2001), 1327 people reported speaking Giernesiei fluently (2.22% of the population). Of these, 70.4% (934) were over the age of 64 in 2001. The Bailiwick of Guernsey includes several other islands, including Alderney and Sark which both have their own Norman languages. Although these are even more severely endangered (with no and approximately 12 speakers respectively), this paper focuses on our research into the indigenous language of the island of Guernsey.

Given the rapid decline in speaker numbers and the associated fragmentation of the social networks of traditional speakers (Sallabank 2010a), Giernesiei can be said to be a 'post-vernacular language' (Shandler 2008, pp. 19–30), where the traditional speaker community is at best fragmentary, and it is used primarily for identity display rather than for its traditional communicative functions in phatic domains.

Although the establishment of a government Language Commission in 2013 indicates a degree of official support, to date there have been no moves to recognise any of the Bailiwick's indigenous languages or to include them in school curricula. As we note in Sallabank and Marquis (2016), Guernsey's language is not standardised, and its continuing low status is reflected by the fact that it does not even have an official name. This chapter will use the name /ˌdʒɛrnɛzjeɪ/, the preference expressed by the majority of speakers in our research, which we spell <Giernesiei> following our proposed Progressive Learner Spelling (ibid.). Another term used is 'Patois', which is frowned on by some language promoters because of its negative connotations in French; yet it is still in frequent use, perhaps partly because it is easier for to pronounce for Anglophones, who seem to have extraordinary difficulties with /ˌdʒɛrnɛzjeɪ/.

1.2 Some terminology

We refer to Giernesiei as a language, which is itself an ideological position or construct. By no means all speakers (or linguists) perceive Giernesiei as separate or distinguishable from French, which is still called 'the good French' by many older islanders, with obvious corollary connotations with regard to Giernesei; it is not uncommon to hear that Giernesiei is 'not a proper language' but either a substandard dialect of French or a mixture of English and French. Such attitudes are however gradually changing, which is reflected in the establishment of a government Language Commission.

As with all 'languages', there is considerable dialectal variation, and also a certain degree of mutual intelligibility with other varieties in Sark, Jersey and Normandy, which seems to vary according to context as well as speakers' dispositions and proficiency. Conversely, speakers of French remark on the low degree of comprehensibility of Giernesiei. Tomlinson (1994) played speakers of French and Giernesiei recordings of each other's speech, and found that only about 25 per cent was mutually intelligible.

As Guernsey is close to France, many islanders hear or speak French more frequently than they do Giernesiei. Despite this, levels of proficiency in French are relatively low, and the French used is not always 'good'. Both traditional and new speakers of Giernesiei who know some French have a tendency to use it to fill gaps in their Giernesiei, which can confuse or intimidate learners who may not be able to tell the difference between French and Giernesiei. Such practices may reflect covert attitudes regarding the linguistic status of Giernesiei (in addition to psycholinguistic processes).

In this chapter we refer to older members of the speaker community, who grew up hearing Giernesiei as one of their languages of socialisation, as 'traditional' (often called native) speakers. It is important to note that by no means all of these are fluent or practising speakers. There is a wide range of abilities among traditional speakers, from fluent to people who can produce very little active Giernesiei. Many of those who consider themselves to be 'native speakers' could be categorised as 'rememberers', 'latent', 'passive' or 'semi' speakers there is also a wide range of

competence and productive proficiency (Williamson 1991; Basham and Fathman 2008; Grinevald and Bert 2011, pp.50-51; Marquis and Sallabank 2013).

The term 'new speakers' is generally used to describe people who have learnt a minority or heritage language and choose it as a preferred mode of communication (O'Rourke et al. 2015). A recurrent theme in our interviews is a complaint that parents or grandparents used Giernesiei among themselves when they did not want children to understand what they were saying. Many children thus developed a passive competence, and they constitute a significant proportion of latent speakers who wish to develop or reclaim active fluency. Some researchers include latent speakers who are 're-activating' their heritage language under the definition of 'new speakers', but in Marquis' experience of teaching Giernesiei, latent and new speakers present quite different sets of challenges and language competencies, as well as sometimes differing ideological positions. Some 're-activating' latent speakers are reluctant to be included under the 'new speaker' label, as they see themselves as more 'authentic' than new speakers with no previous experience of the language. In the current ideological climate in Guernsey, such nuances are highly salient, and even a 'new speaker' with several decades of experience and a high level of mastery (such as Marquis) will find it difficult to attain legitimacy as an 'authentic' speaker.

When considering at what point a language learner might become a new speaker, we need to take into account not only proficiency but also opportunities (potential and taken) to use the language. Dołowy-Rybińska (2015) suggests that a learner becomes a new speaker by engaging with the speaker community, but in Guernsey learners experience difficulties in this regard, both because of lack of opportunities and also because of ideologies of 'language ownership', as will be discussed in part 3. Despite bottom-up efforts by language associations and the top-down establishment of the Language Commission, language planning measures have so far generated hardly any proficient new speakers of Giernesiei: the authors are currently aware of only six speakers under the age of 60[1] who are able to hold a sustained, impromptu conversation on a range of topics (this is our informal benchmark for conversational proficiency; as there is no full linguistic description, there are no formal tests).

1.3 Language support in Guernsey

As described in Sallabank (2005), until recently nearly all language-related activities in Guernsey have been bottom-up, carried out by members of cultural associations who generally have little awareness of revitalisation efforts undertaken elsewhere, little knowledge of linguistics, sociolinguistics or language planning theory, and very little financial support from official bodies. The main language-related activities are (1) cultural performances, and (2) optional extra-curricular lessons in primary schools.

Cultural festivals such as the annual Eisteddfod play an important role in Guernsey cultural life (not only with regard to Giernesiei: the festival also includes French, English and other languages, art, crafts, and musical recitals). The 'Guernsey-French' section was in abeyance from the Second World War until the 1980s, but since 2000 has expanded from one evening to two evenings and an afternoon. In terms of language promotion, such festivals are best seen as displays of 'symbolic

[1] One positive development is that one of the youngest native speakers has a small child who is being raised in both English and Guernesiais.

ethnicity' (Henry and Bankston 1999; Bankston and Henry 2000; Heinrich 2005) in that the language produced is chiefly for the purposes of performance or display. The Eisteddfod and other performance-focused events increase the visibility/audibility of the island's language, both to the immediate audience and through media coverage. They allow speakers to express pride in their language and local identity, which is important for personal confidence as well as awareness-raising and prestige. However, the events do little to further day-to-day use of Giernesiei; there is even a risk that performance may be taking the place of communicative use, and becoming a goal in itself.

Writing about 'reversing language shift' activities in the Ryukyu Islands (Japan), Heinrich (2005, p.69) describes a situation which although far removed, has remarkable parallels:

> (1) Symbolic use of the language prevails (e.g. in speech contests, arts, entertainment, etc.)
> (2) Activities often focus on the interests of older speakers
> (3) The means of reversing language shift (e.g. speech contests) are frequently taken to be the end of language revitalisation.

He warns that 'Reversing language shift activities which display such characteristics are insufficient, in the Ryukyu Islands as anywhere else' (ibid.). Given the rapid decline in fluent speakers of Giernesiei, combined with a rise in non-speaking participants and supporters, there is a trend for less and less incidental Giernesiei to be used during language festivals, both in the organisation and adjudication of festivals and in meetings of language/cultural associations. A related issue is the increase in performances by supporters who learn set pieces without learning the language (and in some cases without understanding what their recitations are about).

Guernsey is a small island with close-knit social networks, especially among the Giernesiei language community. There are several associations which organise language-related activities, but there is a considerable amount of overlap in their membership and activities. Most of the language and cultural associations in Guernsey have a social function: they hold lunches, suppers, and in the past social evenings such as 'beetle drives'[2]; however, social activities have reduced in recent years due to the increased age of members. One interviewee, who had lived in England for 30 years, mentioned the affective aspect as an important part of being involved in a performance group:

> I've got back into the group of people I knew before I went away … I decided sort of because I knew we were coming back, I thought I'll enter the Eisteddfod so I entered it before we actually came back and took part that first year just in readings and poems really – and then I got drawn into the group La Guaine du Vouest … It's a lot of fun – when we've been practising a play and as a group of people we gel very well together and it's very – we have a lot of laughs you know, it's really good fun.

The function of the associations resembles Tajfel's (1981, p.225) definition of social identity: 'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [sic.] knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership'. This is of course a valid aim in itself, especially where a language (and its speakers and their practices) have until recently held low status (King 2014; Marmion et al. 2014). But it should

[2] Beetle is a game which involves throwing a dice and drawing body parts of a beetle in accordance with the numbers thrown, with points for complete bodies.

not be confused with *language revitalisation*, which aims to increase use and domains of use, 'not necessarily attempting to bring the language back to former patterns of use but rather to bring it forward to new users and uses' (Romaine 2006, p.464).

These comments also apply to the extra-curricular language lessons in schools. As we discussed in Sallabank (2010a) and Marquis and Sallabank (2013), the (lack of) quantity and quality of the lessons are unlikely to lead to fluency among the learners; indeed, we know of no children who have progressed beyond beginner level, even after five years of lessons in some cases, although there are a few reports of children trying out the Giernesiei they have learnt with their grandparents. Like the activities of cultural associations, a large part of the *de facto* function of such lessons is to boost the self-confidence of the volunteer teachers. We discuss this further in 2.2 below.

In addition to what might be termed traditional language support, there are some activities which do fit Romaine's (2006) definition of language revitalisation. These include adult Giernesiei classes, some of which are subsidised by Guernsey College of Further Education (which provides community and post-compulsory education) or Guernsey Museums' Access and Learning service.[3] Our research has found increasing interest in learning Giernesiei, but a lack of opportunities to progress or to practice. It was assumed that native speakers were the only people with the legitimacy to teach at higher levels; but as no native speakers had the pedagogical expertise (or the qualifications required by the College of Further Education), having no intermediate or advanced lessons was deemed preferable to employing a non-native-speaker teacher.

Since 2014 the Guernsey Language Commission and Guernsey Museums' Access and Learning service have initiated some new language-related schemes, such as the Guernsey Song Project to write new songs at least partly in Giernesiei. This is also intended to encourage interaction between new/non-speakers (mainly musicians) and older, more proficient speakers: a variation on the Master-Apprentice/mentoring approach to language revitalisation (Hinton et al. 2002) called *ley bohti,* /leɪ bɔti/ ('the buddies'). Another initiative is 'Speed Patois', social meetings using the format of speed dating, also designed to encourage interaction in Giernesiei.[4]

2. LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES IN GUERNSEY

2.1 A language of the past

The Guernsey-French Eisteddfod section consists mainly of competitive recitations of poetry, Bible readings, traditional-style tales and comic plays, with many performers wearing old-fashioned clothes (not necessarily traditional local costume). As noted by Heinrich (2005), the activities focus on the interests of older speakers, and the culture projected harks back to a bygone age, which is at the very least nostalgic and possibly reinvented or mythical (Johnson 2013). The genres and content cater to the tastes of older participants and audience members. Not only does this involve folklorisation (Fishman 1987, cited by Crystal 2000, p.83) and hypertraditionalisation (Wilkins 2000), i.e. the association of Giernesei with unsophisticated folk culture (Watson 1989), but Giernesiei also

[3] The latter are taught by Yan Marquis, co-author of this chapter.
[4] See http://language.gg/article/115903/Speed-Patois and www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLrmcSBcCuA (accessed 4 August 2015).

becomes associated with a bygone age rather than with the present or future. An overt example of this is the description by the 2011 Guernsey-French Eisteddfod adjudicator of Giernesiei as 'the language of our youth' (i.e. the youth of older participants) – it is constructed as an object of nostalgia rather than as a living language. As a younger learner (in her late 20s) who had attended the Further Education College lessons stated, 'Learning Guernsey French is not cool, there is nothing to encourage the younger generation – the Eisteddfod is mostly for older people.' There is however increased participation by children, mainly reciting poetry chorally or individually, but they tend to be entered via schools. In order to accommodate parents in the audience, the children's section is now held on a separate evening; this has the unfortunate side effect of separating older speakers from young learners.

2.2 Static and dynamic views of language

We have previously identified two main diverging trends in language ideologies in Guernsey, which we call 'Static' and 'Dynamic' viewpoints (Marquis and Sallabank 2014). In a 'Static' language ideology, the indigenous language has a mainly nostalgic value and the focus is on maintenance of the traditional language community, and its authority and legitimacy, rather than on development of new users or uses. In Guernsey people who share this ideology are usually referred to as 'traditionalists'. Part of this viewpoint is linked to a continuing ideology of deficit when comparing Giernesiei to what is still known among older members of the community as 'good' French (see section 3).

In the 'Dynamic' language ideology, local language is promoted as a source of shared identity for all; people who share this viewpoint aim to increase the number of speakers, expand the domains of Giernesiei and increase its prestige. They may be more interested in widening fluency than concerned about accuracy, in second language acquisition terms, and actively seek new users, new forms, and new uses for the language.

Some proponents of the 'Static' view are vocal and influential in the island (especially in the traditional speaker community), and so the dominant discourse in Guernsey prevents expansion of Giernesiei into new domains, the development of new terminology, or orthography reform/rationalisation. Such efforts are viewed as irrelevant to traditional speakers ('I don't blog or tweet in any language'), as 'corrupting the memory of Giernesiei' or as 'bastardising the language'. This viewpoint would be seen as purist if it did not frequently involve incorporating French usage into Giernesiei (see part 3).

The current extra-curricular children's classes reflect the 'static' language ideology. There is a hypervalorisation of 'native' speakers as teachers and legitimate language models, although in effect the volunteers (as they are known) are often semi-speakers who do not speak Giernesiei in their daily lives. Most of them have no teacher training and lack confidence in their own language proficiency (or are unaware of their lack of it), and in lessons that we have observed they often turn to French to fill gaps in their Giernesiei. In addition to the lack of pedagogical effectiveness, the static language ideology thus influences the form of language that is taught. Research in second language acquisition supports the common-sense inference that teachers who are not autonomous themselves are less likely to encourage their students to become autonomous language users (e.g. Little 1995; McGrath 2000). Thus, the peripatetic Giernesiei lessons in Guernsey schools may

constitute symbolic 'acts of identity' (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985) rather than effective channels of transmission.

3. LANGUAGE 'OWNERSHIP' AND LANGUAGE CHANGE

The President's Report of l'Assembllaïe d'Guernésiais (a language association) for 2009 included the following comment:

> I am also glad to report that lessons on Guernsey French are continuing in the schools. We have a good band of teachers who are giving up their time to teach. … It is good to know that the children are taught the traditional Guernésiais. Not a new way that some would like to introduce.

Linguists know that all languages change inexorably, and that in the process of language endangerment it is common for normal diachronic change to speed up and for elements of the dominant language to enter the minority language: as structural changes, calques or lexical borrowings (Dorian, 1989; Grenoble and Whaley, 1998). Jones (2000; 2002; 2015) and Ferguson (2012) describe aspects of this process with regard to Giernesiei. However, for non-linguists, especially traditionalists whose attachment to their language is linked to nostalgic idealisation, language change can be associated with degeneration and perceived as pernicious. The reference to the 'new way' in the quote above (which is not reflected in the content of any lessons that we are aware of) reflects fears of loss of ownership: that new speakers might take up the language, run with it, and make it their own. Such a reaction is akin to the worries sometimes experienced by parents about children starting school or leaving home; however, here too, the younger generation eventually needs to become autonomous. But in the linguistic context it reinforces the assumption that the indigenous language belongs to 'native' and 'traditional' speakers, who see themselves as its 'guardians' but who in most cases did not pass it on to their children and are using it less and less.

It is therefore ironic that our documentation of the current usage of traditional speakers of Giernesiei has revealed endemic change and fragmentation of both the speaker community and the language, which highlights the paradox of the widespread ideologies of authenticity and 'correctness'. A sizeable proportion of older speakers have no Giernesiei interlocutors, either because their spouses and contemporaries have passed away, or because they are housebound or resident in hospitals or care homes (see Sallabank 2010a). This linguistic isolation leads to attrition and to the development of idiolects, to 'Varieties of variation in a very small place' (Dorian 1994) in addition to regional, diachronic (age-related) and contact-influenced differences. It is therefore paradoxical to insist on 'correctness' in a language which is not standardised or even fully described. As noted by Jaffe (2015, p.41), 'In these contexts … there is often no unitary or stable set of social uses of the languages to use as a reference for "authentic" use or even "native" competence'.

Documentary evidence of language fragmentation or change is unwelcome to some supporters of language maintenance who have a more purist or static understanding of language. It has led to the messengers being blamed for the message, and it to claims that further documentation and materials development are not necessary (especially if materials based on the documentary corpus might challenge the authority of earlier ones).

3.1 Reactions to language change

Our recent research into the experiences of prospective new speakers of Giernesiei has revealed a range of reactions to variation and change in Giernesiei, chiefly among 'traditional' speakers but also internalised by learners/new speakers.

Traditional polynomie: Regional variation typical of endangered and minority languages without a prestige standard (Marcellesi et al. 2003; Jaffe 2008). Iconic regional variants such as /o/~/aʊ/ are a core value for many speakers (Sallabank 2010b; Marquis and Sallabank 2013), although regional variation can be perceived as a deficit, especially when it comes to official recognition and producing learning and teaching materials.

More complex practices relating to regional variation are not noticed or recognised: our documentation has revealed unexpectedly rich dialect diversity in varieties usually thought of as subsumed under broader categories, such as /e/ ~ /æj/ in several areas in words like /tet/ ~ /tæjt/ ('head') and /fet/ ~ /fæjt/ (festival, holiday).

Age-related (diachronic) variation is not recognised or is denied. Traditional speakers often make claims such as We speak the language of William the Conqueror' or We speak just like our grandparents'. Yet there are documented changes such as the non-use of the subjunctive by 'younger' speakers (in their 50s and 60s) (Ferguson 2012), or the conflation of *savé* (to know a fact) and *counite* (to know a person or place) (Jones 2002), both of which we have also observed ourselves, which are salient linguistically but ignored by speakers.

Language change perceived as influenced by English is negatively sanctioned. When traditionalists refer to 'changing the language' they generally mean influence from contact with English. Yet there is long-standing evidence of such influence going back at least to the early 19th century, e.g. in literature (Jennings and Marquis 2011). Calques commonly used by traditional speakers such as *I fao gardai a hao lé giernesiei* ('we have to keep up Giernesiei') or *nou bouji* ('we moved [house]') are not remarked on.

Language change influenced by French is either perceived as prestigious or not noticed – or perhaps not acknowledged, since it can indicate attrition on the part of 'native' speakers. An increasingly common example of this is the use of *avec* instead of *daov*, *atou* or *acaeté* for 'with'. Given that French and Giernesiei were in a diglossic relationship for several hundred years, the fact that the main sites of language-related activity, performance and schools, are relatively formal contexts may subconsciously evoke a more formal language register and an ideology of deficit, which leads to further convergence with French. In Marquis and Sallabank (2014), we note that for traditionalists, French is still seen as the High language variety and as the only valid source of linguistic prestige.

Idiolects and family-lects are either tolerated or simply not noticed: for example, /ʃæ̃jmʧɛːr/ (the usual pronunciation) ~ /ʃæ̃jmpjɛːr/ for 'cemetery'; or *grai* to mean 'done for/broken'. Such idiolects do not consist only of discrete examples of unusual lexis, pronunciations or structures, but tend to consist of relatively unsystematic combinations or accumulations of variations and changes that we

have documented, such as non-agreement of adjectives, non-use of the subjunctive, increased reliance on French, and 'archaic' usages, especially if a speaker has few interlocutors.

Variants produced by learners or new speakers are criticised and delegitimised: for example, *shé ae piti* for 'it's a pity' instead of *shé piti*, or *chutte serai* instead of *a seisé* for 'this evening'. Some traditionalists may even refuse to recognise or understand the usage of new speakers (Dołowy-Rybińska 2015), even though other interlocutors have no problem understanding them and may even praise their proficiency. One interviewee reported that when she tries to speak Giernesiei to some older speakers they reply in English, although she explains that she is trying to learn Giernesiei. Sometimes they seem to find it hard to make out what she's saying in Giernesiei, which she finds demotivating. Sallabank has also had the experience of being told by a prominent traditionalist that he did not understand her *Valais* (northern dialect), although her main models for learning Giernesiei have been speakers of a Western variety, which is also the variety that this traditionalist identified with.

Neologisms are only acceptable if they have the cachet of having been invented/introduced by someone who is perceived as a 'native speaker'. A common trope in interviews is that 'Giernesiei hasn't developed new terms since 1945'; or *Nou z-a paa d mao, veyou, pour riae ké 'modern'* ['we haven't got words, you see, for anything modern']. So many older speakers prefer to use English terms for 'modern' items like refrigerators, televisions and bathrooms.

This typology confirms and extends the findings of Jaffe (2008) in Corsica, where regional polynomie was overtly valorised while contact-related features were delegitimised and removed from purist language teaching, even if produced by a traditional speaker.

4. CREATING A 'NEW SPEAKER' COMMUNITY

Where a language is not being passed on in the family or community, if language revitalisation is desired, effective adult second-language learning is necessary. Revitalisation efforts often focus on schools, but without competent adult speakers a language cannot be taught effectively, either through education or informally: Fishman's (1991) focus on family transmission is also impossible without (young) adult speakers.

We therefore conducted research (funded by the British Academy) to investigate the motivations, goals, needs and experiences of potential adult new speakers of a highly endangered language (Giernesiei), with the aim of finding out what might get more adults to start learning such a language, and crucially, how they might be helped to progress beyond beginner level.

4.1 Experiences of learners

Between 2012 and 2014 we interviewed 32 current and former learners of Giernesiei, a high proportion of our calculated total of approximately 40 learners taking adult classes at any given time. In addition, we observed adult and children's lessons and held topic-based discussions with learners attending Marquis' classes, e.g. language requirements for specific situations, and asked

learners to fill in questionnaires about their requirements such as spelling preferences, topics, vocabulary. We also collected learners' notes and posts on social media in and about Giernesiei. In addition, we organised a Gaelic taster lesson using the Ulpan methodology popular for teaching Celtic languages, and finally conducted an online questionnaire aimed at both learners and potential learners, which elicited 214 responses (itself an indication of interest in learning an endangered language beyond current provision).

In the semi-structured interviews, which produced the most useful information, we asked prospective new speakers why they wanted to learn a small, highly endangered language which has hardly any speakers; about their experiences of learning Giernesiei: how they viewed their progress, what they found helpful and unhelpful, what their learning goals were and what might help them achieve them, what they would like to be able to say, how their experiences of learning languages (past and present) had shaped their response to teaching methods, and what kinds of materials they would find helpful.

In the online questionnaire, equal proportions of male and female respondents reported learning Giernesiei currently; a higher proportion of male respondents who are not currently learning expressed a desire to do so. However, in individual classes there is a gender imbalance, with some classes being attended almost exclusively by men and some by women; this may reflect times of day and patterns of availability, but also a gender-based 'comfort zone'. Thirty-two questionnaire respondents were currently learning Giernesiei, while 16 more said that they had tried to learn but had given up; several cited the lack opportunities for progression as a reason, and several made similar comments to this: 'I've done the beginners class a couple of times but there's no opportunity to use it, I never get beyond beginner stage'. More women than men have given up learning Giernesiei, and in the current lessons it is predominantly middle-aged male learners who demonstrate longer-term commitment and are attaining higher (i.e. post-beginner/elementary) levels.

In this section we focus on responses related to learners' motivations and experiences which reflect ideologies about becoming a new speaker of a highly endangered language. In addition to the usual challenges involved in learning any language, especially the perceived difficulties encountered by adult learners, learning a very small, post-vernacular language presents an extra set of challenges. Some of the instrumental reasons for learning larger languages such as business or travel are irrelevant (except perhaps for heritage tourism), and the language may be perceived as having little practical use. Non-speakers especially make comments such as 'it would be more useful to learn a big language like French, Spanish or Chinese'. Learners have little exposure to the language: there is very little in the media and there are few publications or reference materials. Why do they make the effort to learn such an insignificant language?

When asked about challenges, many interviewees and respondents focused on the lack of exposure and opportunities to practise due to the declining number of native speakers and their age. Ideological factors also play a role here. When learners try to talk to older speakers, they often receive hypercorrective reactions such as 'We don't say it like that' or 'You'll never pronounce it like we do', which several respondents reported finding demotivating; some reported having given up learning Giernesiei because of this. Such reactions imply that the traditional-speaker model and accent are impossible to replicate. It is worth mentioning here that in earlier interviews with

traditional speakers, as well as some former learners, during Sallabank's doctoral research, a consistent theme was the perceived difficulty or impossibility of learning Giernesiei as a new speaker.

Several learners reported that traditional speakers seemed to feel the need to disparage learners' abilities and potential. One reported, 'When my neighbours found out I was learning they were enthusiastic, but they try to get one over by rapping something out like a machine gun – end of conversation.' This affects learners' confidence: 'I don't like speaking in front of people who are really good for fear of making mistakes'. Lack of tolerance for learner errors or new speaker varieties was also remarked upon: 'I find people too quick to correct – as learners we're only at toddler stage'. One interviewee commented that as a language teacher she knows that it is necessary to start with a restricted set of terms but feels that speakers don't make allowances for this, or for other regional variations although they know there are different dialects of Giernesiei.

Reluctance to share Giernesiei with new speakers was another recurrent theme. One stated: 'Actually no, they didn't want to talk to me because I'm English. Seriously . . . the only person who used it by choice freely willingly would be [X].' Another observed that 'Gran only talks to people she knows speak it … keeps it to herself, doesn't want to share'. Another new speaker interviewee commented that 'Lots of people see Giernesiei as a nostalgic thing and almost as a secret society or club with an audible membership card to belong to the community', again highlighting ideologies of linguistic purism and ownership.

This perceived reluctance to share Giernesiei is in stark contrast to learners' most commonly stated desire, greater exposure to the language, especially of traditional speakers: 'I would love to just sit and listen and be completely immersed'. Self-study materials and recordings to listen to were seen as potentially useful to try to compensate for the lack of exposure: 'I'd like a CD to put on in the background to listen to subconsciously'. Because of the dominance of the 'native' speaker model, recordings of native speakers were cited as especially desirable for guidance on pronunciation and prosody: 'the lilt and rhythm', but many respondents recognised that more accessible recordings would also be useful. One interviewee stated that she would welcome opportunities to practise which she can use in her own time and which do not involve demotivating encounters. Thus, while prospective new speakers are influenced by ideologies of legitimacy and the dominance of native-speaker models, they also recognise problems associated with it and are willing to challenge some assumptions.

The 'language of the past' ideology was also seen as a hindrance to learning. One interviewee noted that her grandfather 'didn't feel it sounds right to hear a young person speaking it'. Many learners expressed a desire to be able to talk about modern life, which they recognised can require linguistic innovations: 'new vocabulary to describe my own reality'. One interviewee commented that 'Church is the only place where people in relatively modern clothes speak it in a normal life context'. Another stated, 'I'm bored with crab pots, *gâche mélai*[5] etc. – quaint, heritage – we need language for nowadays' and another wanted language which was 'not part of historical re-enactment, less of an exhibit'.

[5] A traditional apple cake

Nevertheless, when asked about their motivation, many learners expressed a desire to connect with heritage culture and a perhaps essentialised notion of local identity. Although a third of learners have no family connection with the island, they also see local language as a way to connect with island culture, although ironically language is usually absent from local culture nowadays. Comments included:

- 'I don't want it to die out'
- 'I would be better off learning more advanced regular French – but this is my home language'
- 'A sense of place and family provides a different type of usefulness'
- 'It's a way to feel connected to the island'
- 'It's a cultural focus, what makes Guernsey special'
- 'When I was a kid I used to love hearing my grandparents speak it – I was always fascinated by it'
- 'I remember my aunts speaking on the phone in Giernesiei'
- 'As a Guernseyman it's a crying shame that we can't speak our language – part of me is missing, I don't feel complete as an individual'.

Some respondents also expressed a desire to challenge the inevitability of language death and to reclaim a language which had not been passed on by their parents' or grandparents' generation, and to transmit at least a symbolic amount of Giernesiei to younger generations: 'I want to be able to pass words and phrases to my grandchildren'.

A minority of interviewees, however, reported learning for intellectual reasons, out of curiosity 'because it is different and it's interesting', because of interest in languages in general or in historical linguistics.[6]

When prospective new speakers were asked what they would like to be able to say, responses reflected many of the themes discussed above:

- 'I love you'
- 'I love Guernsey'
- 'Come on Guernsey FC!' [Football Club]
- 'To be able to insult my clients' (although most respondents denied wanting to learn Giernesiei as a 'secret language')
- 'What are you doing tonight?'

Learners' aims for language use also were also in contrast to the main sites of traditionalist language maintenance activities, performances and schools. Although some mentioned entering the Eisteddfod as a way of experiencing traditional culture and as an accepted trajectory for learners

[6] Giernesiei is seen as preserving features of 'old French'; the Normans were a dominant force in mediaeval Europe, when much 'old French' literature originated (Posner 1997; Chaurand 1999: 36–8).

who have taken a beginners' course, most wanted to be able to have conversations in Giernesiei. Despite the lack of opportunities for progression, many respondents expressed a desire to move beyond the basics:

- 'I'd like to be able to have a conversation and understand what comes back … get past hello and the weather'
- 'I'd like to be able to have this level of conversation in Giernesiei'.

However, relatively few respondents expressed interest in engaging with Giernesiei to the extent of taking an active role in building a new speaker community, although many recognised the need for exposure and practice outside the classroom in order to gain fluency.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Facing our own ideologies and assumptions

The authors recognise that researchers are not exempt from ideological processes, and so need to be open about their own positionality (Sallabank 2013, p.60). It will be fairly obvious from reading so far that the authors are sympathetic to the 'dynamic' view of language and are critical of purist and static language ideologies. As we consider ourselves to be language activists, we also see a need to reveal and challenge ideologies that hinder effective language revitalisation. Our ideological view of revitalisation involves active use of Giernesiei as a living language, not only for performance or identity construction (although we recognise the importance of identity in our own attachment to the language).

We are on record as promoting orthography reform (Sallabank and Marquis 2016) and have been accused of 'changing the language' (a worse crime than allowing it to die) – we suspect that the comment in the President's Report of l'Assembllaïe d'Guernésiais about teaching Giernesiei in 'a new way that some would like to introduce' was aimed at Marquis. We recognise the inevitability of language change in new speaker contexts, and the need for lexical innovations to enable new speakers to talk about their everyday lives. Nevertheless, Marquis is keen to preserve (and to use) older ways of expressing concepts that are just as valid as contact-influenced ones. He also prefers to research and implement long-established patterns of word formation, and to extend the meaning of older terms, rather than to use calques or borrowings: for example, *dessinai enne picture* (literally 'to draw a picture') for 'to take a photo'; *dardeiss* ('slate') for 'screen' or 'tablet'; *haose* ('hose') for 'bandwidth'; *ironie* (spider's web) for 'internet'. In this way, Marquis can be seen as more purist than some 'traditionalists' whose usage converges towards French or English.

5.2 Authority and legitimacy

We use these terms ourselves, but hesitate to teach them in lessons, to avoid criticism as they are not part of the traditional canon; to this extent we too are influenced by traditionalist ideologies. We would be happy for other speakers (old and new) to suggest and use alternative terms, in the hope that that there might one day be enough of a crowd to enable crowd-sourced language development.

As noted by Jaffe (2015, p.22) with regard to Corsica, 'complex identity and language ideological issues are raised about the legitimacy, authority and authenticity of [Corsican] language learners in a sociolinguistic context in which both formal/institutional and informal/social use of the minority language is quite restricted'. A situation where learners are discouraged from 'having a go', and teachers are wary of introducing terms to talk about modern daily life, is not conducive to the growth of a new speaker community. Tensions concerning what a language can and should be used for, and by whom, are common in language revitalisation contexts. They stem partly from differing views on authority in language and who counts as a legitimate speaker, and who has the authority and legitimacy to decide (Marquis and Sallabank 2014; Costa 2015). Until recently it has been assumed that such authority is held by traditionalists who have prestige in the community. In the long run, of course, new speakers are generally younger and will outlive traditional speakers. But in the meantime, to combine the knowledge of traditional speakers and the enthusiasm of new ones would be preferable to ideological divergences which hinder effective language transmission.

5.3 Challenges for language revitalisation

The vast majority of Giernesiei learners interviewed for this research project were middle-aged or older; only one was in her twenties. Similarly, only 9% of the questionnaire respondents (20 people) were under 30 years of age; 78 per cent were aged 40 or over. Only two questionnaire respondents aged 20–30 reported learning Giernesiei at present; 11 more said they would like to (there were no respondents aged under 20). As mentioned in 4.1, the most committed learners of Giernesiei are middle-aged men. The relative lack of younger adults taking the classes may reflect availability and family commitments, but when compared with language attitude studies (Havard 2008; Ferguson 2012; Sallabank 2013) it is also indicative of a lower levels of interest in heritage language learning among teenagers and younger adults, which could be of concern to language planners. For Giernesiei to continue being spoken in the future, there is a need to attract younger adult learners.

From the responses described in section 4, it seems highly likely that the twin ideologies of 'language ownership' and 'language of the past' play a role in the lack of engagement with Giernesiei among young adults. It is also possible that parents of primary-aged children who have some commitment to Giernesiei practise what Marquis calls 'distance learning': they send their children to lessons, while making excuses for themselves such as 'I'm too busy' or 'it's difficult to learn a language as an adult'. But as noted in section 2, the extra-curricular school sessions run by mainly 'traditionalist' volunteers have not produced fluent new speakers (and are unlikely to). In addition, over-reliance on formal learning, like a focus on performance, can actually reduce use of a language in the family and community (Aikhenvald 2003). Thus, revitalisation of Giernesiei (or revernacularisation from its current post-vernacular state) is unlikely to succeed without a change in ideologies, accompanied by active engagement by a core of new speakers to create a new speaker community committed to active use of Giernesiei. We hope that initiatives such as *Ley bohti* and 'Speed Patois' which attempt to bring together older and new speakers will 'get past hello and the weather' and help to foster such a community.

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