

BJ: So let me just finally ask you some questions specific, more specifically about language. Have you ever heard of Pittsburghese?

KD: Yes.

BJ: How would you describe what it is?

KD: Um, a very strange accent that nobody, um, outside of Pittsburgh seems to understand. Um, it's, I guess it's, it's not viewed as a very, um, classy way of talking. It's something that's mostly attributed to the working classes.

BJ: Mm hmm.

KD: Um, kind of, it doesn't- I don't know how to describe it. Sort of a lazy mixture of all the different accents that, that came here.

BJ: Really? A mixture of different accents that came here.

KD: Yeah.

BJ: So, what are some examples of- Can you think?

KD: I suppose um- I've heard different theories about where yinz came about. I've heard that it's actually a Dutch word, or something like that. I don't know. Um, but it- Um, I'm sorry I forgot the question.

BJ: Just examples of where- Pittsburgh things. [Pittsburghese things.]

KD: Um, [I guess] I guess, Yinz would be the most famous one, um, which is just sort of like the Northern or the Pittsburgh y'all.

BJ: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

KD: 'n'at.

BJ: 'n'at, yeah. Are there- so you said it was an accent, so it's mostly just these words that people use, or is there- are there- is it also like pronunciation?

KD: I guess there's- yeah. Um, I guess there's a certain- I've heard a lot of people describe it as a lot of people, um, put a question mark, sort of at the end of all their sentences.

BJ: Hmm.

KD: Um, or in, in sort of um- They draw out certain words and contract other ones. I don't know. That's just, um, people who have come here from other states and other cities who have heard it. [That's how they have described it to me.]

BJ: [So they, they notice it?]

KD: Yeah.

BJ: And that's how they talk about it?

KD: Yeah.

BJ: Uh huh.

KD: I guess it's kind of hard to pinpoint exactly what's different about it. It's just- it sounds a little odd.

BJ: Yeah. Uh huh. So were you, uh, were you aware of it growing up? Did you know people who had that accent, or did you have that accent?

KD: My, my grandmother, is actually- You can hear it a lot in her voice. Not my mom so much, and my dad, some words you'll hear it. The same with my boyfriend actually. I think I- I had a few just mis-pronunciations. When I was little I said "Pixburgh" all the time, which I guess is pretty common around here.

BJ: I guess. People say it is.

KD: And I guess a lot of people end their sentences with preposition, um, here, so, which I do myself a lot.

BJ: Like saying "Where's that at?"

KD: "Up 'ere. Up there."

BJ: Yeah. So you, would you say you ever use Pittsburghese?

KD: Um, consciously, or?

BJ: Well you wouldn't be aware of it, it wasn't conscious. But-

KD: I've, I've done it uh. I've sort of like put on the accent to make fun of it at times. Not to make fun of it, but, you know, to imitate it. But I think, uh, I've said where at a lot. I say that a lot, yeah, I think.

BJ: Mm hmm. So when would you want to imitate it?

KD: Just to, I don't know. Just to have fun, um, I don't know. Especially in my neighborhood, a lot of people are um- My grandmother, I said that hers is really strong. So sometimes, if I'm, if I'm teasing her, I would, I would exaggerate, and um.

BJ: Mm hmm. Uh huh. And what about among like people your age, do people [make jokes about it?]

KD: [My friend] Christina, um, she has a pretty strong accent even though she grew up in Ringold, some how she managed to pick it up along the way. So hers is pretty strong. Um, the rest of my friends. The one's who haven't grown up in Pittsburgh, obviously they don't- I don't really ever hear it in them. Um, the one's who have grown up in Pittsburgh, it's little droplets here and there.

BJ: And you tease, do people tease each other about this?

KD: Mm hmm. Uh huh.

BJ: By?

KD: Because we're supposed to be educated people who are very worldly and everything, and we say things like, you know, yinz going out. You know.

BJ: Uh huh. So have you ever seen, um, I mean, have you ever learned about Pittsburghese apart from just hearing it? Have you ever seen anything that had Pittsburghese written on it, or?

KD: Uh, yeah. A couple- I've seen T-shirts and um a friend of mine actually gave me a mug that had different Pittsburghese phrases on it. Um, a little souvenir book of Pittsburghese phrases. Um, I think there's a- a couple of the radio stations usually have a- have a character during their morning shows who's a [very, a yinzer.]

BJ: [Yeah. Like Jimmy Kren.] He's the, he's the sort of official Pittsburghese speaker in some ways, yeah uh huh. Have you ever heard the term yinzer?

KD: Yes.

BJ: What does that mean?

KD: Um. I guess the image that would come to mind is some one who is very stereotypically Pittsburgh. Um, dressed head to foot in Steelers garb, and um, drinking Iron City, and ((both laugh)) um, um, speaking in a very thick Pittsburghese accent.

BJ: And probably the image that comes to mind is it a male or a female?

KD: Mm hmm. Male. I mean I've met some people, women, who I would characterize as yinzers. Um, big hair, ((both laugh)) uh, kind of loud and obnoxious. Yeah, so.

BJ: Yeah, uh huh. So it wouldn't be necessarily a compliment to call somebody a yinzer?

VL20: Sometimes it's a term of endearment. I think a lot of people, um, the same people who sort of look down their noses at Pittsburgh would use it as an insult. I've been called

a yinzer because I like Pittsburgh so much, um, and I don't intend to leave. So, a lot of people have referred to me as that.

BJ: And you wouldn't take that as an insult?

KD: No.

BJ: Uh huh. Yeah. I wonder when that word started being used. Have you known that word, yinzer, all- pretty much all your life or?

KD: Um. [I don't think-]

BJ: ['Cause sometimes- it's interesting] sometimes older people say they've never heard the word before- that word.

KD: Yeah, I don't recall being aware of it when I was young, a younger. Probably sometime around high school it seemed to enter the lexicon more readily.

BJ: That's interesting. Yeah.

KD: I'm not sure who invented it.

BJ: I have no idea. I'd like to track that down. It would be interesting.

KD: I guess it's just sort of like a- another word for like a- the equivalent of like a hick or a red neck, or something like that. So.

BJ: Mm hmm. A hick or a red neck, yeah.

KD: Some one with a- sort of a- not very, um, not very sophisticated.

BJ: Uh huh. And also with a certain local pride in a certain way, or a local identity.

KD: Mm hmm. Yeah. To a fault ((laugh)) maybe.

BJ: Have you ever seen any Pittsburghese or any kind of yinzer stuff on the internet? Is that?

KD: Um, yeah. I've actually seen your- I've seen your website. I've seen Pittsburghese.com. Other than that, I don't think I've ever looked at it, so.

BJ: Yeah. I think Pittsburghese.com is the big one. I mean obviously because of its name it's the one that people get to when they're- but uh, you know. If you look around there are others too, which is kind of interesting that people would do this, yeah.

KD: Mm hmm.

BJ: So you have, uh- you certainly know the word yinz and you use it at least jokingly yourself.

KD: Mm hmm.

BJ: Do you think you ever use it yourself without sort of being conscious of it or sort of putting it on?

KD: No. I think, I went to a pretty strict Catholic school when I was little, and they were very very adamant that we speak properly. I don't know why. They just- if, if we ever- I don't know if I every personally slipped and said, um, but I know that if I did it, I would have been corrected.

BJ: Really, uh huh.

KD: They didn't want us to say yeah. We had to say yes. Yes and no. Yes ma'am and no ma'am, so, um, they were very, they were very strict with language. Yeah, so.

BJ: What about yinz guys? Is that a local form, or is that-

KD: Mm hmm

BJ: It seems kind of redundant=

KD: =yeah=

BJ: =I mean, since yinz is already plural.

KD: Right.

BJ: But, you've heard it- you'd say you've heard it?

KD: Yeah, uh huh.

BJ: What about, if somebody says, you know, if the lawn uh, the grass is getting to long, somebody says the lawn needs mowed. Or if somebody=

KD: =They leave out to be.

BJ: Yeah. The leaving out to be.

KD: Yeah. [Some]

BJ: [Do] you do- do you do that? Did you [[ever have that called to your]] attention?

KD: [[Yeah. I do that a lot.]] Yeah. Or I say, um, my clothes need washed.

BJ: Mm hmm.

KD: Or the dishes, the dishes need done. Or something that doesn't really make any sense, but I know what it means.

BJ: Is that a Pittsburgh-ism, or is that just when somebody's not being careful.

KD: I don't know if that's just bad grammar, or it that's- I think, I've heard other people say that they don't really understand, um, needs washed, or this needs- needs washed=

BJ: =or needs done, or whatever=

KD: =yeah. Um. I don't know. I guess the proper way to say it would be, this needs to be washed, or this needs to go into the laundry. ((laughing)) I don't know, um. Yeah.

BJ: Did anybody in Richmond ever sort of comment on that? 'Cause I don't think they do it there.

KD: They, the biggest thing that they disliked about my accent, however prevalent it might be, is pop. I say pop. And everyone would get sort of angry with me about that. They would say it was soda. Pop is a noise. Soda is a drink.

BJ: Why do they- [Why do people get upset about these things? So what, big deal?]

KD: [I don't know. People get really offended by it.] I don't know why that of all the word in Pittsburghese would make people angry, but people get really annoyed with it. I don't know why.

BJ: Well, you know. I'm from Pennsylvania, and I grew up saying pop too, and then lived in other places, and I sort of gave it up, you know, the way people do, and now since I've moved back seven years ago, I make a point of saying it. I just want, you know, I want to sort of keep this word alive.

KD: Right. I think in other areas, if I asked what kind of pop do you serve- They knew what I was talking about, but they pretended they didn't just to give me a hard time, so I think I, I interchange it every once in a while, depending on the situation.

BJ: And you've talked about 'n'at.

KD: Mm hmm.

BJ: Is that one that you would have used when you were a kid, except you would have gotten corrected, or [people in your family use it?]

KD: [Probably.] It seems like something that would slip out every once in a while, being as it's another word for and that.

BJ: Mm hmm.

KD: Which is sort of like a punctuation on whatever sentence you're talking about.

BJ: Mm hmm. Yeah. Have you ever heard of a grinny?

KD: No.

BJ: That's an old local word. I think mostly a rural-

KD: Yeah. There's, there's a few that I've never heard before. I think there's another word for pigeon that I didn't understand, uh=

BJ: =Yeah. If you look through those uh,=

KD:= Sputzies. I don't know what that is.=

BJ: =Yeah. Sputzies. That's a kind of bird. That's a German word for sparrow or something.

KD: Yeah. I'd never heard that before. Um, I think it was on- it was on a mug that a friend of mine had given me and we didn't know what it was, so.

BJ: So, where would you look up a word like that?

KD: I think I looked at Pittsburghese.com, but it didn't really have an explanation, so I just sort of=

BJ: =I think it's actually just a German word. Yeah uh huh.

KD: Yeah.

BJ: Yeah, no, grinnie was an old word for chipmunk, that I think was, well I think, I know it was a Scotch-Irish word, and so was yinz, by the way. That's a, it's not Dutch. I think a lot of people think it is because there were lots of German's here, and they think that something must have come from German. But actually, a lot of the local words are Scotch-Irish.

KD: Oh, okay.

BJ: And then Pixburgh. You said that you used to say that when you were a kid.

KD: Yeah, I did.

BJ: Who says it? Who would say Pixburgh?

KD: I don't know. I've heard that, um, attributed to Pittsburghese. I remember being pretty little and saying it. So, it might have been, a, uh, a mis-pronunciation, so.

BJ: Just because it's hard to get your mouth around Pittsburgh.

KD: Yeah. I didn't really understand what the name of the city was.