

# HUNGARIAN

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## How to Approach Customer Support

Tips for achieving better translations and respecting cultural norms



# Introduction

Global businesses today serve a diverse set of customers who speak different languages, come from different countries and regions, and have different cultural contexts.

Every one of the more than 6,900 distinct languages spoken around the world is unique, and cultural nuances can vary widely. It's important to understand these factors when providing customer service. Communicating in the customer's native language and behaving in culturally appropriate ways help develop and nurture trust. This is why any customer-centric business should strive to build cross-cultural competency into their customer service organization.

To help you achieve this, Unbabel has put together a series of language guides. Our goal is to provide helpful and illuminating context in an easy-to-digest format. In this guide, we'll cover the Hungarian language.



# About the Hungarian Language

Hungarian is the official language of Hungary and one of the official languages of the European Union. About 13 million people speak Hungarian, and a vast majority live in Hungary and neighboring countries like Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Austria. Standard Hungarian is based on the dialect spoken in Budapest, the capital of Hungary. Apart from the standard dialect enforced in education and bureaucracy, there are several rural and urban dialects of Hungarian. Ethnologue identifies nine dialects of Hungarian, several of which are mutually intelligible.



Hungarian is also known as Magyar. It's the only language of its kind spoken in Central Europe. Its closest living relatives, Khanty and Mansi, are minority languages in Russia, about 2000 miles away.

ÜDVÖZLÖM

JÓ REGGELT  
KÍVÁNOK



# Core concepts in Hungarian culture relevant to customer service

## INDIVIDUALISM

Hungary is a highly individualistic society. Every person looks out for themselves and their innermost circle first. Hungarians tend to depend more on their immediate family and friends for assistance than on the government or public institutions. People's personal accomplishments are considered more valuable than their origins or their status in a group.

Even though Hungary is situated in Europe, Hungarians tend to refer to themselves as a part of Central Europe. They like to call their country "kompország," which means "a ferry country between two shores." Truly in the middle of Eastern and Western Europe, Hungarians view their national identity as isolated and distinctive among their neighbors.

## NOSTALGIA AND PRIDE

Throughout history, Hungary has been through a lot. Due to the influences of various powers such as the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburgs, and the Soviet Union, Hungarians have long been trying to find their voice. The country's past still plays a huge role in defining and shaping the citizens' attitudes. Many Hungarians are frank and expressive about their feelings on the past or the present. This sentimentality and pride that their country has been through such major events and persevered is reflected in their distinctive identity. They use the term "Hungarikum" to describe this. Hungarikum is a combination of "Hungaria" (Hungary) and "unikum" (unique) – it means any phenomenon that's special and unique to Hungary. They take great pride in their Hungarikums, which could be anything from animals and plants to food and music and even their language.

## ADAPTABILITY

Over the years, Hungary has had to adapt to several social, political and economic upheavals. This has led Hungarians to being resourceful, creative problem-solvers. If they encounter an obstacle, they will find interesting ways to solve the issue. In customer support, this translates to flexibility with unwavering attention to the goal: They're willing to work with you as long as the problem is fixed quickly and efficiently. Hungary's specific brand of adaptability is reflected in the saying "A zúrt nagykapu mellett, mindig van egy kiskapu," which means "if the big gate is closed, there's always a little door open."



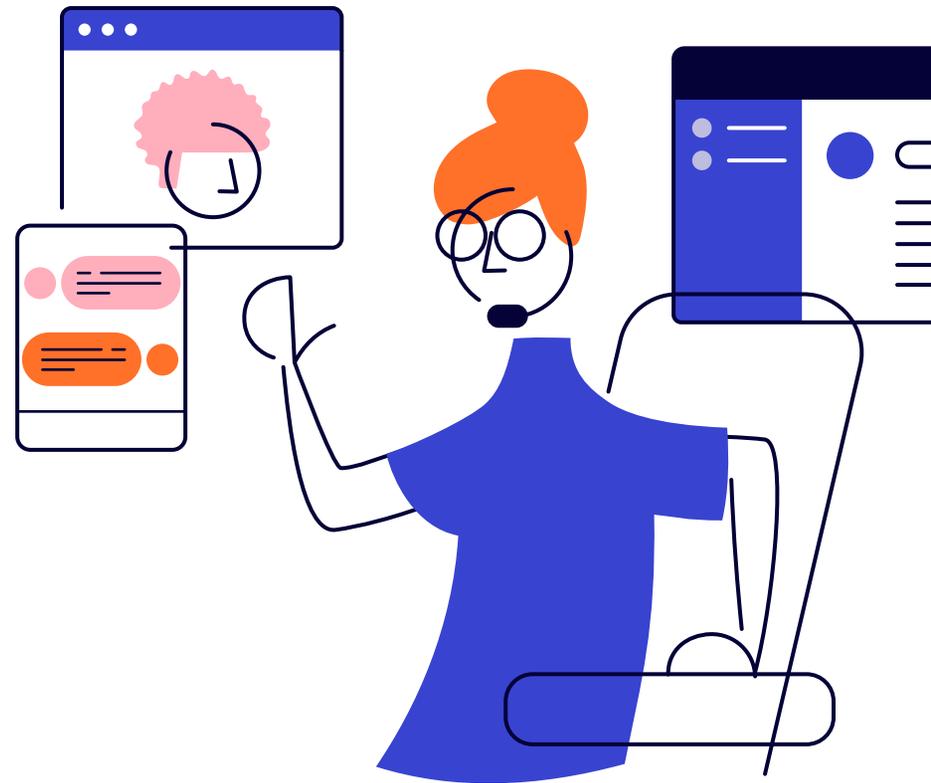
# Best practices for communicating with Hungarian customers

## PREPARE TO HEAR THE BRUTAL TRUTH

Hungarians believe in direct communication. Any discontent or criticism will be delivered honestly. They're known for their bluntness and they're free with unsolicited feedback, so try not to take their expressive nature personally. It's important to remember that their focus is only on resolving the issue at hand as quickly as possible. Their approach might seem a little cynical or pessimistic in the beginning; this is only because they're cautious before they develop trust in you. While your conversation with them might seem transactional, it's still crucial to work toward earning their trust and building authentic relationships with them, as this will go a long way.



Hungarians take great pride in their food and wine. These are always acceptable topics of conversation. Avoid discussing economic standards of the country, the World Wars, the Cold Wars, and the American economic influence. These topics will make them skeptical.



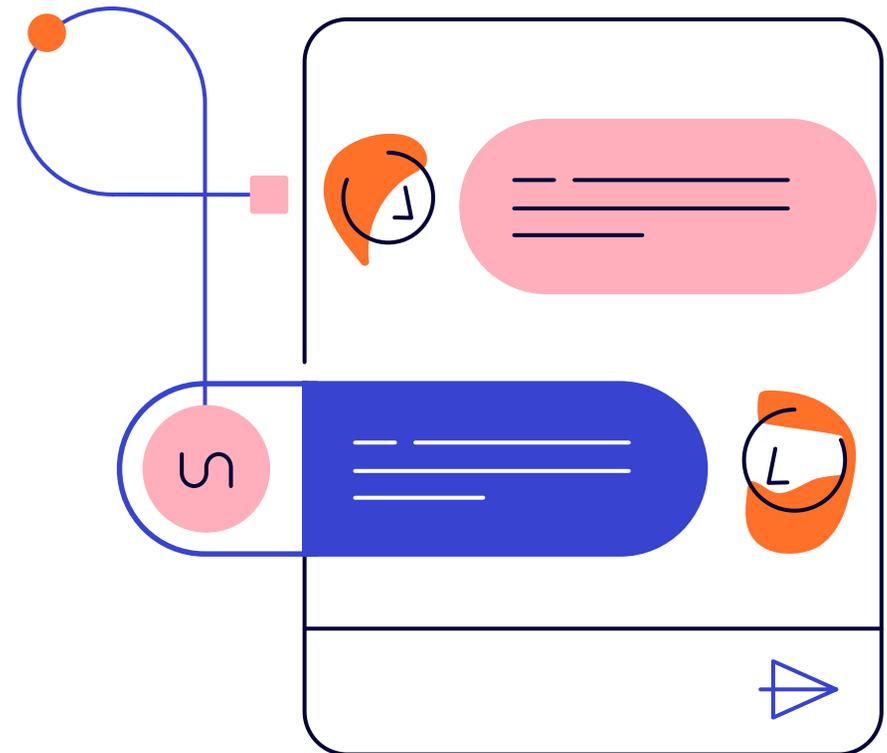
# Best practices for communicating with Hungarian customers

## BE THOROUGH IN YOUR RESEARCH

Any claims you make need to be backed up with extensive research, hard facts, and background information. Hungarians appreciate extensive research and convincing arguments. Exaggeration and hyperbole, on the other hand, will only make them turn the other way. In fact, you might even be invited to engage in debates with your customers, as the direct approach is considered healthy communication. They might even use stories, anecdotes, or jokes to prove points. However, keep in mind that it's better to avoid confrontational or high-pressure sales tactics. While your Hungarian customers are flexible, they usually need time to reflect on any information presented to them.

## FOLLOW THROUGH DILIGENTLY

Out of sight really is out of mind for Hungarians. Your Hungarian customer might not be quick to respond or stay on top of their communication with you. Make sure to follow up on your customers frequently and gauge their perception of your product or service. While things might get agreed upon verbally sometimes, it's always better to follow through with a written agreement.



# Best practices for optimizing machine translation output

When writing in English with the knowledge that the content will be translated into Hungarian, there are several best practices to follow.



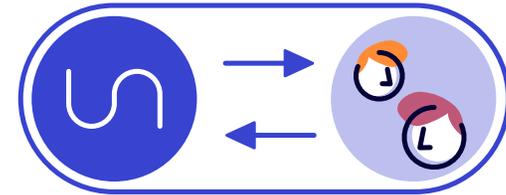
- 1 Avoid long sentences (over 30 words)
- 2 Avoid idioms or slang
- 3 Keep it simple and straightforward
- 4 Copyedit to avoid typos
- 5 Use active voice to reduce ambiguity
- 6 Avoid abbreviations, including contractions like "you're" and "we'd"
- 7 Be consistent, especially with terms like "email" that can be written multiple ways
- 8 Stick to English grammar rules
  - Ensure no spaces are missing
  - Use proper punctuation and capitalization
  - Finish all sentences (do not use fragments)
  - Avoid double subjects (e.g., the noun and a pronoun referencing it)
  - Ensure the word order is correct
  - Check for subject-verb agreement (person and number in singular/plural) and pronoun agreement (person, gender, and number)
  - Format messages correctly (e.g., with no extra line breaks, bullets or asterisks)



# Best practices specific to English-Hungarian machine translation

## 1 USE FORMAL AND INFORMAL TONES CORRECTLY

In Hungarian, both formal and informal tones can be used in customer support. However, they require different rules.



### FORMAL GREETINGS

not advised

- Hi!
- Hello!

advised

- Dear John,
- Dear Sir/Madam,
- Dear Mr./Mrs./Miss Smith,

### INFORMAL GREETINGS

advised

- Hello!
- Hi!

### FORMAL CLOSINGS

not advised

- See you!
- Have a great day!

advised

- Sincerely,
- Regards,
- Thanks,

### INFORMAL CLOSINGS

not advised

- See you!
- Bye!

advised

- Thanks,



# Best practices specific to English-Hungarian machine translation

## 2 AVOID EMOJIS

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### not advised

· Good morning, Stefannie :)

### advised

· Good morning, Stefannie.

## 3 AVOID INTERJECTIONS

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Interjections are more suited to spoken Hungarian than to written language. They should be avoided when writing to a Hungarian audience.

### not advised

· Oh, I'm so sorry about that.  
· Ah, that's alright.

### advised

· I'm sorry about that.  
· That's alright.



# The Golden Rules of Customer Service



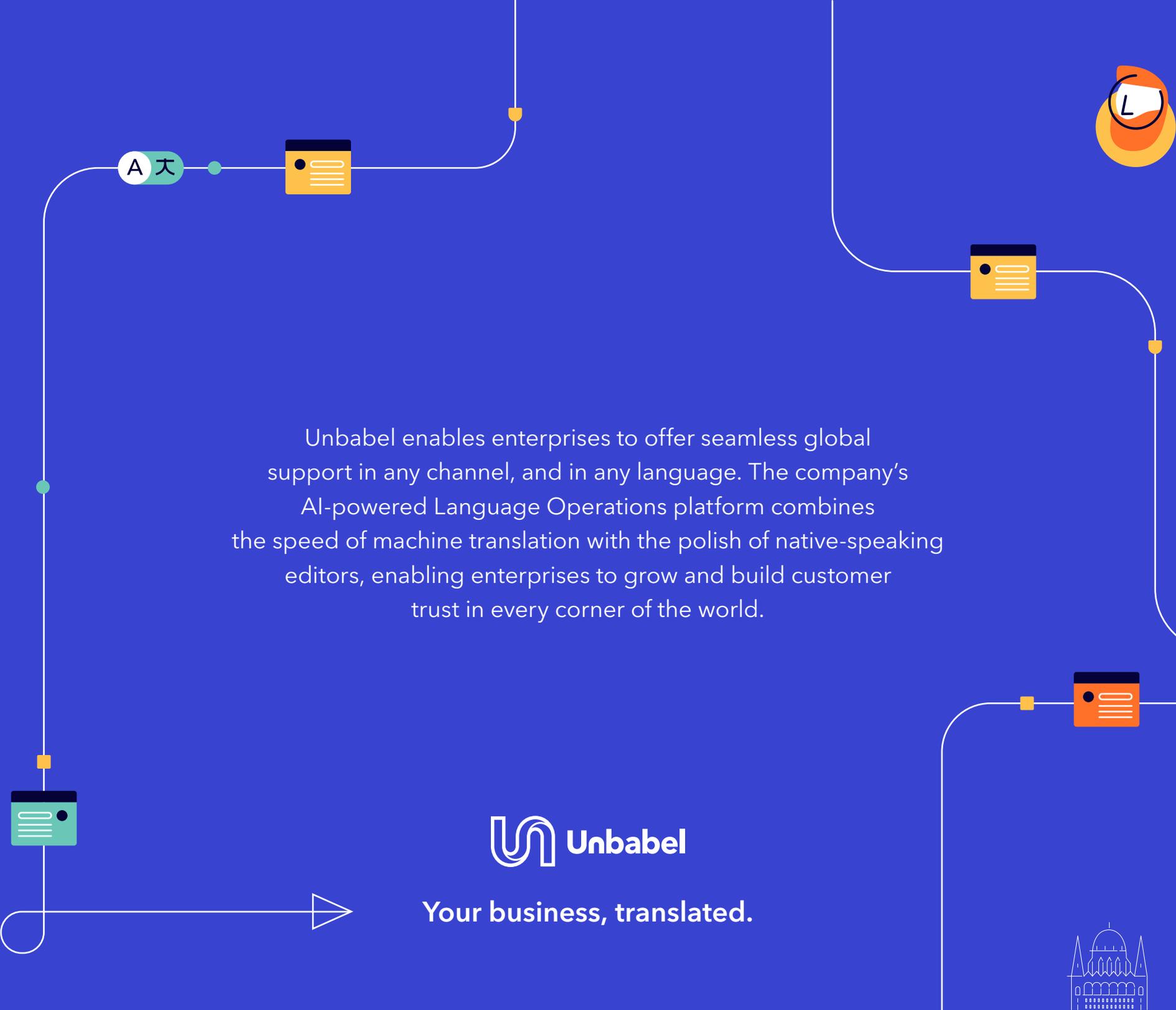
Of course, some best practices do not vary by language and should be applied to every customer service interaction. Here are the nine best practices we recommend.

- 1 EVERY INTERACTION MATTERS.** Always put in the best effort to make each interaction – every single one – a great one.
- 2 READ, DON'T SKIM.** Ensure you do not miss any valuable details or context in the message.
- 3 COMMUNICATE CONCISELY.** Only give the information you need to, helping your customer to find the answers to their questions or queries as fast and as efficiently as possible.
- 4 FOCUS ON GREAT SUPPORT BEFORE FAST SUPPORT.** Speed is important, of course, but it should not take precedence over quality.
- 5 MAKE THINGS EASY.** Always aim to reduce customer effort and take the burden off them when it comes to getting answers or help for their concern.

- 6 BE RESPECTFUL.** Always say “please” and “thank you.” This applies across cultural contexts and demographics. Politeness never goes out of style.
- 7 TAKE A NEUTRAL STANCE ON ISSUES.** There’s no reason to cause friction in a customer service interaction. Don’t take a stance on issues – even ones that seem harmless.
- 8 REMAIN POSITIVE.** This helps customers gain confidence in your ability to help them.
- 9 USE SIMPLE TERMS.** Keep it simple to avoid confusion and mistranslation when working across languages and cultural context, but don’t patronize customers.

In today’s competitive and globalized business climate, businesses who treat their customers with care and respect – including by speaking their language and respecting their cultural norms – will have the most success.





Unbabel enables enterprises to offer seamless global support in any channel, and in any language. The company's AI-powered Language Operations platform combines the speed of machine translation with the polish of native-speaking editors, enabling enterprises to grow and build customer trust in every corner of the world.



**Your business, translated.**

