

Women in Business and Technology

Transcript of Episode 027 - Designing understanding with Chineasy Founder ShaoLan

Guests: ShaoLan

Summary: Sonia and Colleen kick off the show at the Microsoft One Week Hackathon, the largest private hackathon on the planet. Colleen interviews teams at Imagine Cup, a global competition that empowers the next generation of computer science students to create new applications. Sonia interviews ShaoLan, the Creator and Founder of Chineasy.

Find audio and more information at Microsoft.com/WIBT

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SONIA DARA: Microsoft Ignite is a conference for IT implementers and influencers, enterprise developers and data professionals.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Attendees will get the latest insights and learn new skills from technology leaders shaping the future of cloud, data, business intelligence, teamwork and productivity.

SONIA DARA: The event will be held from September 24th through the 28th in Orlando, Florida.

For more information and to register, visit Microsoft.com/Ignite.

ADVERTISEMENT: You are listening to the Women in Business and Technology podcast from Microsoft. In each episode, you will hear from women in amazing technology and business roles, as well as male allies who are helping make the industry more inclusive, and bringing you tips on how to build a successful career in a supportive community. Welcome to Women in Business and Technology.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Welcome to episode 27 of Women in Business & Technology. I'm Colleen O'Brien

SONIA DARA: And I'm Sonia Dara

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And we're coming to you from the largest private hackathon on the planet, right here on Microsoft's campus.

SONIA DARA: Last year, more than 18,000 people across 400 cities and 75 countries came together for a week of hacking. And 2018 marks Microsoft's fifth and busiest hackathon yet.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right now, we're standing outside two tents on campus, Code Former and Hackatron, where employees are gathering to bring world-changing ideas to life.

SONIA DARA: The Hackathon is just one of many activities that are happening this week. There's an Expo featuring cutting-edge product and service demos, Give Fest, where employees can meet local and global nonprofits, and tomorrow's event, which I'm really looking forward to, is an inclusion panel. Our CEO, Satya Nadella will be joined by Arlan Hamilton, the Founder and Managing Partner of Backstage Capital -- we've mentioned on the show before. He'll also be joined by Kimberly Bryant, the Founder and CEO of Black Girls Code, and he'll be joined by other industry leaders to discuss building inclusive workplaces.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: We're dedicating this episode's Community Connect segment to another happening this week as well. I interviewed students participating in Imagine Cup, a global competition hosted by Microsoft that empowers the next generation of computer science students to create new applications.

SONIA DARA: Then, we'll jump into an interview that I had with ShaoLan, the founder of Chineasy, a company with the mission to bridge the gap between the East and West, and to help people understand China, Chinese culture, and its language.

And we'll wrap the show up in our Cutting Edge segment with a discussion about Jess Wade, a researcher who wrote 270 Wikipedia articles in a year to get female scientists noticed. Wow, what a boss!

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Way to go, Jess Wade.

And on that note, Sonia, what do you say we head into the Hackathon tents and start changing the world?

SONIA DARA: Yeah, I'm going to need some coffee first.

NARRATION: Community Connect. Get involved and stay connected.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Imagine Cup is a global competition that empowers the next generation of computer science students to team up and use their creativity, passion and knowledge of technology to create applications that shape how we live, work and play. Every year, tens of thousands of students from across the globe compete for cash, travel opportunities, prizes and the honor of taking home the Imagine Cup.

I attended the Imagine Cup Showcase on July 23 here at Microsoft in Redmond, where 49 teams demoed their solutions for a panel of judges.

I heard from Iqra Irfan and Areeba Kamil about their solution, Fe Amaan, which aims to reduce the high rate of intrauterine deaths and stillbirths in Pakistan. Areeba explained more about their ambitions for the project:

AREEBA KAMIL: We hope that this project is actually deployed and used by expectant women, because we believe that it's the right of every woman to get good healthcare facilities and easy access to such facilities, so that they can provide good care to newborn babies.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: I spoke with Jose Rafael Cortes Leon and Hanoi Alexa Gonzalez Talavera from Mexico about their project, RedBeat, a device that measures the vital signals of a patient, including temperature, heartrate, blood oxygen, and more. Hanoi was thrilled about competing in the finals, but explained her team's broader hopes for RedBeat:

HANOI ALEXA GONZALEZ TALAVERA: Well, our project is called RedBeat, and it's an IoT-based medical solution designed to improve the life quality of the patients of cardiovascular disease and to keep them safe every moment.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Finally, I connected with New Zealanders Sukhans Asrani, Andrew Hu, and Winston Zhao about the solution that they had built, UniRide, the first carpooling platform for students. Their mission is to turn commuting into a fun and sociable activity that you can look forward to everyday. According to Winston, the team was thrilled to make it to Imagine Cup, not only to compete, but also to see what the other students had built.

WINSTON ZHAO: Imagine Cup has been such an amazing experience. I think when you're around so many people, coming up with your own bright, innovative ideas, it really kind of ignites the fire in your heart and really motivates you to kind of, you know, push the extra mile whenever you can.

And I think it's just really inspiring to see so many young people as well just like myself coming up with all these bright ideas. I mean, I look around and I see some of them and it's really incredible to see what everybody's made and the real changes that they're making. So, I'm just looking forward to seeing everybody success.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: For more information about Imagine Cup finalists, a video recap of the World Championship and details about registering for a future competition, visit imaginecup.com.

And now let's get on with the interview.

SONIA DARA: I'm thrilled to welcome to the studio the founder and creator of Chineasy, ShaoLan. Welcome to the show. Thank you so much for joining me.

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Hi, Sonia. Ni hao.

SONIA DARA: So, ShaoLan, can you tell our listeners a bit more about Chineasy and the products that you offer?

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Right. Chineasy, it's a personal venture I started about five years ago in the attempt to help my British-born children to appreciate and enjoy their cultural legacy.

And then as a result, I created this method, and the whole thing went viral. When I gave my first TED talk and they put my talk online, lots of people came to me and asked if I can produce more.

So, now, five years on, we have the whole range of publications. Also, we have the board games, we have two apps. One is like a smart phone app. The other one is a tablet app for either casual learners or serious learners or people, for example, like children.

SONIA DARA: That's great. So, it's a method that you've developed for teaching Chinese?

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Yes, for teaching Chinese.

And then here it's a bit tricky to know about Chinese, so what is Chinese in terms of language. And Chinese is a collection of languages. But then if you separate between speaking and writing, so it's much easier. So, speaking is a collection of many different dialects. The biggest one is called Mandarin. And Mandarin, there are 800 million speakers. So, it's low-hanging fruit. Once you know how to speak Mandarin, you can speak with another 800 million people. And smaller dialects that were a hundred million or 80 million people you can speak to.

SONIA DARA: Still not a small number.

SHAOLAN HSUEH: No, it's quite attractive.

And then in terms of writing or reading, that's even better, because all the dialects, they share the same written forms. Even, for example, Japanese Kanji, you can recognize Kanji once you know how to read some Chinese characters.

SONIA DARA: There's an incredible story behind your company, with roots in both your own upbringing and your experience parenting your own children, you're saying who were born in the UK. Can you share this origin story?

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Sure. I grew up in an artistic family. My parents, they are both artists. My father, a mathematician and engineer, he decided to become an artist after he married my mother. So, he just because of my grandfather, my mother's father, was a professor in ceramic art. So, because of love, my father wanted to be a ceramic artist as well. And now, age 76, he is still teaching in a university, and he's also a professor, and he's writing and making incredible ceramic arts. And my mother is a calligrapher.

So, I grew up watching them basically in the mid, in their muddy, inking studio, and they wanted me to become an artist, and I refused to do that, and I went to study science and do my Internet startups.

And then, after I moved to the UK, I have two children, and I realized that my children, they didn't really appreciate what I had taken for granted. I thought, what can I do? And I went around, check for all the possibilities. I couldn't find any to inspire them. And of course they pushed back whenever I tried to help them. I thought I was trying to help them.

So, as a geek, I thought, what can I do? And I started breaking down also into characters on my computer, looking for pattern. And once there is the method behind it, then I used beautiful arts -- everybody loves something beautiful -- and so I used the arts to like sugarcoat the characters to make it attractive.

SONIA DARA: So, it's the characters that you're basically stylizing into art for them to break down patterns of each Chinese character?

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Yes. Yeah, just imagine English. There are 26 letters. But with 26 you have an almost unlimited number of vocabulary you can use. The same with Chinese, there are like 70-ish building blocks I discovered. And once you know a few -- you don't need to know all 70 to start with. Once you know a few, you construct many more.

For example, one person is a person, just two strokes, very straightforward, looking like a person walking. When you have two together, that means "to follow." Three together means a crowd. And when you have a person stretch their arms wide, this person is saying, "That's very big."

Then now you start putting things together, big person is an adult. Person and a fish is a mermaid. You don't even know how to pronounce it, but very quickly you can accumulate your vocabulary.

SONIA DARA: So, you're creating simple visual forms of each one of the characters that people use as building blocks visually essentially to then understand the written character forms and what they stand for. That's awesome.

SHAOLAN HSUEH: I use a program, software, to manage all the thousands of characters, and then I found the correlation. There's an animation. I actually can show. I gave a couple speeches and I show people how I broke them down. And then, later on, of course, now there's people who see Chinese, see, as highly illustrated and then very colorful. That's all what happened after the methodology was developed.

SONIA DARA: That's awesome. So, Chineasy wasn't your first company. You are also a cofounder of pAsia, Inc, formerly one of the most recognizable Internet companies in the Greater China area. Where does your entrepreneurial spirit come from? Was anyone in your life role modeling entrepreneurship earlier?

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Right. I think many of my friends. I love making friends around the world, and every friend inspired me. Just like on the way here to see you, the cab driver was very chatty. So, I learned something from him.

So, I would say, yes, people around me. I have so many mentors in my life. And some of them are much older than me, some of them are much younger than me, and could be male, female, or something in between. And then so, it's just a matter of being able to learn something from each individual.

And in a way, I could see, yes, my parents probably influenced me quite a bit, although on the surface, they are the stereotype Asian parents, conservative and also wishing the children to take on more like a secure career path. But at the same time, I think they're doing the opposite, they are just very dedicated artists.

And I look at the work they were doing, like my mother in order to draw the painting or the calligraphy perfectly, she will do it once again and again and again until reach to perfection. And the same is the way I look at my father.

I think instead of telling me what I should do, I think they already established the example by doing it themselves. In a way, they are making, for example copying the

ancient poetry into the ancient ink and ancient ceramic art, they actually have implemented in a modern form.

SONIA DARA: As my parents are Indian immigrants as well, so I do totally understand what that -- if I could go back and have them actually teach me Hindi, I regret not learning Hindi, because I was totally one of those kids who was like, "No, I don't want to go to like Hindi school and all that." But now I'm like, oh my goodness, I would have loved to have something like Chineasy.

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Right. It's never too late.

SONIA DARA: I guess it's never too late. If you ever want to take on Hindi as your next project.

SHAOLAN HSUEH: I would love that. I would love that.

SONIA DARA: I would love that.

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Especially you have direct access. A lot of people don't.

SONIA DARA: Yeah, that's true, that's true.

But yeah, that's something I think what you're showing is that it's not too late and that as an adult you can learn a language.

You started off as this way to teach your children about your culture and to teach the language, but it's definitely grown. You mentioned your TED talk, but you've done two TED talks that have been viewed collectively over 15 million times, one on Chinese characters and another on the Chinese zodiac.

How did the opportunity to deliver these TED talks actually come about, and how have they contributed to awareness of your mission?

SHAOLAN HSUEH: It was an amazing opportunity that I managed to share my passion at TED stage. And the first one was when they learned about that there was a method. They said, "Oh, um, okay, that sounds interesting. Can you show us how you do it and just make a home video for five minutes? And it doesn't need to be like smart or with lighting; just use your phone."

So, I recorded a five-minute video on my phone at home and sent it to them. So, they said, "Sure, come to give us a talk." So, I did that.

And so, I would say without the opportunity to share at TED, Chineasy could have been still a good project and important personal project for me, but I probably wouldn't have

been able to share with so many people today. So, I could say, yes, Chineasy was launched at TED and on the TED stage, and this is a very fortunate thing I think I'm truly grateful about.

SONIA DARA: So, how did they first learn about the methodology? Like how did that cross their paths?

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Right. Because I've been attending TED as well. So that probably makes a difference.

SONIA DARA: Being there, having that opportunity, you struck while the iron was hot to mention it.

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Yes, and then I had been developing this method for a couple years, and I showed a few friends, and some of them said, "Wow, that's amazing, you should share it." And some of them said, "Ah, why do I need to learn Chinese? Really?" Or some of them said, "Sure, I know it's important but it's too late for me, it's for my kids." Or some of them said, "Okay, what's the point of learning a couple hundred characters? It's not going to make me fluent."

So, I have like both messages from both sides. One is very encouraging and positive. The other one is, ah, no, don't do it, it's stupid.

So, there are noises around in life, and this is may I share some experience in life. Life is not just butterflies and flowers, and there will be lots of people, of course, supporting you. At the same time, some people, they may say something they don't understand. The impact, either positive or negative, will affect you. And as a person here, you or me or whoever, I would like to just stay focused, just keep doing what you believe in.

SONIA DARA: In July of 2013, Chineasy raised 197,626 pounds or, for our listeners in the U.S., 265,000, on Kickstarter. I was surprised to see this after learning that you were a founder and managing partner at a UK-based venture capital firm, Caravel Capital, before founding Chineasy. Why did you decide to crowdfund your idea instead of exploring venture capital as a funding option?

SHAOLAN HSUEH: That's a good one. When I started my first Internet company, we had a lot of great investors around the world. And we have Intel Capital, Goldman Sachs, Citibank, you name it.

And I really had great pleasure working with those professional investors. At the same time, I also understand that the nature of Chineasy is slightly different from any other company or any other startups I would like to see. It's not just because I started this with a motivation to help my children. I see this as a social venture as well. And in addition to provide a fun and effective way to help people to understand Chinese

culture and the language and the history and the philosophy, I also see this potentially a great impact we can make to enable people to appreciate the differences between us.

So, I can't put a price tag on that. People say, there is always a price tag on everything. But with this vision, I found it slightly difficult to articulate, okay, so how much is this worth?

And in this case, I would also say at that time, I was so much concerned in a good way in creating and creating. And in the process of creating I think it's important for us to stay engaged with the people who are around us.

And the truth is, Kickstarter was not a fundraising event, Kickstarter is actually the opportunity for creators like us. We can share with the early adopters. And it's non-dilutive, it's not taking the capital. People who gave us, contributed to Kickstarter campaign, the backers, they get what they want, something called reward. So, we deliver. It's more like product pre-sell. So, in this case, we have the early opportunity to engage with them in a very intensive way, and then they will tell us what they like, what they don't like.

So, for us it's a great opportunity. It's nothing about capital raising, it's nothing about, yeah, maybe there's a cash flow management advantage using Kickstarter, but then we are responsible to deliver our services to the backers.

SONIA DARA: That's great. That's a really good way to distinguish between venture capital funding where you have to think about a value upfront, essentially, and when it's harder to articulate that, instead going through crowdsourcing, but it's basically you're building your base already of people you can have this feedback loop with from the beginning.

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Sure. And I do see that, for example, a lot of companies like Microsoft is a pure commercial venture. But at the same time, the impact, the social impact Microsoft will be making is beyond what you can put on the share price.

SONIA DARA: So, Chineasy has won numerous awards, including the Wallpaper Life Enhancer of the Year Design Award, and the Design Museum Design of the Year Visitor Vote, both in 2014. What does it feel like or mean to you to receive this type of recognition?

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Yeah, that was really honor. We didn't expect that. And I thought, okay, when I started Chineasy, I wonder where my qualification was. I was not a trained teacher. I'm not a Chinese scholar. And then when we started winning design awards around different countries and territories and with recognition, I started having doubt. I'm not a trained designer, so why do I deserve it? So, that is the thing I started thinking about.

But then later on, I started thinking, ha, actually, maybe that's a good thing, because first, the recognition is not just because of like, for example, designer work, it's not just about this color is good and that texture is very fancy. It's more about how a good design or the collection of designs can make a difference.

What is the problem we are trying to solve? So, in Chinese we are trying to solve a big one. Chinese is hard and it's important to learn. And China is such an important part of the global community, we need to learn about them properly. So, we are trying to solve a much bigger vision, a much bigger challenge.

So, in a way, for the small part of me it's good for me ego. I'm truly honored that we are recognized that way. But we will never stop there, because the mission is much greater and that I don't think this venture will stop anywhere.

SONIA DARA: Spending some time with the Chinese flash cards and on your website conducting research, it's apparent that you are very visually inclined. I expected to see that you had a background in graphic art or something along those lines. But you graduated from National Taiwan University with a bachelor's in agricultural chemistry and then went on to get your MBA and a Master of Philosophy in International Studies.

I definitely see how this interest in international exchange and your business savvy were born out of your formal studies, but where does this interest and talent in the visual arts come from? And I think you touched upon it from your parents, but was there any other inspiration that really helped you think about that being the format for Chinese?

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Sure. A lot of people ask me why I can do what I'm doing without any qualification. And, of course, all the formal education I have, I have a collection, a nice collection of degrees, they are quite nice to have.

SONIA DARA: Yeah, it's a very nice collection of degrees.

SHAOLAN HSUEH: But at the same time, they are not really relevant to what I really do after I graduate from any of those.

I would say, yes, the formal education is the framework and is some foundation. We can learn and then later on, we can move on. If we look at any subject we studied ten years ago, they are outdated. Nowadays, we just need to continue learning. And it's a lifelong learning era. So, if you think what you have learned either five years ago or even two years ago will be still up to date, I'm sorry, it's not going to happen that way. So, it doesn't matter what you study. I really believe in learning throughout the lifetime, doesn't matter what that is.

So, the degrees I had, I had a great time, wonderful student life, make lots of friends, but no one is going to stop there. If we stop there, yeah, your progress of life will stop there, too.

So, back to your question about, okay, so how about design and all things? It's simple, everybody loves beautiful stuff, no one likes ugly stuff. And even if they say, oh yeah, they probably don't tell the difference. They do. Once you put them side-by-side, they do notice the difference.

This is something we can train our children, and it is important to train them. It's not just about the color, the shape, as I mentioned. It's more about creativity.

And this is very heavy now from here. In the new era, when the machine and the AI, the artificial intelligence, all the smart stuff, and the robots, they are going to take over a lot of day-to-day dull jobs, the future for our children, that will rely on their creativity and problem-solving skills. So, if they don't have that, then I think you have to start giving them the opportunities.

And because I once said, all children are natural born artists, and it's much harder to keep them being an artist when they grow up. So, it's our duty as an adult, stop suppressing them, give them the opportunities.

And then so when they learn how to resolve problems and they come out with their own design ideas to resolve problems, then I would say most of the good solutions, they tend to be beautiful, they tend to be user-friendly, they tend to look after user's experience, because a poor user experience, doesn't matter is it hardware or software or services, they are not going to last long.

SONIA DARA: The Chineasy Advisory Board is a very impressive group of people, including an MIT professor, there's Tim Brown, the CEO of Ideo, and Ariana Huffington, the founder of Thrive Global and the Huffington Post. How did you go about building your advisory board, and identifying the skills that you needed to support the development of your company?

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Mentors play an important role in my life throughout, since I was very young. And I think part of it is to do with I just love people and I love learning from anyone.

So, in addition to all the incredible people you named, in fact, I have a great set of friends around the world, and they support me in different ways.

And the only reason those people are the people on the website we listed is because they are relevant to my creation of Chineasy and also providing me great advice and guidance.

But the truth is it's in a way I felt like I'm truly lucky, and many of them I've known for many years, and some of them actually I probably just met them not a long time ago. But then if we are willing to take advice and then in a way to respect their time, I think most people will be quite open to provide their support and also their life experience and wisdom.

SONIA DARA: So, ShaoLan, how do you define success for your company? I guess companies.

SHAOLAN HSUEH: They are two different questions, first, how do I define success, and second is, how do I define success of my company. Let's start with the first one, because it's much deeper.

I'm a Daoist. It's not a religion, it's a philosophy. So, what we see in life is life is not success and failure, the gain or loss. It's not black and white. What you see as a gain today may be the onset of another rollercoaster cycle, vice versa.

So, when you see things and life this way, actually when we face the setbacks of frustrations or even the glorious moments, we stay centered, what is important for us, what is your mission.

So, in that case, the definition of success has to be when we know, we put all the good intention and the right effort, pursuing the mission you believe in, then, yes, that's success. When you're a doctor, your mission is to save lives. But what is the cancer patients die? Did you fail? I don't think so. You've done your best, you prolonged a life as the best quality possible. So, that's not a failure.

And if your goal, you're an Olympian, your goal is to get a gold medal, there's only one gold medal. Do you fail your life? No, you didn't. There are many other aspects of you which is worthwhile. So, can we say a millisecond behind, then you become the silver medal and you fail? No, please don't see things this way, please don't see life this way, because the truth is, yeah, in a million years from now, nothing matters.

SONIA DARA: It sounds like practice is something that from your parents and practicing their art and then you're saying she would try calligraphy, your mother, over and over until she got it just right, and that you had to put in your effort, your time, your practice, and that's where you're heading towards your mission and your goal, and as long as you're doing that, you're living basically your best life. It sounds like that kind of is a virtue that's come about.

SHAOLAN HSUEH: It is. And we also need to be careful, because when we practice, of course people say practice makes perfect, but at the same time, if we keep repeating the same thing, then we're not progressing.

I remember when I started learning skiing as a total beginner. I'm now a very active skier. I remember one day I skied with my instructor, he's a French guy, in the French Alps. And after a long week skiing nonstop, I was sloppy. And he looked back, he said, "What are you doing?" And I said, I'm tired. He said, "You didn't turn properly that corner, you didn't turn properly." And I said, "I'm exhausted, come on." He said, "Then stop skiing." "Why are you so harsh?" And he said, "If you don't turn perfectly, you are practicing from mistakes. So don't do it, stop." And then I put myself together, although I was really exhausted, and then go down perfectly, as he said. So yeah, we don't need to be so harsh in life, but at the same time, we need to be careful.

SONIA DARA: So, do you have any advice for aspiring entrepreneurs or any of our listeners who want to potentially build big careers, any wisdom you want to impart?

SHAOLAN HSUEH: I probably have a lot of life -- I wouldn't say advice -- some experience I can share. And then at the same time, I wouldn't say I'm the best person to advise people on bigger career. I don't have a job, I have a mission. I work everything around this bigger mission. And whether or not it's a pay job or a lucrative job is not my top priority.

And so, I do know whatever you do, you feel like, okay, today, I would like to be a developer or be a graphic designer. It doesn't matter what you do, believe in what you do and you know the value what you can do to contribute to your bigger mission, and very importantly, knowing that you are the best person who can do it.

So, I love people. For example, I love people, I really love providing great services. I would be the best server in the restaurant. So, it doesn't matter what you do, if you love communication, yeah, maybe set up your own podcast and invite interesting people, talk about things. And then what you talk about will make positive impact to other people. So, it doesn't matter what that is, just love it and do well, and have fun.

SONIA DARA: That's important, definitely.

So, ShaoLan, where can our listeners find you, ShaoLan, on the Internet, and then also Chineasy?

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Sure. I also have a podcast called Talk Chineasy. And it's available on all the major podcast platforms, from SoundCloud or iTunes or on Amazon Alexa. If you ask, "Hey, Alexa, teach me Chinese," then that will be my podcast. It's very short, it's like ten minutes a day, and you will learn something interesting. And every day there's an interesting guest.

SONIA DARA: And then what about Chineasy, where can people find that?

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Okay, so talk Chineasy is the show. They can learn from all subjects, from incredible people and also learn Chinese. And then if they want to know more, they can actually come to our website, Chineasy.com, and of course all the shows are available. At the same time, they can subscribe to some like advanced learning, the consolidation, and I have a recap video to provide to people when they want to learn more and exercise like a little worksheet they can work on.

And also, I have a couple videos out there, including the two TED talks you talk about, and we hope we can have more opportunities to make more videos to entertain people.

SONIA DARA: Thank you so much for joining us in the studios. Thank you.

SHAOLAN HSUEH: Oh, thank you. It's a lot of fun. Thank you.

NARRATION: Cutting Edge, our take on stories in the business and technology world.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: In this Cutting Edge segment, we're taking a look at an article written by Hannah Devlin that was published in *The Guardian* on July 24 entitled *Academic writes 270 Wikipedia pages in a year to get female scientists noticed*.

The hero of this article is Jess Wade, a postdoctoral researcher in the field of plastic electronics at Imperial College London's Blackett Laboratory.

SONIA DARA: Her mission is to get every woman who has achieved something impressive in science to get the prominence and recognition they deserve. So, this is very in line with that Marian Wright Edelman quote we love to use, which is: "You can't be what you can't see."

And Wade is doing something about it. She wrote about 270 Wikipedia articles about these impressive women.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yes, I love this quote from Wade. She says, "I had a target for doing one a day, but sometimes I get too excited and do three."

She went on to say, "The more you read about these sensational women, the more you get so motivated and inspired by their personal stories."

SONIA DARA: So, Wade's parents are both doctors, so she's always felt very encouraged to pursue science. But when she became a PhD student, she was very confronted by the fact that she was in the minority as a woman.

In the UK, female A-level physics students has stagnated at about 21 percent for the past decade. And in Britain, fewer than 9 percent of professional engineers are women.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: The article closes on a hopeful note though, an explanation of Wade's goal for her activism. Quote, "I guess it's to make science a better place for everyone working in it, which happens when we recognize the contributions of these awesome women," she says. "The girls who do come, because they will, will come to a much more empowering environment."

SONIA DARA: Well listeners, that about wraps it up for this episode. It was awesome to chat with ShaoLan and to learn more about Chineasy. I personally have only ever been to Shanghai and Beijing, but now knowing that there's this app that allows me to explore even more of the Chinese culture and the language, I'm super excited to check it out.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yes. ShaoLan was awesome. And it was so hopeful to hear from all of those Imagine Cup teams.

You know, I was about to say, they're going to do great things when they grow up, but honestly, they're already doing great things now.

SONIA DARA: Yeah, no kidding.

Thanks to you, our listeners, for tuning into another episode. Please remember to rate, review, and share our show on Apple Podcasts or wherever fine podcasts can be found.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: If you have any feedback or questions, you can e-mail us at WiBT@microsoft.com, or tweet us at [MicrosoftWomen](https://twitter.com/MicrosoftWomen).

SONIA DARA: Your mission for this episode, listeners, if you choose to accept it, is to become a Wikipedia contributor. This mission is of course inspired by the star of our Cutting Edge segment this week, Jess Wade. To get started, head to [Wikipedia.org](https://www.wikipedia.org) and search for contributing to Wikipedia.

According to the site's article on Wikipedians, the volunteers who write articles, 84 percent of English Wikipedia editors identify as male. As of May 2018, Wikipedia is the fifth most visited site globally, according to Alexa Internet, a company that provides commercial web traffic data and analytics.

So, if you're looking for a place to influence through content creation, Wikipedia is a fantastic place to add your voice to the conversation.

END