



# Raymond A. Mason School of Business

WILLIAM & MARY

DIVERSITY GOES TO WORK PODCAST

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## EPISODE 49: HEATHER HANSEN – “BUT WHAT ABOUT MY ACCENT?”

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### **Phil Wagner**

Hello from the halls of the Mason School of Business here at William & Mary. I'm Phil, and this is Diversity Goes to Work. Buckle up because we're getting ready to take a deep dive into the real human lived experiences that shape and guide our diversity work in the world of work. Should be fun.

### **Phil Wagner**

Welcome to yet another episode of Diversity Goes to Work. As our workplaces grow increasingly global and interconnected, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment to reevaluate one of the most potent yet overlooked aspects of DEI: language and human communication. We often hear that language is power, but today, we're going to be looking at language as a tool, tool of empowerment. And our guest argues that language is more than just a means of expression. It's a bridge, she says, allowing us to traverse cultural divides, challenge biases, and foster truly inclusive spaces. In her work, she seeks to break down linguistic barriers and challenge the often unseen micro inequalities that stand in the way of truly diverse and inclusive workspaces. Heather Hansen helps global professionals show up, speak up, and inspire action in a changing world. Heather's 2018 TEDx talk, titled 2 Billion Voices How to Speak Bad English perfectly, has had over 200,000 views, and it's used across the world in many university classrooms and in many corporate training spaces. She's a leader in the field of global English communication, where she's known for being an outspoken advocate for global voices. She fights against micro inequalities related to language and accent in international teams, and ultimately, she helps companies build communication cultures where every voice is heard. She's the author of Unmuted: How to Show Up, Speak Up, and Inspire Action. Heather, it's such a privilege to welcome you here today. Thanks for taking time to join us on our podcast. Can you tell our listeners a little bit more about who you are and what you do?

### **Heather Hansen**

Thank you so much, Phil. Thank you for having me. And that was probably the best introduction I have ever been given on a podcast. So thank you so much for that. You mentioned some really important points in that intro that I'll just kind of reconfirm now. You mentioned a bridge and how language is a bridge. And I think in introducing who I am and what I do, I like to consider myself as a bridge. A bridge between academia and practice, especially in the area of linguistics and English language teaching, as well as a bridge between

the typical monolingual, yet perhaps multicultural, English speaker versus the multilingual, international, and multicultural English speaker. I think that's a bridge that needs a lot of work to be built so that we can overcome some of the challenges we see between people who don't really have that experience of learning a foreign language and understand the privilege they have being born into English. So, I was born and raised in California, and I studied international studies. In fact, William & Mary was one of my shortlisted schools that I considered way, way back in the day. But I ended up at a small school of international Studies in California. And after all of my time working abroad studying abroad, I almost spent more time abroad than in the United States during my schooling. And right after graduation, I moved to Denmark, where I continued my studies in linguistics. And after about four years there, my husband and I made the move to Singapore and lived here. We thought we were coming for two years. It turned into eight. I started a company here focusing specifically on global communication skills. So, giving people, especially in multinational companies, the tools to communicate well and build those bridges of understanding among their teams and to their clients and stakeholders all over the world. And that's what I've been doing ever since. We had a short stint back in Denmark again and then back again to Singapore. But this is really home for us and where we plan to stay, and where I headquarter my business, although I work all over the world at this stage, especially since we moved online. So that's really all about what I do and my background and what brought me here.

### **Phil Wagner**

Excellent. One of my favorite things about your work is your TEDx talk. In my mind, that's where all academics really find their place to shine. Right. And it's like a due diligence you have to do along the way. In that TEDx talk, how to speak bad English perfectly. You really unpack a lot of your work, and I'm wondering if you can share about that process and then how that led you to unmuted, which is also just wonderful work, a wonderful. Again, a toolkit in its own right to give leaders the tools they need to build those spaces we speak of. Can you talk about maybe those two things the TEDx and unmuted share with our listeners a little bit more about both of those works?

### **Heather Hansen**

Yeah, and thanks for the question. Yeah. The TEDx was a big deal for me, and it's led to a lot of attention, and a lot of people refer back to that TEDx it came about. And it's not all positive. Right. A lot of people will say, oh, why is she calling it bad English? And what's this and what's that? And the whole point of this talk is that there is no such thing as bad English. It's my clients who come to me and say, my English is so bad, my English is so bad, I need to sound like you. I want to sound American. I want to sound British. And I'm saying, well, first of all, your English is not bad. There's no such thing as bad. And you are, for some reason, equating American or British English with good. Who taught you that? And it was very likely teachers, educators, parents, and the business world in general in the global economy has taught that if you are not a native speaker, then your English is not good. And the reality is that most of us native speakers are the ones causing problems in international settings. We speak too fast. We use a bunch of idioms, touch base, whole nine yards, all of our great

Americanisms that we don't even realize are Americanisms, especially if we've never learned foreign languages and we are the ones causing the difficulty. So that was one of the first main messages in that TED Talk is that as native speakers born into the language, we are in the great, great minority of English speakers worldwide. This is not our language. And when it is used in the global economy, it is used very differently, and it is a tool for understanding. So, as far as I'm concerned, if you can understand and you're being understood, that is good English. That is good communication. And that was the main message of that talk. Beyond that was also the message around accent. I've become quite known in Southeast Asia as an accent specialist, meaning people come to me and say, fix my accent. Or, more likely, HR calls and says, fix that person's accent. Make them sound like you. And I have always been very much against that mentality. It's not about accent reduction. You don't reduce an accent. You don't neutralize an accent. You add to it, and you learn to speak with clarity. So when I go home to California, people tell me I talk funny, and I usually say, why? Because I speak clearly now. I articulate my word endings, I use a T in my words, and that's what I teach my clients to do. So, I am a huge supporter of accent recognition. Instead of accent reduction, meaning all of us need to learn the skill set of how to tune our ears to better understand others globally. The world is coming to us. You can sit in your living room in my hometown, in a little teeny hometown in California, and the world is coming. So you need to develop those skill sets. So that, I think, did that do the talk justice there?

### **Phil Wagner**

And you take us down a rabbit trail. So let's not forget to come back to unmuted because I want to talk about that, but I think you're teeing up some important themes here you talk about in your work. The goal is to get your message out to be understood. What does your work say about listeners? Right. Those who might say, I'm an inclusive leader, but still find themselves subtly discriminating or holding those biases against language or accent. Before this call, you and I were starting to unpack that term a little bit more. What does that really mean? So, talk to us about the flip side for the audience. What does your work say? What orientation do they need to take to be ready to change how they think about accent?

### **Heather Hansen**

Yes, and I have a few chapters on listening and accent in unmuted as well. The problem that I see is leaders believe they are being inclusive. Leaders believe that using inclusive communication, meaning words like folks instead of you guys, or using he and she instead of just he, that these are using inclusive language is being an inclusive communicator. And that is not the case because there is so much inherent unconscious bias in the language itself. When we go into a global setting, and the language that we use is the lingua franca, the common language, when that is English, there is an immediate hierarchy and power differential. Those of us who were born into the language have immediate power and control in that conversation. And we see this enormously in a place like Singapore, that is so incredibly diverse and international, and yet all the leadership tends to be native English speakers. Why is that? There's something happening. Why do I get phone calls every day where they say, we really want to put this person up into the C suite, but we just aren't sure he's global enough?

We aren't sure he can really represent us. We aren't sure that his executive presence is strong enough. What does that really mean? What it means is this person does not properly fit the image and the bias that I have for what a leader looks like and what they should sound like. And what they're really saying is his accent is too heavy, or her accent is too heavy, although very often, most 80% plus, it's he, not she, at this level. And the great majority of my clients are he. It is very much about them not fitting this, first of all, very Westernized image of leadership. And that's one huge, huge problem. And secondly, it's about them not sounding the way they expect and want them to, which is also very Western, more native sounding. And even that is such a silly idea because look at the United States. How many different accents do we have? You know, immediately when I say someone from Texas, Alabama, Florida, New York, New Jersey, Boston, the California Valley girl, and all the different ethnic variations of English that we speak in the United States, just as I mentioned, those out loud people will hear and have immediate ideas of what those people sound like and what that means, and that is what is actually coming into the workplace, and that is what we are not talking about. And that if we want to talk about inclusive communication, that's really the essence of it. So that's, I think, something very important to unpack and start thinking about at a different level.

### **Phil Wagner**

Yeah, quite an unpacking there. And in that, you talk a little bit about our themes and power dynamics, and I think those are really important themes that don't often get discussed in this space. We know that they exist. We know that they drive our communication patterns. I'm wondering, how do power dynamics influence that inclusive leadership communication that we speak of? And particularly, how can leaders be mindful of those power dynamics in their interactions? In what ways, I should say, can inclusive leadership communication challenge or disrupt, or upend those traditional power dynamics within an organization?

### **Heather Hansen**

Well, first, we need to see how it shows up because there are a few different ways that these power dynamics show up. In a meeting, for example, the leader could think, hmm, Annie never speaks up. She must not have something to say. But the reality could be that Annie is translating into another language. It takes her a split second longer to raise her hand and have the confidence to contribute. It could be that Annie comes from a culture where it is respectful to follow whatever the boss says, and it is respectful not to say something against someone who is older and has a higher rank in the company. There could be a lot of reasons why Annie is not speaking up. And yet, many leaders will have an immediate assumption from our Western-biased mentality and how we have been raised, especially in the United States, to always speak up if we have something to say. And of course, I expect my people, and we have a team, and we're close, they'll tell me anything. No, no, not necessarily. So, being an inclusive communicator means making space holding space. It means meetings need to slow down. You have to get comfortable with silence, which, as Americans, we are absolutely not comfortable with silence. I know that from living in Scandinavia, where they are very comfortable with silence. We go to a dinner party, there's that seven-minute pause, and we all kind of freak out and look around the table like, who's going to say something? But in a lot of cultures, that

pause is necessary. It's a time to reflect and to think twice about what we're going to say. Not just to make noise but to say something meaningful. So, that's one way that this power hierarchy can have a huge impact on what's happening in the conversation. Another really common myth, I would say, is this idea that the leader should have the answers. The leader should be the eloquent speaker. The leader should be doing all the talking. And there are a lot of people who go into the meeting. I'm the leader of the meeting, therefore I should be doing the talking. And that's actually the reverse of what we should be doing. The leader should be coming in to facilitate discussion, to hear new ideas, to get all the voices on the table. So that's another way that that power differential can cause some problems for us. So, how do we begin to solve it? Well, first of all, like I said, giving more space, staying quiet, giving chances for others, going into a meeting, and making it your mission to hear from every single person around that board table that you want to make sure that everyone has spoken. Because if they haven't, why are they there? Why were they invited to this meeting if they are not contributing in some way? But it is also your job, from a very basic level, to build a culture where people feel like they can press, unmute, and they can speak up. So the psychological safety needs to be in place, the cross-cultural awareness needs to be there, the self-awareness of knowing if you're too loud in the room and dominating a conversation. These are all parts of that puzzle. So this is the main reason I wrote Unmuted because I was so tired of being called up by HR. We want to change the communication in the company. Can you come do a two-day program on presentation skills? That's not doing anything. That's not getting us anywhere. It's so much more complex. Communication is complex, and it needs a complex solution. And that's where the whole framework of being conscious, confident, and connected came into existence.

### **Phil Wagner**

Again, as a fellow communication scholar, I feel that so deeply, right? You find yourselves in that soft skill space, which is how you're often classified, where people think you can package your entire discipline or an entire canon into a fun 60-minute workshop, and you're like, no, this does not work that way. So, again, I feel that quite deeply. We're getting to strategies. We're getting to tools for the toolkit. But before we go further in that conversation, I do want to back up and talk about barriers or obstacles to even being able to implement your work. What are some of the common barriers you find? Is it just power structures, or are there other barriers that you find get in the way of actually adopting this?

### **Heather Hansen**

Yeah, there are a lot. There are a lot of barriers. I mean, the biggest excuse that companies and individuals, working professionals, have is I don't have time. I don't have time. And I always chuckle with that excuse when it comes to communication because you are communicating every single moment of your workday. You constantly have time to work on your communication. You always have time to apply your learning and your new skills. So time is an excuse that we use, whereas if you simply raise your awareness around how you are communicating, you could be working on that and changing your behaviors every minute of every day. So the excuses around time are a big one. Other challenges would be the cultural challenges. So, I am in a very, very international environment. Sitting in Singapore. We have

an enormous expat population of workers who are from other countries. I have a dinner party, and I have twelve different nationalities in 18 languages around the table. It's insane. And so, every conversation that I am in is a cross-cultural one. And you learn a lot about how to communicate when you're in those situations. Now, what I've noticed, especially from an American perspective, is that typically, unless you're in a very large city, you do not always have that kind of practice available to you.

### **Heather Hansen**

Maybe your only interaction with someone foreign is working with your IT guy in India, which is, I know, a stereotype in itself, but it's very common. So those small, short interactions you may not think are that important, or they may be frustrating for you, or your biases creep up. And so that causes some challenges as well, to learn and understand how important cross-cultural communication is. And many people believe that culture is the big C, just the country, nationality, and the culture that we bring. But there's little C culture as well. There's the difference between men and women communicating. The differences between people from different religions and upbringings and backgrounds and races, all the things we talk about in DEI, all of those differences are little microcultures that we carry with us. And you can be as different from the person that you grew up next door to as you are to someone from China or someone from Malaysia or Germany or France. And that's important to understand that intercultural is also interpersonal. So, we need to have a shift in mindset in how we are approaching our relationships. So those are some of the very biggest challenges along with this power differential. And I would just tack on to that the fact that so much of it is unconscious. Many people have never even thought about the fact that they could be biased against certain accents. And yet when I bring up that Texan or that New Jersey, I mean, when someone says, oh, I'm from New Jersey, I immediately think of Joey and Friends, like, that is my image. Now, if Joey and Friends walks into the office and I have a meeting, and he's my potential client, how do I manage that when I have a picture of Joey in my head the minute he opens his mouth? These are the biases that creep up on us, and we don't realize them until we're in the situation. So there are many, many challenges that make it difficult to really implement this kind of work. And so much of it isn't that unconscious level. So it's about really becoming self-aware first. And that's the first chapter of the book: who are you? It's very much about becoming more self-aware of your own cultural baggage and what that means for you in the world.

### **Phil Wagner**

Yeah, the foundation of emotional intelligence. Right. Self-awareness. So key to so much in our leadership journey. We've talked a little bit about kind of getting people going, getting the engine started so that they become aware working in this space. When you're talking about microaggressions or unconscious bias, we also have to recognize that sometimes you can elicit sort of the pink elephant effect where you say, hey, be careful about this. These are unconscious. Now be aware. And you're constantly now thinking of those. I'm thinking that this could also become reductionist, fetishizing, exotifying, tokenistic. Very quickly.



**Heather Hansen**

Like every area of DEI.

**Phil Wagner**

Right.

**Heather Hansen**

The fine line that we're always walking.

**Phil Wagner**

How do you navigate that?

**Heather Hansen**

And that is quite difficult. And this is also why I tend to stay away from national comparisons of culture. That is by far the most popular, and especially in the mainstream public. People gravitate towards those books that say, Americans are like this, and Germans are like that, and Chinese are like this, and it's not like that. It's not like that. Everyone comes with their own personal experiences. If I walk into a room and someone says, ooh, Heather's American, I'm going to act this way because Americans like this, they are very likely going to fail. I have spent over half of my life outside of America in two incredibly different cultures than the American culture. I do not have any close American friends here. I do not flow in the American circles. I'm as un-American as you could probably be at this stage. And so assuming, based on my passport, that I will have a certain personality, I will communicate a certain way, I will have certain beliefs. That's a scary stereotype to start following. So what I really focus on is this idea of intercultural being interpersonal that we need to have the toolkit to understand how to be curious, what questions to ask, how to notice what the differences are in our styles of communication without trying to peg it on. Oh, it's because they're from Germany, so they're very punctual. I mean, come on. I've met a ton of Germans that are always ten minutes late because they've lived in Asia forever, and they follow the typical how we show up here. Just because you're from a certain country does not mean you're going to tick that box. And there are other personal characteristics that are so much more important. So, really, I'm all about talking about the microcultures and steering away from these national stereotypes. But when we dig into bias and dig into uncovering why we are biased, it is due to stereotypes we have grown up with. There's a reason why we all think that Germans are punctual, and there's a reason why we think Indians speak a certain way. Well, that's because a white male voiced a character on the Simpsons that we all grew up with and made up an Indian accent that we seem to think is real, and it's not. And so there are stereotypes that have been given to us through the media, through education, through parenting, through teachers, through politics, through everything that has taught us certain things, and it's about deconstructing those and coming up with our own beliefs and our own ideas and learning through experience instead of falling back on the mental stereotypes we've created through what has been told and given to us if that makes sense.

**Phil Wagner**

Yeah, it does. And again, I appreciate the way you unpack and speak to your work consistently here. I want to go back to what this means for leaders who adopt your work. You talked earlier about avoiding terminology like you guys. Right. And I remember in graduate school, that was, like, the thing everybody loved to police each other's language. And I understand that every element of language is a microcosm of power. So I get that, and I see that that's legitimate. But I don't worry; I know that becomes overly naive simplistic.

**Heather Hansen**

Incredibly.

**Phil Wagner**

Yeah, it's performative. And so what about your work takes us beyond that, beyond performative allyship? And look at me. I recognize accents are power. What does it actually do to change how we lead, how we communicate, how we build inclusive organizational cultures?

**Heather Hansen**

Yeah, I actually don't even talk about inclusive language because I think it's pretty ridiculous, and I don't think it moves the needle at all. Whether you say you guys or folks, that's not the point. The point is understanding underneath that every single person at that table has a voice and a voice that's worth listening to. And so it is moving beyond all of the labels, all of the vocabulary, all of the policing because that in itself is a power play. The people who police grammar, police vocabulary, the grammar police online, that's the worst part of my job. When people find out that I'm a communication consultant, they immediately get self-conscious and say, oh, I better really watch how I talk around you. And I'm like, no, actually, it's the exact opposite. I am the one that you do not have to be worried about because I'm accepting of anything you say. Right? Do you get that in your work as well?

**Phil Wagner**

I teach management communication, and so I try to set the standard that I'm a human first, right? I'm a human first and always again. You should feel free to kind of let your guard down together. And the struggles you speak of working with executives who don't think that somebody's ready to rise up. I see that in our international student population here, particularly in our MBA programs, just the impostor syndrome that has already set in as they start that MBA journey, and we begin dismantling that on day one. So I see so much applicability right here, right now, with where we are in our teaching and learning landscape.

**Heather Hansen**

Yeah, those international students. For sure, you know, I was there. I was that international student studying in Austria, speaking German, having to stand up and give my final oral presentation in German. And already at that age, I had already spoken at my high school graduation. I had spoken in front of thousands of people. I was a competitive speech and debate person. I was all-American ranked nationally. And I was sick with nerves and worry,



having to stand up and do that in German, sick with worry. Made myself sick for weeks and stood in front of that class and watched them all look at me with pity and the professor trying to give me words. I knew everything. And all I was thinking was, if I could just do this in English, they would know how smart I am. They would know that I have all the answers, that I know this stuff. And you get into that downward spiral, and the impostor syndrome is very real because you're working five times harder to manage the linguistics of the subject, as well as the subject itself, as well as the perceptions of the people who are listening to you. And you could have been top of your class back home, which I was, and then you move into a foreign language environment, and everything changes, and suddenly you find yourself having to prove yourself, and you shouldn't have to, what you're saying just. It hits my heart because I lived that, and that was one of the main experiences that made me decide that this is what I wanted to do with my life because I felt like, for me, internationally, I can always switch back to English, and I regain my power. I can say you don't like the way I talk. Let's speak English then. All right. And now I'm in charge. But what about all the people who can't do that? Bahasa, Mandarin, Thai, Tagalog, you name it, even French and German. What do they do when they're thrown into an English-speaking workplace, English-speaking university, and their entire degree, all of their grades, their promotion, their salary, the way people perceive their leadership ability is based on the way they communicate, and they can't climb that ladder. So I understand exactly where that impostor syndrome comes from, and it's very real, and it's because the rest of us have not been educated to understand what it's like to battle through that kind of situation. We don't have the empathy because we've never experienced it if we've never learned a foreign language or we've never lived abroad. And by a foreign language, I mean more than, like, two years of high school Spanish. Right. We're talking like living, working, experiencing what it is like to live your life in another language. And there are very significant challenges that come with that. So, sorry, I took us off on a totally different direction, but that hits my heartstrings because I've lived it, and I know how painful it is.

### **Phil Wagner**

No, it's great. I want to ask about measurement because we know if we don't measure it, it doesn't get done. And so, how do you actually measure the effectiveness of what you do? How do you know that it's working and achieving those desired goals? What are some of the measurement schemes that you might?

### **Heather Hansen**

Yeah, I have a really strong opinion on this one because we know that, well, we superficially know that most diversity inclusion training doesn't work. That's the new headline, right, is that we're pouring all this money into diversity and inclusion. None of it is working. Nothing is happening. But I would argue that we're measuring all the wrong things. Just because you're measuring these little pulse surveys, that really doesn't tell us what has changed in the organization. And most organizations are measuring it that way through course evaluations pulse surveys of the audience over time. Now, what I strongly believe in, and I partner with an organizational network analysis firm in Denmark, one of the world leaders, Innovisor. And what they do is they run surveys of the company, not asking, how do you feel about this? Do

you feel like you belong? But asking questions like, who do you turn to for advice? Who do you trust? Who do you believe will support you in a new project? They're these kinds of questions, and you get lists of names, and what they're able to do is graph the social map of the company in black and white. We can actually see how are people connected, and we can see on paper, oh, look at this. We've got this old boys club over here that only talks to each other, and they actually don't talk to any of the women in the department. Or, whoa, guess what? We have this guy from the UK sitting in Singapore and this guy in the UK, and they talk to each other more than they talk to their own teams. Why is that? Does that have to do with language, and accent, and belonging? So we're able, through this kind of analysis and what the work that Innovisor does, that just blows my mind. And I cannot believe more companies aren't looking at this, is looking at the social fabric of that company, of who trusts whom, who interacts with whom, are they connected. Are they in silos? And you can start a project and see what that looks like, and you can finish the project and see whether or not that has changed. Because simply saying do you feel like you belong? Tells us nothing. We can actually see do they belong. We can also see when people self-select to remove themselves from the conversations where they believe they don't belong, and yet they are actually fully socially connected, and yet they're still reporting that, no, nobody likes me. Well, that means that you're self-selecting and moving yourself out of the conversations because people are there supporting you and are turning to you and are asking you. And it's not always the white Western male's fault. Sometimes, there is work to be done on the other sides of all the diversity equations to meet in the middle, and we can see that. But that, I believe, is the only true measurement. And I write about this. I have a full chapter dedicated to it in unmuted because the work they do is so important. And we've collaborated now on an accent bias study where we've also seen this English advantage play out in the workplace, where people who are born into English are listened to to a wider extent and degree throughout the company. So when we can see that in black and white, it really does change everything, and it gives us a real good idea of what is working and what isn't.

### **Phil Wagner**

I have one more question for you if it's all right. So we know that the pandemic really opened up a chasm pretty quickly between present and future. There was a catalyst. We had to change. We had to pivot. We moved organizational communication primarily, if not exclusively, online 2020, and that has forever disrupted our norms around effective organizational and leadership communication. I think we find ourselves again in one of those moments where AI has hit, and it has hit hard, and it is currently changing and will forever change organizational communication. Maybe it's not just AI in your work, but I'm wondering about those sort of key trends in global communication that you see shaping the future of leadership communication, inclusive communication, organizational communication, and beyond.

### **Heather Hansen**

Yeah, absolutely. AI is the biggest one right now. AI is huge. I would also include in this, which is also AI-based, our translation tools our tools for interpretation. So you can watch a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation and get a translation or subtitles up on the screen as you're

watching. I think the ability for us to begin using our own languages is huge. We already have the technology to have an earpiece, and all speak our own languages at the table. There are companies that will come into your meeting and do simultaneous interpretation in any number of languages to the unique individuals on that call. And that could completely change the way we communicate globally. If we were able to level the playing field so that English was not the world's language, but actually everyone could speak their own languages, then what happens to that power differential of the English speaker on top? I could see that people could feel very threatened by that. So that's another big piece of technology that I think is very quickly changing the world. And we have all kinds of other tools that are helping the international English speaker, like Grammarly. I also incorporate Yoodli, which is a public speaking tool that can give you AI feedback on the way that you speak, your speaking rate, your number of fillers. There are a lot of great learning tools out there that can help to support and give that extra confidence to the international speaker that's hopefully starting to level the playing field. On the opposite side, we have a perpetuation of bias with companies, one in particular called Sanas, that has developed an accent translator. So Raj in India, calling John in Michigan from the call center, presses a button that says Mike from Michigan. He speaks in his Indian English, and John hears Mike's voice. That is already happening. Now, I understand this is a huge, huge help for that Indian call center worker whose livelihood depends on being able to sell a product or get that top ten rating in his customer service. Yet, at the same time, we aren't helping the world by perpetuating the bias and not allowing people to hear and start tuning their ears to others. So it's a very fine line that we're walking, and it's quite difficult. But technology is absolutely reshaping our world and the way that we communicate, for good or bad. I see it could go in either direction. There are a lot of great tools that can help us, but I think we also need to be very careful about the ethics of especially AI, which is only as good as the information we feed it. So it's really becoming as biased as we are. So, how do we stop that from happening? But yes, definitely really big challenges coming up in the future around our global communication.

### **Phil Wagner**

So that seems then we'll have to have you back on another episode to unpack those. But as we end today's conversation. Heather, I'm so inspired by the work you do. Can you tell our listeners where to find your work and the best way to support you in your journey?

### **Heather Hansen**

Well, if you want to learn more about me, my speaking topics, and my books, then I would go to [heatherhansen.com](http://heatherhansen.com), and that's also where you can get a copy of *Unmuted* and learn more about my work there. If you're interested in corporate training programs, my corporate training firm is called [Globalspeechacademy.com](http://Globalspeechacademy.com). So, either of those places or feel free to reach out on LinkedIn. I love to get DMs and start conversations on LinkedIn and get to know people in their work there, so you can easily find me there as well.

**Phil Wagner**

Excellent. Heather, thanks for joining us on our podcast today. Such a privilege to speak with you. Appreciate your time.

**Heather Hansen**

Thank you. This has been such a nice conversation. Thanks for having me, Phil.

**Phil Wagner**

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