**Harry Josephine:** *Whit if me language isno aafil keen o bean "Scotland's"? Whit if mosst fock at spaek hid dinno think o hid as a "proper language", but cheust "the wey we spaek"?*

**Siobhan McAuley:** *Yeah, I heard the story of what's been going on within the Deaf Community. And I came out of that meeting, and I sat in my car, and I bawled, I was devastated. And I was more devastated because I was so ignorant to the bigger picture.*

**Rachael Keiller:** *For me, like, especially at college, it wasn’t to be celebrated, it was like, “if speak with an accent, you won't work as an actor, there's no jobs, like, you know, if you sound to working class” and I was actually taught to sort of get rid of my accent.*

**Tomiwa Folorunso:** *How can we make sure all members of the audience are participating? Or how can we make sure all members of the audience are engaged on an equal level?*

**MC**: This is the Future Culture podcast. In 2021, the Culture Collective programme was created and established a network of 26 participatory arts projects, shaped by local communities alongside artists and creative organisations, funded by Creative Scotland. Since then, they have embarked upon an event series entitled Starting Points, that explored pertinent themes to community-based art projects within the network. This podcast will explore what comes next! What does the future hold for creatives and their importance for communities across Scotland as we go forward?

In each Future Culture episode, we will consider different themes which mirror those of our initial Starting Points events. In this episode, Broadcast, we focus on Scotland’s languages.

This week we discuss:

* Ideas around language and its signifiers
* The importance of recognising BSL as a first language
* The use of the arts as its own language to communicate with communities and audiences

**Part 1: Ideas around language and its signifiers**

**MC:** Language is a form of communication that allows intercourse between multiple people or simply the ability to communicate. It can be any action in essence, but it may have particular limits placed within its meaning to protect what constitutes a ‘proper’ language. Language itself may be defined as a structured system of communication used by humans, but there is more to even *these* definitions than meets the eye. And it sometimes may be forgotten that voice sounds, gestures or written symbols also act as language and communication.

There are complexities between language and culture, and the two are interwoven. A certain language can point out a specific group of people and when you interact with another language, it also means interacting with the culture that speaks the language. Not accessing a culture’s language directly may mean not understanding that very culture. This can lead to negative outcomes, including misunderstandings and even conflict.

Growing up in a specific society inevitably means learning things like glances, gestures and varying tones in voice or other tools of communication, to alter what we say and do. This may come from imitation and observation of those closest to us, or within our immediate circles.

But what about arts and culture? If we were perhaps to look at culture as a consequence of human interaction, then acts of communication are manifestations within specific communities. So when we apply that to the arts, it can create either a wealth of new doors opening, or, a multitude of boundaries.

Another consideration is the landscape in which we operate. Dialect is part of that landscape and can take on different nuances within language, and can even be considered a language in itself. Scotland’s regional dialects and languages have perhaps been pushed to one side because of the predominance of spoken English, but as the country and world evolves, factors such as migration, disability, technology and importantly, preservation of historic values come into play. This can drastically change the way we communicate with one another, but also how we present ourselves culturally. And the important thing to remember about the arts in this context, is that it’s a universal language and can help serve as a form of communication where sometimes language cannot.

As part of one of Culture Collective’s Starting Points events on the subject of Scotland’s Languages, we were lucky enough to be joined by a panel who brought a wealth of experience, both within the arts and culturally, to the conversation but also represented different areas of the language macrocosm.

One of those people was Harry Josephine Giles. Harry Josephine is an award-winning writer and performer from Orkney. Their science fiction verse novel [Deep Wheel Orcadia](https://www.panmacmillan.com/authors/harry-josephine-giles/deep-wheel-orcadia/9781529066609) was published by Picador in October 2021. In this clip we hear them talk about their Orcadian language as spoken in Orkney, their studies in Minority Language Literature and the way they approach this overarching subject of language…

[CLIP] **Harry Josephine:** *The language A'm spaekan nou is Orcadian, the Orkney dialect, an hid's the language o me islans. Hid's a dialect o Scots wi gey strong influences fae Aald Norse. Aboot half the fock at haem spaek hid as a first language, that's ten thoosan fock, an cheust aboot ivrybuddy in the islans unnerstaans hid. That's the strongest density o Scots onywhar, along wi Shetland an the Doric in Aberdeenshire.*

*Weel, in Orkney we dinno ferly think o hid as a dialect o Scots, but cheust hid's awn thing. Linguistically hid is, but fer whitivver reason -- history or culture or polietics -- Orkney is alwis haaden hidself apairt fae Scotland. That maks a bit o a fankle o a phrase like "Scotland's language": whit if me language isno aafil keen o bean "Scotland's"? Whit if mosst fock at spaek hid dinno think o hid as a "proper language", but cheust "the wey we spaek"?*

*A'm gotten a PhD in minority language literature, an wan o the things I resaerched wis hou national languages in Europe is alwis been mad trow Empire: that stannart language is a tool o coloniesaetion, an language's like Engliesh or French is alwis mad bi centralised pouer tae exclude the periphery. Deu we waant Scots tae try an deu the sam thing, or no? Is hid anither wey o thinkan aboot language, no as wan fixid thing, but a spectrum o weys o spaekan at's aal desairvan o support? Yin's the quaistion's A'm bringan the day. Whitivver poeur deus, thir's aye fock at'll deu thir awn thing wi wirds, an mak thir awn thraan pouer that wey.*

*I think the truth is that most folk that are bilingual in one sense or another, or maybe more accurately, I think most folk engage in code switching, but most folk, even if they say they only speak one language, will have multiple registers of that language that they use in different places. One version of it that they speak with their friends, one version of it that they use at work, one version of it that they use in their poetry. We switch quite naturally between these codes and for folk that have different language communities, whether that's Scots and English or any other kind of set of language communities that co-exist sometimes together, sometimes in conflict.*

*But code switching can become very pronounced and nationality or language community is one of the ways that that's pronounced and class is another major way that that's pronounced and with Scots especially, Scots is a language that is often marked now in the 21st century as either working-class or rural. It's not thought of truly that often as a national language that everybody in the nation speaks*

*when folk open their mouth and speak Scots because of where the strong language communities of Scotland are, it's thought of as a working-class language or as a rural language or both. And that means that when you speak it, power relations are there in your mouth as you're speaking. And we're all conscious of that, we deploy these power relations. We use words and language and codes to communicate to each other, what our social positions are and what way we think about each other.*

**MC:** Here, Josie introduces herself and her relationship to our theme of language in Orcadian. She raises the provocation that perhaps Orcadian and the folk that speak it do not necessarily want it to be recognised as a language in itself and therefore be subsumed into a wider context of ‘Scotland’s Languages’, preferring instead to view the words and their pronunciation as simply “the wey we speak”. She goes on to describe standard language as a tool of colonisation, inherently involved in much larger power relations. Another of our speakers at the original Broadcast event was Artair Donald, Gaelic Artist in Residence at Highland Culture Collective. You might remember Artair also spoke during the Amplify podcast on minoritised voices. In this next clip, Artair talks about how language is received by the listener and offers perhaps a slightly differing opinion on the impacts of the standardisation of language:

[CLIP] **Artair Donald**: *I think it's constantly shifting. Yeah, as Jamie said when I went to school, I had no English, but very quickly had to learn English or I was going to get left behind. So I think at least I didn't get the belt not for speaking Gaelic anyway. But yeah, so I mean, I think now, you know, we have Gaelic medium units throughout Scotland in Glasgow, we have three primary schools feeding into the secondary school, and overall throughout Scotland there’s get quite a demand for Gaelic education. I think the worry is there won’t be enough teachers. So and I think, and the Gaelic language itself has evolved as well to more, and not what you'd call an RP against but more of a kind of standardised kind of way of speaking, for example, where I come from Tiree, we use quite a lot of dialectical difference compared to the Isle of Lewis and different places. So I think that Gaelic’s been standardised in schools now. So it's almost all the young people learn the same kind of one, one for fit for all.*

So, although Artair sees the evolution of Gaelic speaking becoming more standarised as a result of education as generally a good thing, he does agree on the importance of keeping the richness of the language alive by introducing different words and dialectical differences during the course of his work. It’s why cultural investment is vital to legacies like these and enabling minority languages to thrive. This therefore leads us onto the first of two provocations in this section, the first being: ***Josie spoke about the standardisation of language being a tool of colonisation, but how can we increase the power of minoritised languages culturally?***

Another panellist we were lucky to have at the event was Ghazi Hussain. Poet and Art27scotland Artist in Residence, Art27@Southside is a partnership between Art27, Southside Community Centre and the City of Edinburgh Council to employ artists as catalysts for the reactivation of a traditional community centre. They aim to transform the Southside Community Centre into a vibrant cultural hub which is relevant, inclusive, reflective and driven by everyone, including the many ethnically diverse communities in its neighbourhood. You may recall we heard from Ghazi’s fellow Art27Scotland colleagues Yuke Huang and Asha Trivedy Episode 3 of this podcast, entitled AMPLIFY.

Ghazi, a former Palestinian refugee who fled Syria and was given leave to stay in the UK, he is also a teacher who has taught Arabic poetry and calligraphy for many years. He studied philosophy and Arabic grammar and went on to teach a range of different age groups and abilities in schools and universities.

Let’s hear from Ghazi on some of his thoughts surrounding language…

[CLIP] **Ghazi Hussain:** *​​ The language for any person is like the identity of the person because if I'm in the street, I hear somebody speak in Scottish or Gaelic, I say, his is Scottish. I identify that person. And they say your tongue is your address. If I hear Glaswegian accent, ah he's from Glasgow, he’s the Scottish from Glasgow, then. And that's our words is like our mirror. So reflecting our culture, our education, our politics, our morality, as well. But my experience is, as you know, when, as a person who… my English used to be very, very, very, very bad, nowadays it is very bad. Just you know, and when I, is my experience, I'm going to speak about my experience because we speaking about language and language is very important. So my experience here is my problem used to be because I don't talk. I'm afraid to talk. That's half of my problem, the other half of the problem when I talk. Because I say things different than what I meant to say. And people misunderstand and that's misunderstanding between me and the other person is make a distance, distance of misunderstanding and that distance is very difficult to cross it. Because people will accuse you, you are stupid, because you don't understand. And that's it's a cruel. Yes, I know stupidity is a talent of misunderstanding. But I'm not a stupi*d.

**MC:** Ghazi's comments on “your tongue being your address” and also how words can identify someone's politics, culture, morality and education are on point. He brings back our earlier points on misunderstanding and a further thought-provoking subject about how people can be called or thought of as stupid if they don’t understand. But this is someone who was a teacher for many years, and continues to teach. Whilst this is a far bigger subject for this podcast and how we can sometimes make gross assumptions about people, this man simply sought refuge in another country and was attempting to communicate in order to live his life.

And similar to Harry Josephine, and many others within the arts industries, Ghazi has used his craft to not only keep his heritage and identity alive but also educate others. His cultural project ‘Poetry for Survival’ is about learning how to write Arabic poetry in an inclusive environment. This gives an opportunity for all Arabic speakers to develop their poetry skills. And in their words: *it covers how to express your feelings and experiences to make your poetry into a weapon – because poetry is a way to resist, a way to survive. Life is a word, learn it well. Freedom is a word, use it wisely*. That statement in itself serves as a reminder how powerful language can be.

And it’s thanks to artists like Ghazi, Harry Josephine and countless others who embody their roots in this manner - creating numerous spaces, pieces of art, projects and even movements in order to keep these themes alive whilst also nodding to the future. They challenge the dominant narrative and cast light on the many ways that we can discover new stories in the world.

All of this leads to our second provocation of this section: ***Based on these aforementioned points offered by Ghazi on identifying someone through language, can this then be looked at in a wider context - are we influenced too much by dominant narratives within culture and do we need to challenge this more?***

**Part 2: The importance of recognising BSL as a first language**

**MC:** We are re-introduced to North Lanarkshire Culture Collective, who we first met in our last episode Spotlight which explored freelance creatives. The Collective is working with four creative practitioners delivering six projects locally, co-produced with individuals and groups most affected by Covid-19.

Their project will work with and through Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire’s six community anchor organisations, who are embedded in existing communities and have a rich understanding of local needs and priorities, helping to reach those most affected by the pandemic.

One of the Culture Collective networks in this area is Project Coordinator Siobhan McAuley. Siobhan has immersed herself in the community to identify those community members the project is serving, when it comes to the negative impact of the pandemic. One of these local groups was the deaf community in North Lanarkshire’s Deaf Club.

British Sign Language, also known as BSL, is a physical sign language used in the UK and the first or preferred language amongst the deaf community. BSL is a language in and of itself, which can be a common misconception for many in the hearing community.

Siobhan was someone who discovered this. Let’s hear her talk about her journey with the deaf club in their community and what she took forward from her experiences with them…

[CLIP] **Siobhan McAuley**: *I started to recognize the groups that had been most affected by COVID, or had just no arts at all. And, you know, they'd never experienced somebody coming in and delivering art workshops. When we started to recognise the groups that most needed it at one of they groups was North Lanarkshire Deaf Club. Initially, I made contact with the Deaf Club, and I thought, I'm gonna go and I'm really gonna be best saying, I'm not going to be ignorant here. I was really proud of myself. Me and my son had worked on sign language for the past few days in prep before going into this meeting. I felt quite gallus about it as well, because I could say “Hello, Good Morning, my name’s Siobhan.” And I walked in. Yeah, I heard the story of, of what's been going on within the Deaf community. And I came out of that meeting, and I sat in my car. And I bawled, I was devastated. And I was more devastated because I was so ignorant to the bigger picture. I just thought, why did I not think of that? You know, what, why do we not think of that, and why was that never discussed during COVID. A lot of young people because of face masks aren't learning to lip read, they just feel missed out, they don't feel relevant. Communication was non-existent, because zoom freezes, if your internet’s not good, the sign wasn't able to be put across in the zoom. Now, for this particular group in North Lanarkshire, they're the only youth group in the whole of Scotland. So the only deaf youth group in the whole of Scotland, so young people travel for miles, I think as far as Aberdeen, every second Friday to attend this group, it's a real shame that they never got the chance to do that. And as well, some families don't have sign capacity. So the young people had no communication, throughout lockdown, throughout two lockdowns, so no communication at all. And for that young person to have no social engagement, it has a knock on effect on their mental health. It's now something that I'm passionate about is raising awareness of the mental health and the impact of young people, especially within the Deaf community. The communication when I wasn't physically there, with the Deaf community was quite difficult. There was an interpreter the time. And that took a while for me to get used to start with. But then when I stepped away from that setting, I thought, okay, we go through that, now, I understand how it works out, that's okay, I know what I'm doing here. And then I would send an email, a follow up email, and I wouldn't hear back. And there was huge gaps. It was frustrating from my end, because I was keen to make an impact. But there was just continuous delays in getting back to me. And eventually, when I had set up another in person meeting, I didn't realise that English isn't their first language. And I was like, of course, it's not because it's sign. Again, that was another blow in terms of, why would I assume these things? You know, we do, as I just said, and I think many people would just assume that oh, write it down if you can't, if you can't hear me, I’ll write it down. And actually, that's not really going to make a difference. And I was keen to get taster workshops out straight away and then get a date and the diary and it just took its time. It was much, much longer than what I had predicted. That was a real wake up call for me and now my approach is different.*

**MC**: I mentioned earlier in part 1 of this podcast, that by not accessing a culture’s language directly may mean not understanding that very culture, and that is why it was so important for Siobhan to have immersed herself within part of the deaf community in Lanarkshire. BSL is, as she touches on, not the visual equivalent of English. In fact, when BSL is used within the structure of spoken English it’s called Sign Supported English (SSE) and not BSL.

It’s important to also mention here the role of the BSL interpreter. A sign language interpreter facilitates communication either between users of a sign language such as British Sign Language (BSL) and users of a spoken language, or between users of two different sign languages. Interpreters will use their skill and knowledge of the two languages, and their understanding of any cultural differences between those for whom they are interpreting, to transfer a message from one language into the other.

British Sign Language is the official language of the deaf community in the UK, however, this doesn’t mean it’s used by all deaf people in the UK and Siobhan comments on this with the heartbreaking accounts of households not being able to communicate over lockdown, due to not having sign capacity. And that can be for a plethora of reasons at no fault of parents or those within the home setting. The thought of not being able to communicate is startling. It can lead to frustration, disassociation, Ghazi’s previous point about misunderstandings, missed opportunity, mistrust, low morale and as Siobhan says AND has witnessed, impact on mental health.

Everyone has the right to be able to communicate effectively. Everyone also has the right to have access to culture and the arts. But, in order to make that accessible for all, the right communication has to be in place. Siobhan mentions Lanarkshire Deaf Club having the only youth group in Scotland and this begs the question: why is this? Whilst the reasons may be more complex, one observation is, that surely this has an impact not only on the previously discussed health & wellbeing of young people, but also their access to a greater cultural lived experience.

Another person who is helping create greater awareness and accessibility within the arts for deaf people is multidisciplinary queer artist and deaf performer Jamie Rea. Jamie was another of our Starting Points event panellists along with Harry Josephine and Ghazi who we heard from earlier. Through a BSL interpreter, Jamie explains his upbringing, his career and, his role in the arts community, but also the importance of BSL…

[CLIP] **Jamie Rea:** *I'm a BSL user. That's my first language. I come from a deaf family. And we don't use English much. It wasn't until I went to school, they we were taught and English. And that's the way that the deaf community I've been taught for a long time, they've been forced to not use signed language, but to use an English spoken language, or English written language. And when I was at home, I would be using BSL. But when I was at school, I'd be using Signed Supported English, and almost losing some of the rules of grammar that I'd learned to home with the natural language development that I’d had there. They're not just that, but then been forced to speak, and taught to speak, sometimes even been taught to speak French. When really I wanted to be learning about the beautiful depths of BSL. In Scotland, there's the BSL Act. And I'm so pleased that that's there and that the community has the BSL Act, and that it has been, you know, there is a plan to roll that out in schools more than what it currently is, at the moment. I think there is such a huge need there, not just for BSL, but for the signed languages in France or Spain or other countries as well, and to keep the language relative to the person. Since graduating, I have started an explorative process and all different forms of art as a performer, as a producer, as a creator. And I'm also a BSL Consultant. So I work with theatres, mostly. I am a bilingual person. And I'm also part of the artists community, I feel that it's important that BSL is centred within our industry, and that I want to be a huge part of that going forward because deaf people, BSL users in our community, find their motivation. And it's really important for them to be able to see themselves represented with an industry. For the language I use being BSL and feeling, how much support that receives in comparison to hearing people who might want to work with me or people that are just focusing on their own work to think first of all, and general social settings. BSL is represented, but it’s often represented through a hearing interpreter connecting us together, in a kind of triangle, you know, as a deaf person with a hearing person and an interpreter. And it's always okay to ask, you know, I think that anybody that’s sharing a space should feel they have the right to ask what's the, what's the word for this? What's the sign for that. And any language should be open to being interrogated and shared? And we should always be welcoming to each other. No matter what language we use. It's okay also to forget the next day. And I think it's, as long as you always maintain an open mind and not just an open mind to ask but also to receive asked, but also to receive. Regardless of the communities that we're in, we're going to always have differences within our community, you know, between our communities. And I think we find the common ground when we actually ask the questions of one another. Most of the time when I'm working and working with hearing people, that's majority of my working life since I've moved to Glasgow and what I really appreciate is when the people that I'm working with actually start to understand the importance of having an interpreter there, and not just trying to get by, or of trying to communicate directly with me when an interpreter isn't available, you know, and working towards using an interpreter less. And I think that COVID seemed to give people the time and space to stop and think about what is required for accessibility, and I think that it's become better. I think there seems to be more understanding, more general understanding about access and equality to space.*

**MC:** One of the things that strikes hard within Jamie’s account is his comments on how he was forced to speak or learn French and other languages. These were being taught in school but as a deaf person, BSL wasn’t. As an intrinsic language within the UK and a language to improve not only accessibility but in the wider context to connect people within a country, it’s staggering that this is not part of the curriculum. And questions over the importance placed over BSL being a recognised language have to be asked. Should there be more freedom for people to select what language they want to learn? Should the government place more investment in this? The list goes on. BSL was recognised as a language by the UK government in 2003, it’s not mandatory in schools and schools are free to teach if they choose to do so but the uptake isn’t there. Arguably this would help not only deaf people but hearing people also to express themselves more freely. Why not even add it as an extra-curriculum option? As Jamie mentions there is the The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015, this promotes the use of BSL in Scotland, primarily by requiring certain authorities to develop BSL plans that outline how they will promote and raise awareness of the language. This indeed provides some hope.

Jamie’s bilingual role within the arts is essential and this isn’t just about him providing help on a consultancy basis, *but* by using his skills and talents within the arts combined with his BSL linguistics, he is able to educate on a far superior level. He has the ability to show that hearing creative practitioners may create cultural output on what they think deaf audiences may need or may enjoy *HOWEVER* without that core understanding of being a deaf person, these assumptive projects can sometimes be lost. Therefore his presence in these spaces is far-reaching and we should now look at increasing those positions for others to do the same.

The pandemic has had a devastating impact as Siobhan spoke about but as many have said, it’s also highlighted the accessibility and communication gaps that need to be improved which leads onto our provocation to take forward from this section - ***Jamie mentioned in the live event, the pandemic seemed to give people the time and space to stop and think about what is required for accessibility, but where do we take that next and how can we see language evolving culturally?***

**Part 3: The use of arts as its own language to communicate with communities and audiences**

**MC:** We now journey to east-central Scotland and visit Glenrothes, Kirkcaldy and Levenmouth. There we find Young Quines, a Culture Collective project steered by Scottish intersectional feminist theatre company Stellar Quines.

In response to the impact that Covid-19 has had on communities and the creative sector, Young Quines will see the creation of 4 Creative Hubs across Fife. The Hubs will provide free-to-access youth theatre for young women and non-binary people aged 14-21 years old and will put young people’s voices at the heart of the work by offering a flexible programme that will be co-designed with the participants.

Two people steering the project are Rachel-Jane Morrison and Rachael Keiller. Rachel-Jane is a theatre-maker, director and community arts practitioner from Levenmouth in Fife and Rachael hails from Leven, has first-class honours in Acting and is an actor, drama facilitator and creative practitioner.

We touched on dialects in part one of this podcast with Harry Josephone but were keen to explore this more. There are four main dialects within Scoland being Insular, Northern, Central and Southern, but with them all come sub-dialects. Ways of speaking with words, phrases or pronunciations which are only found in a smaller area within a main dialect.

We know that as we venture from place to place in any country, there is a shift in language, accent and expressions that filter through to life including culture. Based on this subject, we were keen to ask Rachel-Jane known as RJ and Rachael how are they using the arts as a language to communicate amongst themselves and with their audience?

**STING**

[CLIP] Young Quines - Rachel Jane Morrison & Rachael Keiller

**Rachael Keiller:** *In terms of this project anyway, we're still in the early stages of that. And I think what one of the challenges has been for us is like, how do we communicate with our audience when there's been such a lack of opportunities for so long and this area? Because of the pandemic as well as hard to get into schools and other youth things because a lot of them still aren't happening. So we've been thinking a lot about like, how do we as Stellar Quines reach out to young women and non binary people in Fife who don't even know really who Stellar Quines are d’you know because they're like a professional theatre company based in Edinburgh, that maybe you would only hear about if you were studying in higher drama or if your family had an interest in theatre. But if you don't know that this is for you, how do we access that? And a lot of the the conversations we've been having is about, like, what language we're using? Are we a drama group? Are we just a safe space for these people to come and meet, and then we'll decide what we'll do with the time. And so we're still trying to figure that out, I think. I think we just first of all want to hold a space. And then second of all, kind of, because we want it to be led by the young people almost used the language that they sort of create, to then talk about what we're doing, but, I suppose, me and Rach, are really aware that we've left Fife going to college and uni, whatever. And we have a language that we sort of can use as facilitators, and people that have worked in arts for a while now. But that language doesn't necessarily translate to the young people that we actually want to reach out to. So we're finding it quite interesting. It's like, those young girls that we were from Fife, stepping back into that sort of role and thinking about, you know, what would we have connected with and what just kinda sound like theatre nonsense or that feels like it's not for that, that we would have felt like wasn't for us at the time. So it's quite nice. And it's quite refreshing to go back and look at where we came from. And use that to our advantage, I suppose…*

**Rachel Jane Morrison:** *It’s like what Rachael is saying is like, there's this absolute kind of almost like transference of knowledge and language that we both use. And, you know, anybody who works in the arts know that you often wear many hats, and often have different roles. And I think, when it comes down to language and communication, that's often a huge part of that, you know, like, when I'm pitching to a board of funders, my language, and the way I speak is very different. Whether I'm with my brothers, and we're chatting, and we're watching a football, like, it's, you know, that kind of language, you know, there's peaks and troughs of when you turn it on and turn it off I guess. And I think what I used to struggle with when I was at uni in Glasgow, I used to very much get the whole like “Oh you’re no fae here”. And I'd be like, Oh, is that? Oh, yes, you know, or like, I'd come home? And then it's like, oh, you're trying to be posh, you know? And it's like, how do you use that , 1. to your advantage, but also, how do you stay honest and authentic in that, and I think the arts actually enhanced communication, like with your confidence, expressions, sense of self, sharing of knowledge. So I think what Rachael and I are both finding and like she said, you know, really refreshing is that we can be both of those things in this space, we can both be very articulate, very in tune practitioners with styles and different models and methods of working. But equally, we can laugh about what's been in the East Fife Mail with the group. So…*

**Rachael Keiller: *…****yeah, and, and that's probably like, the first time that that's ever happened for me is that I'm not, I'm not stepping into, you know, Fife that works in the central belt and does drama, or, you know, if it's like both, and, and that's to be celebrated. But actually, For me, like, especially at college, it wasn’t to be celebrated, it was like, “if speak with an accent, you won't work as an actor, there's no jobs, like, you know, if you sound too working class” and I was actually taught to sort of get rid of my accent. and so then it's like, actually, now, I'm glad I held on to that, because that is what connects me to the young people I'm trying to connect with now is that like, I'm normal to them. I'm not an outsider from the central belt coming to Fife trying to recruit, you know, someone that these young people might see as like, posh, or from the arts and other. I'm just like, normal, because I'm from here, and I speak with the same voice. But actually, what's ironic is a lot of my early career, I was trying to not be that because I was told that I wouldn't fit in the arts and I think that's why we've got an issue here in Fife with actually connecting with the young people in the first place is because there's such a sense of like the arts isn’t really for people here. And me and RJ are kind of trying to batter that wall down but it's been built so high and with the toughest cement. You know and we're just two people. It's tough. We're trying to change the landscape.*

**MC:** Rachael and RJ offer a really clear and honest explanation behind one of the passions fuelling this project, and it’s their own experience. It’s been a common reason for a lot of people across Culture Collective and that’s the desire to provide something better for current and future generations within their communities. We often hear phrases such as “*I wish I had had this when I was younger*” or “*I wish this had been in place as it would have made things so much easier for me*”. And recalling our 2nd episode of this podcast looking at health and wellbeing, this is all part of that conversation as well, as these things impact how we live our lives more richly. Because as RJ says, the arts enhance communication, confidence, expression and sense of self. People deserve all of these things.

Rachel and RJ are also using language in different modes. Not only the use of their dialect to reconnect with the people in their area, but also to grow the conversation surrounding the arts AND to use the language that young people are using to combine with their own disciplines and shape a programme for them. This in itself shows a true understanding of what needs to be introduced and again it’s their lived experience driving this forward.

Their desire to return to the communities where they were raised and those communities accepting them as natives with true intentions is a wonderful approach. Rachael’s comments on being told she wouldn’t get work based on her accent highlights exactly why they should be bringing this project to their area. If we start to introduce things more into communities and build those connections across the wider cultural landscape then they become more accepted and part of our daily communication streams.

The fact that dialect is often associated with class as well is something that we must address. Class in the arts should not enter this conversation as a negative, as everyone has the right to follow any path they desire. The stereotyping of accents, dialects and the way we speak as Harry Josephine mentioned, is something to be challenged. We must be able to show people across all generations that opportunities are available to them, and judgement shouldn’t be placed based on assumptions. And it’s this strand that we are going to use for our final provocation of this podcast. When RJ and Rachael talk about studying their discipline and the negative comments they received on their accent, begs the question: ***what ways can we further nurture regional dialects when it comes to the arts and should we be placing more investment into culture in areas outside the central belt to encourage this nurturing?***

**Part 5: Host Round-Up: Morvern & Tomiwa**

**MC:** At the end of each episode I like to have a debrief with a guest to discuss the themes raised each week with someone who is connected directly to the episode theme. This week our guest is Tomiwa Folorunso - Tomiwa is an Edinburgh-raised, Brussels-based writer, presenter, creative and digital content producer currently studying an MA in Cultural Studies. Having written for the likes of The Herald and The National, she works with Fringe of Colour and previously was Black Ballad’s regional editor for Scotland. She also presented the BBC Radio 4 documentary *The Art of Now: Black and Creative in Scotland.*

Here, I catch up in conversation with Tomiwa about the provocations in this episode and take a look at the future.

[CLIP] **Morvern & Tomiwa**

**MC:** Hey Tomiwa, how are you doing?

**TF**: I’m good, how are you?

**MC:** Good, good. So we are revisiting in some respects the Broadcast event but also taking the conversation forward a little bit as well. And interviewing folks from the network from the Culture Collective network, to find out some of their thoughts and some of the subjects that came up in Broadcast, way back when in November in Hawick. But just to kind of pick up on some of the questions that came up as part of that event, and kind of just see your thoughts and your thinking on it. Because I'm very aware that although you hosted the event, you didn't really get much of an opportunity because you were asking the questions, I wanted to pick up on something that Harry Josephine said, around the standardisation of language being a tool of colonisation. And I was wondering if you could maybe tell me some of your thoughts about how we might be able to increase the power of minoritised languages, culturally?

**TF**: Yeah, Harry Josephine spoke about this really well and articulated it kind of beautifully. And it's the big question, but I feel any question about language in Scotland is going to be a big question. Almost this first step is that a social and cultural and like even political understanding of this language across Scotland. And part of that starts with I think, like Scottish history, because so many people don't even know what are the minoritised languages within the country. And so how can we even give it power if we don't have that knowledge and understanding of the history of language in Scotland? It came to be that those language some languages are only spoken in certain parts of the country, or by a small number of people because I imagine like I've not been to these communities like I've not been to Orkney, I'm ashamed to say a Scottish person, that you go to Orkney in these languages are very much present. Right? And it's, it's very present and you can see it within culture there. But it's this thing that happens right as you go down this as you get closer to the central belt, that it becomes very standardised, and almost like especially to speak of Edinburgh, very almost like in some senses Scottish but also very like British or English just in terms of culture anyway

MC: Yep. Some of the stuff that Ghazi said at the original Broadcast event I really liked, I really liked that term where he mentioned that your tongue is your address as a way of kind of like an identity, an association, maybe even the language that you speak talks about kind of your background and your culture and education. So just kind of moving on from that. Do you think we're maybe influenced too much by certain bodies within culture? Or do we need to challenge this more? There was something that actually I think we've talked about it a little bit there around Edinburgh, and I'm from Glasgow originally, and actually, a lot of people used to just say but Edinburgh that full of English people, I wouldn't necessarily think it's full of English people. I think there's quite a lot of Scottish people in Edinburgh, but there's something about the accent and the language that they speak that makes them sound English. And I think that comes down to class as well, actually. So it's almost like a signifier of class. I just wonder if the way we speak can sometimes be a signifier for other things, and whether we can be challenging that?

**TF**: 100%. It's not the same issue that you have in America, okay, you will have it in America, in the US but in a different way, I think but Britain, the class system is so much part of like, the identity of Britishness. You know, they just like almost come together. And within that, yeah, is accent and language. And I think, definitely, as someone who grew up who was like born and raised in Edinburgh, you know, I'm Nigerian, my parents are Nigerian, you know, they learned English growing up, they studied in English, but in Nigeria. And so I think like, the way they spoke was very much similar to I don't know, like the Queen's English, almost, you know. And like, my dad's studied English literature. He has a PhD in English literature. So he was very much on us in terms of how we speak and how we articulate ourselves. So I had that growing up, and that was the home I came from, but I also went to school or secondary school more so that was in a catchment area that was like very deprived and very wealthy at the same time. And I remember like, a lot of my friends would be like, Tomiwa talks posh, you know, Tomiwa speaks a certain way and like, and they would sound very Scottish. But especially in that sense of how they had categorised me as posh because of my accent. That then means like, if you don't sound similar to me, you are “poor”, quote, unquote, like, and that says where you're from…

MC: or you're like, othered than some way…

TF: …exactly. And the moment you open your mouth, and you open your mouth and you speak, it almost doesn't even matter what you say, because based on your accent, and like, the sound of the words, people have made a judgement. I feel like it's also like a signifier of social mobility in a sense, because sometimes, like, I'll speak to, I have certain friends that are have grown up, like incredibly wealthy and incredibly privileged. And then you meet their parents, or they sound the same as like, I don't know, like, the kind of accent you would expect. I'm trying not to stereotype. Do you know what I mean? Like, I'm trying to be so careful. And they don't sound like me, perhaps. And you would almost expect them to do too, because of how much money they have, is like very limited thinking or dangerous thinking. But it is the reality of growing up in Scotland or living in Scotland that our accents, say even in the difference between like an Edinburgh accent and a Glaswegian accent, to me like retaining the accent, or retaining your accent and not feeling pressured to have a more southern English accent or that kind of way is also your way of saying, like, this is where I come from. These are the communities I'm part of, it shows you, you know, yeah, it's something to be proud of. It's like part of culture, right?

MC: Like, it shows also that kind of recognisably Scottish accent and it's something that I experienced when I was growing up because my mum's English and I think I had quite an English, AKA in Scotland posh accent when I was when I was at primary school. And then when I came to secondary school, just got that wiped out me completely like and it was actually like, having a Scottish accent to fit in, in a lot of ways. But there is something kind of quite special, I think around dialects and regional dialects as well. So I just wanted to kind of pick up on this question. This is something that came up with some of the interviews with Young Quines, part of Culture Collective is should we kind of be nurturing our regional dialects within the apps and placing more investment I spent potentially in places that are outside the central belt because I suppose I mean, Glaswegian , quite well known, I suppose when it comes to when it comes to the arts and when it comes to being on stage and stuff you do mention like Edinburgh and the Edinburgh accent as well, because I think that for me the true Edinburgh accent, I suppose the working class Edinburgh accent is something that I think a lot of Glaswegians don't know, I remember when, like a friend of mine from classical, which was chatting to someone he was like, where's that person person from? Because I'm like, that's what the Edinburgh accent is. But it's just not that well known. You know?

TF: It feels like okay, yes, obviously, we need to preserve theSE dialects and these accents, like, like, how can we not, and that's part of the job of culture, I feel like, it's as much as culture is very much looking forward, I think and recreating and reimagining and just like being in the present, is also preserving what we have in our histories in a way and keeping those alive and coming back to them. Scotland is a small country, it's not this huge country it’s small, and it's sweet. There's not that many people. And so to constantly be putting investment into the central belt is great. But it's like not, let's not forget the other parts, right? And even come back to the fact that, you know, we have the language and the Broadcast event in the Scottish Borders. Like, it's so important that we're having these conversations in different parts of the country. Because yes, it's small. Yes, there's not that many people. But that doesn't mean that there's not a wealth of like experiences, and like voices and stories to be heard. And it's like money, right, and putting money and putting investment into these different communities, which is part of what Culture Collective’s done right? So that people can find their way to like, keep these languages alive, and express how they use them and how they feel about them in their daily life and bring like a conversation about them to kind of present or like contemporary Scotland.

MC: Cool. I suppose something else that I just really liked from the event was Jamie Rea, the deaf actor was talking about his experience kind of growing up with BSL, and also thinking about how the pandemic maybe give people a bit of time and space to actually think about accessibility when it comes to a whole range of needs when it comes within culture and audiences. And I also really liked what he was talking about, about how BSL is evolving. Towards the end of the event, there was some discussion around binary language. And Jamie was explaining how the sign for people which used to be very kind of binary and kind of man woman was the definition of people has begun to expand in terms of a BSL signing way. I'm just interested to hear your thoughts about how you think that that language might evolve, where we take it next, and how you might see yeah language evolving culturally as well.

TF: Obviously, I don't have favourites, and everybody on the panel, like everything they said was like, Oh, my gosh, amazing, wonderful. But I really felt like Jamie's contribution was so special, and really was challenging the way I think and the way that I viewed language and that point about how with BSL, you have this, like freedom and like fluidity to it to, or you have the freedom to for it to be fluid, I should maybe say and that is something that I don't think English always allows us. And we can definitely learn from that in the sense. And also learn in terms of like how we live our lives and navigate the world from that fluidity, I suppose like be in touch with what is going on in the world around you. One thing that happened during the pandemic was that people remembered accessibility or started to think more about it. How we continue that is really important. And also, like, how do we continue that to make sure we're giving audiences the best experience? You know, like, I've programmed events, I've curated events, like I have not thought with this mindset, so often you're like, oh, as long as we have subtitles, that's okay. But actually it's like how can we make sure we're giving the entire audience the best experience of whatever culture they are experiencing? You know, and I, I worked with Fringe of Colour have worked with them for two years, and they made this huge effort. Fringe of Colour Films is like our online film festival that takes place in August online. For Black people and people of colour and Jess the founder made this leap, huge effort and commitment, I should even call it effort, right? Because if It should just be how it is. But there's commitment to make sure all our films were subtitled and had audio description. You know, it's like a festival based on donations and fundraising. And so doesn't have BSL, but it's online. So perhaps you could argue that it was okay. I don't know. Very happy to be corrected on that. But I think especially anything that's live, why isn't there a BSL person there? Why aren't you giving that non hearing members of the audience that same experience? You know,

MC: I mean, you're kind of talking there about kind of like a benchmark as well. And it's something that's come up in our previous podcast episodes as well is around kind of grassroots practitioners and organisations actually leading the way, often when it comes to accessibility as well. Yeah. Commitments benchmarks.

TF: Yeah. It's just like making it the norm. I think the other thing is it is not going to be easy. Like it's not going to be, well, I mean, some grassroots organisations which argue differently, but like, I understand for as you're changing the way you're working, there's this huge commitment. And we've seen this cultural shift. And the one we're in now is very much focused on audiences, and participation and engagement. Those are like the buzzwords of 21st century culture, right? If we're thinking about these things, then how can we make sure it's all like how can we make sure all members of the audience are participating? Or how do we make sure all members of the audience are engaged on an equal level? That's what I want for Scottish culture? Because it is so possible.

**MC:** It’s the end of another episode, but we do want to leave you with one big provocation courtesy of Tomiwa to take forward. And that is: “When thinking about access, how can we make sure all members of the audience are participating or being engaged with on an equal level?”

***There’s this huge commitment and we’ve seen this cultural shift and the one we are in now is very much focused on audiences, participation and engagement. If we’re thinking about these things, how can we make sure all members of the audience are participating or engaged on an equal level?***

In our next episode, Locate, we focus on Scotland’s places. In the meantime, why not head over to our Miro board, an online space that’s been created to invite you to join the conversation. Add your thoughts, insights, experiences and questions here, and we'll include your perspectives in our future conversations. You can find the link in the show notes to accompany this podcast or on the Culture Collective website. You can view videos of the original Starting Points events there too.

**Credits:**

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