

Ethi:CS -- The Weekly Ethicacy, Week #3, Yenmin/Shana, Room #1

Topic: AI startup erasing call center worker accents

We used the article, [The AI startup erasing call center worker accents: is it fighting bias – or perpetuating it?](#) by Wilfred Chan as our primary source. Other sources included: [Sanas](#), company website. [Do You Know When Did The Call Center Start In India?](#) by Tarun Sharma.

Summary of issue:

Call centers have been around since the 1950's, but in the early 1990's, India began to see more business. US/UK businesses outsourced call centers particularly in India due to low labor costs, and large English-speaking population, and enough people to work night hours in order to offer service. Recently, a Silicon Valley startup, called Sanas, created an AI program that alters the workers voice in real time.

Accent translation Program

- ❖ Purpose is to help call center workers from around the world sound like 'westerners' at the exact time when they need it the most during the phone call.
- ❖ This AI program provides a shortcut to the laborious and often unsuccessful 'accent neutralization' training that call center workers receive.
- ❖ Lessens the discrimination that the call center workers receive because of their accent.
- ❖ Boasts confidence of workers to have conversations without the bias of the customer because of their accent. It can be frustrating to not be understood because of your accent.
- ❖ It is optional. Agents can opt in and out at any time they choose.

Accent translation Program

- ❖ Masking the accent is another (extreme) form of code switching, a survival mechanism that oppressed peoples must do to assimilate in a Western-centric world.
- ❖ It is a well-intentioned idea that actually capitalizes on and is rooted in xenophobia.
- ❖ On a sociological level, it is dehumanizing, and encourages the erasure of non-White identity. (For example, names are changed to be more Western, they have to learn a specific type of English, and they work graveyard shifts)
- ❖ This AI software creates a false reality catered to the Western palate and perpetuates an "indifference to difference". It continues to feed a false narrative that everything is and should be centered around the Western consumer diet.