



Globalization and Trust with Ingrid Christensen

Leading Learning Podcast
Transcript for Episode 354

Ingrid Christensen: [00:00:00] If globalization is in your wheelhouse, and that's a strategy, that's a tactic for you to reach your profitability and your revenue goals, regardless if you are a for-profit or nonprofit organization, you have to think about speaking the language of your consumers, of your customers.

Celisa Steele: [00:00:21] I'm Celisa Steele.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:23] I'm Jeff Cobb, and this is the Leading Learning Podcast. Globalization is a strategy that makes sense for many learning businesses, and going global usually involves language services. This episode, number 354, features a conversation with Ingrid Christensen, president and founder of INGCO International, a full-service language solutions company. Ingrid is also author of the book *The Language of Trust: Communicate to Build Meaningful Relationships in Business and Life*. Celisa and Ingrid talk about what localization, globalization, translation, and interpretation are and their role in diversity, equity, and inclusion. They also discuss trust as a necessary leadership skill and ways to build trust through one-on-one personal exchanges and in marketing materials and instructional materials. They also talk about credentials as signals of trustworthiness, feedback as a tool for nourishing trust, and using Peloton in a second language to get both a physical and a mental workout. Celisa and Ingrid spoke in March 2023.

Celisa Steele: [00:01:43] Just tell us a little bit more about INGCO International, the work that it does, your role there—just unpack that a little bit.

Ingrid Christensen: [00:01:52] Absolutely. Language services is a big and juicy area. There are lots of things that fall into our industry. It's a little-known fact that revenue-wise we are larger than the global music business. So, for being a bit of a hidden industry, we're actually quite large. I have the random, fell-into-my-lap story of how I came into language services, but I guess had a knack for languages. I studied languages in college and had an unfortunate job at a sports bar that I did not love and needed something more interesting and fulfilling. And this

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was while I was in college. I found a job at a local interpretation company in Minneapolis, and that really was my first foray into language services. I didn't really know much about it. And, long story short, that led me into a career as a freelance Spanish interpreter. I had to become certified as a medical and legal Spanish interpreter and worked freelance for about five or six years before deciding to launch my own company. Seventeen years ago (actually, in February, we just turned 17), I launched INGCO International. I now have a staff of just about 20 individuals globally, and we serve mostly global corporations and organizations that need to, for one reason or another, provide documentation, training, or any kind of service in another language. The main services that we offer under our umbrella fall under language services, and they are translation, interpretation, localization, and globalization. And I'll unpack that a little bit because they can be a little bit confusing because I think a lot of people don't have a ton of experience in this area.

Ingrid Christensen: [00:03:51] Interpretation is anything that's spoken. An interpreter would be like an interpreter you see at the United Nations or an ASL interpreter you see at a concert or a medical interpreter that goes with a family to a medical appointment at a hospital or an interpreter that works in the court system or the education system. That's the typical spoken interpreting solution. Then there's a written translation, which is anything written. That could be a Web site. It could be training material, marketing material, a legal contract, really anything that's written from one language to another. Then you move up into this concept of localization. Localization is part of a general business strategy that is known as globalization. I like to think of it as, say, you have a product, and you're going to take your product to Europe. Europe is a big area. There are lots of different languages spoken. The act of taking your process there is your business strategy of globalization. Localization would be making sure that product looks, sounds, and feels appropriate for each of the different areas and languages spoken in Europe. So you may decide you need your content in Spanish, French, Italian, German, or whatever other languages you would need it in. Localization is pinpointing it for a specific culture, location, or audience, and it's part of that bigger globalization umbrella.

Celisa Steele: [00:05:24] Thank you for walking us through those terms. I do think it's very helpful and very practical. Interpretation, it's the spoken language; translation, it's anything written; then you have globalization as a bigger strategy; and localization is how you make things appropriate in particular regions and areas. I've been thinking that, over the last several years, it seems that we've heard a lot more about diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. In preparing to talk to you, it occurred to me that it feels like interpretation, translation, and localization would have a place in these DEIA initiatives. I'm curious to (a) get your thoughts on that and whether you agree with that. And then (b), knowing that you've had these 17 years

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working in the interpretation and language services area, what changes have you seen during that time?

Ingrid Christensen: [00:06:25] Those are two big questions. Yes, and a lot. To get to your first question, I do think that DEI, accessibility, belonging, and all of these kinds of buzzwords have always been naturally embedded in the services that we provide. Our core value, our core purpose have always been to provide equitable access to communication. Whether that communication be written or spoken, that's really the main purpose and the main reason why we survive, why we thrive, and why we exist. I do think it's really important to note that accessibility, access, and belonging are embedded in the nature that language services is. Because, in order to really make somebody feel like they belong, give them a seat at the table, and make sure that they have equal access, they have to communicate. I can't think of a way to provide somebody access to a program, a solution, a product, or service if they can't understand what it says or what they're being told. I think that any language services, at the root of what we do is all about accessibility, belonging, and making sure that.... This is DEI in action, is what I like to say. These are the tangible things that an organization can do to walk the walk and talk the talk when they're really invested in DEI.

Ingrid Christensen: [00:08:02] It can be a big effort, and it could be a small effort. It just depends on the particular organization and what their overarching goals are. I do think that you hit the nail on the head there that everything we do is embedded in accessibility. When I think about this larger DEIA umbrella, I like to think of it as a kind thing to do. It's a human thing to do, to provide access. It's in many ways and many times a legal requirement to provide access to information. And there are some statistics that prove that up to 80 percent of consumers will not even consider buying your product or service if it isn't marketed and/or sold to them in their native language when there are so many options out there. As an organization, if you're really looking at expanding and having globalization as part of your business strategy, you need to speak the language of your customers. That's also marketing. We need to talk to people like they want to be spoken to, in a way that they can hear us, in a way that they can understand us. I think that's really the nature of what translation and interpreting is.

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Celisa Steele: [00:10:37] The second part of my two-pronged, very meaty question was around what have you seen change in your years working in this field? I would be curious to know are you seeing more demand or a different kind of demand? Or what would you characterize as the major shifts or changes?

Ingrid Christensen: [00:10:55] I would say that for a lot of organizations, when before it was a nice-to-have, now it's a must-have. Organizations that want to and need to compete on a global scale must, by nature, have a comprehensive language access program built in from day one. When you think about how we, as consumers, have access to any product, any service at our fingertips, and, if you remember that stat I just dropped, 80 percent of consumers are not going to buy something in a language they don't understand. If globalization is in your wheelhouse, and that's a strategy, that's a tactic for you to reach your profitability and your revenue goals, regardless if you are a for-profit or nonprofit organization, you have to think about speaking the language of your consumers, of your customers. Now, yes, have I seen the industry change? For sure. When I started, we barely had e-mail, and we barely had the Internet. I used to work out of stacks of dictionaries all around me, and our clients would courier us a document to translate. We'd type it out, print it out, and courier it back. Obviously, we don't have to do that anymore.

Ingrid Christensen: [00:12:16] That's one way that technology has enabled us to do our work faster, with more clarity and more consistency. I think we, at INGCO International, as an organization, embrace technology because I think technology is our friend. It only allows us to do our job better, faster, and smarter. We've had access to different machine translation solutions along the way, different machine translation protocols, translation protocols, and different programs that we've had access to. And our technology enablement has just exploded over the past 10 years. The affordability has made it much more accessible to all organizations and organizations of all sizes. I would say that, like every industry, technology has shifted and changed 100 percent the way that we do our work. I could also talk about how languages ebb and flow depending on migration, how migration comes and goes, how refugees come and go.

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Certainly, that has affected the different language volumes that we see access to, for example. That's another big way that our industry has changed. I could go on and on in nuance, but there are lots of changes. And I don't think they're going to stop. They're going to keep coming.

Celisa Steele: [00:13:39] Given your depth and breadth of experience with language services, I'm curious to know are there typical missteps or misconceptions that organizations have around language services? Any insight there to share with us?

Ingrid Christensen: [00:13:54] I think so. I think thinking that it's something that's a one-and-done solution; it's not. I think that our content is constantly changing. I know my content, even on our Web site, is constantly changing, which would require a constant update in your localization and translation process. The other thing I think that especially global organizations need to remember and/or seize the opportunity is the value in globalization and how localization really fits into the larger business strategy and understand that it is a very powerful revenue driver if done correctly and understanding that it requires constant nourishment and constant focus and attention so that you get it right. I would say that thinking that it's a quick fix—no, it's not, just like anything. And thinking that it's a one-and-done activity. I think that it requires constant attention, just like any other business strategy.

Celisa Steele: [00:15:06] I hear you using the word *strategy* repeatedly, and thinking about language services as a strategic part of what your learning business is doing makes a lot of sense. And then also, I think, hearing you speak to the fact that, usually, this fits with an organization's mission. If you're really out there to serve learners, making sure to speak their language, literally, is really important. I know that you've recently published a book called *The Language of Trust*. I'd love to pivot a little bit and talk about that book. Let's start by talking about what's the relationship between these language services and interpretation, which we've just been talking about, and trust?

Ingrid Christensen: [00:15:51] Thank you for that. *The Language of Trust* has been a lifelong seed that was planted in the back of my head that finally came to fruition. It's been a big project, a fun project. When I think about anecdotally and the research that I completed when writing this book, I think about the number-one way to cultivate and nourish trust is through communication. I think especially when you're communicating with somebody in a different language, trust-based communication is even more vital. One, you have to make sure that you're actually understood. You can't even begin to build a trusting relationship with somebody if you can't be on the same level of understanding. And, two, I think that translation and interpreting provide a base level of comfort, knowing that you're providing accurate and

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consistent language and vocabulary, and it shows that the organization in general is attempting to even gain the trust of the people that they're trying to work with. I think that for me, at least, speaking to somebody in a language that they understand with words that they can understand is the most human form of trust-based communication that I can find. And it's really, really vital, I think, for organizations, especially learning organizations, that when they're trying to impart some knowledge from one person to another, making sure that they're doing so in a way that is understandable, accurate, and consistent is vital to building that trust-based relationship.

Celisa Steele: [00:17:46] If we want to cultivate trust as a leader in an organization, what does that look like? What are some concrete ways that we can establish and maintain trust?

Ingrid Christensen: [00:17:57] I think that, first and foremost, recognizing the importance of trust, recognizing that it's something to be valued and something to focus on. And I think that this is going to sound pretty similar to what a lot of other people say about a lot of things in life, but for trust creation to flourish and nourish, we have to stop, to take time, to think and reflect. We have to take time to learn. We have to take time to listen and communicate effectively. We have to lead with listening. We have to commit to open, honest, and vulnerable communication, and we have to meet people where they are. A lot of this isn't rocket science. It's just slowing down, taking the time to, number one, reflect, and then really committing to carving out time to cultivate and nourish trust with the people that matter most to you. Whether you're working on building trusting relationships with your coworkers, with your family, with friends, with clients, with customers—all of these different pockets of people that touch this web of life that we lead, all of those individuals, if they're important to us, they're deserving of our trust. We ought to, I believe, spend time in quality trust nourishment and creation. Finally, do what you say you're going to do. There is nothing that creates trust as much as being consistent and accountable. And when you say you're going to do something, actually do it. Whether you're providing a product or service or you're giving feedback to your employees or team members, that act of accountability really shines because you're walking the walk and talking the talk. You're doing both things. And that is, for me, based on the individuals that I research, the number-one way to create trust.

Celisa Steele: [00:20:07] That makes a lot of sense (a) that it takes time, energy, and effort to cultivate the trust, and then (b) it does come down to, in many ways, just the relationship with individuals. I'm thinking we have learning business leaders who have the team that they're working with and the people that they're managing, even customers, as you said. And so there are these opportunities for one-on-one exchanges or even small-group exchanges, where you can create trust and continue trust. But I'm also thinking of learning businesses having a lot of

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less direct opportunities to potentially create trust. I'm thinking about learning experiences where there might be course materials that go along with an in-person seminar or materials that accompany a conference session or just the content that goes into an online e-learning course. When you think about more of those products and more of an indirect relationship or channel for creating trust, do you have thoughts on how that might work and what trust might look like in those contexts?

Ingrid Christensen: [00:21:14] I do. I've thought a lot about trust, especially in relation to a very digital world that most of us are used to. We're much less interactive in person than we've ever been before. And, certainly, I love e-learning, and I love the different learning platforms that are out there because it's easy, and it's quick, and you don't have to drive across town or fly across the country to take courses. But there is that added challenge of how do you truly, authentically engage with your audience? How do you garnish and cultivate trust with them? And I understand that kind of dilemma, the push and pull. Some of my tips and tricks for this are, whenever possible, look for opportunities to engage before, during, and after. I know that's hard. But, when you're creating content, can you build in engagement even before a course starts? Maybe there are engagement opportunities during. Maybe there are moments to pause. Maybe there are moments to reflect. Maybe there are moments to, within the platform, engage with other students or other participants in the program. And, after, how can you build in touchpoints after the program to keep that engagement and keep that communication and conversation going? Another way that I have found, based on my research, that's great for building trust and nourishing trust is something as simple as credentialing—taking the time to become credentialed and certified and showing your credentialing as a proof point that you can be a trusted advisor or a trusted educator. I think there's something to be said about licensing and credentialing that is really important for students to be able to “trust the master.”

Ingrid Christensen: [00:23:02] I think a third way is clear and concise documented processes. Nobody likes to document processes any more than I do. It's not my favorite activity. But there's something really important when you show somebody what they're going to learn, you teach them, and then you remind them of what they learned. It's almost like the human brain needs to see what they're going to do. Tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them. It's the series of repetitions that I think is really important. And, of course, as educators, I'm sure your listeners are a million times stronger and more educated than I am as far as learning comprehension. But I think it comes back to that basic nature of tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them. So, as much as possible, building in those opportunities for engagement, credentialing, and really outlining the process. As much as possible, practice the different opportunities to

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lean into different senses. Even though we're audio and video, what else could we add into a learning platform to engage some of the other senses? We can show vulnerability through our words, our actions, and our body language. But how else can we build in those trust points? And then, certainly, ask for feedback. I don't know of a better way to help push that trust development along the line except for feedback. I think that's something that's really important.

Celisa Steele: [00:24:38] Thank you for that. This is the Leading Learning Podcast, so we always like to make sure, when we have a guest on, to ask about their own practices, habits, or sources for their own continued lifelong learning. Ingrid, tell us a little bit about how you approach your own lifelong learning.

Ingrid Christensen: [00:24:59] Thank you. One of my personal values is that every day I strive to be a better version of myself. And so I do carve out purposeful time daily to strengthen my own education and knowledge, whether that's reading, whether that's reflection, whether it's listening to podcasts, whether it's writing. I spend a lot of time writing. There's something about the act of writing that I think reinforces knowledge within me. I also think that engaging in new and fun things to work the brain in a different way for me has been a bit of a shift. I think, as I move into this next stage of my life, what else can I learn in different ways to keep the mind fresh and active? I live in Minnesota. It's a terrible winter. We have zero sunlight, it's freezing, and we're buried under like a million feet of snow. But this winter I decided that I was going to get off the couch at least one day a week. I took an improv class, and it was something that was super fun, and I laughed. It got me out of the house, got me thinking, and got my brain working in a different way. I'm certainly not going to become a comedian or a professional improv artist, but it was fun, and it was different. I constantly ask myself, "How can I build these opportunities into my life, even if it's in just short snippets of leaning into learning and becoming a better version of myself?" I think especially when there are different seasons of life and recognizing that we need to honor each of those different seasons and really what works for us at every different point in time.

Celisa Steele: [00:26:46] Given your background and your professional life, I'm curious—do you do some of your reading and learning in Spanish or some other language, or do you tend to do it mostly in English?

Ingrid Christensen: [00:26:59] I do. This is going to sound a little cheesy, but during the pandemic, I jumped on the Peloton, whatever, trend, just like everyone else because I couldn't go to the gym, like other people. And I try to take classes in Spanish just because it's fun and because it works my brain in a different way. I try to listen to music in Spanish. I try to watch

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some of my Netflix bingeing in Spanish-spoken TV shows and programs because I think it's really important for my brain to keep the language up. So, yes, it's fun and makes me think a little bit more.

Jeff Cobb: [00:27:47] Ingrid Christensen is president of INGCO International and author of *The Language of Trust*. You'll find links to INGCO International and to Ingrid's author site in the show notes for this episode at leadinglearning.com/episode354.

Celisa Steele: [00:28:02] Jeff and I would be grateful if you would rate the Leading Learning Podcast on Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen, especially if you find the show valuable. Those ratings help us show up when people search for content on leading a learning business. Go to leadinglearning.com/apple to leave a rating.

Jeff Cobb: [00:28:19] And please spread the word about Leading Learning. You can do that in a one-on-one conversation with a colleague or a personal note, or you can do it through social media. In the show notes at leadinglearning.com/episode354, you'll find links to connect with us on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

Celisa Steele: [00:28:37] Thanks for listening, and see you next time on the Leading Learning Podcast.

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