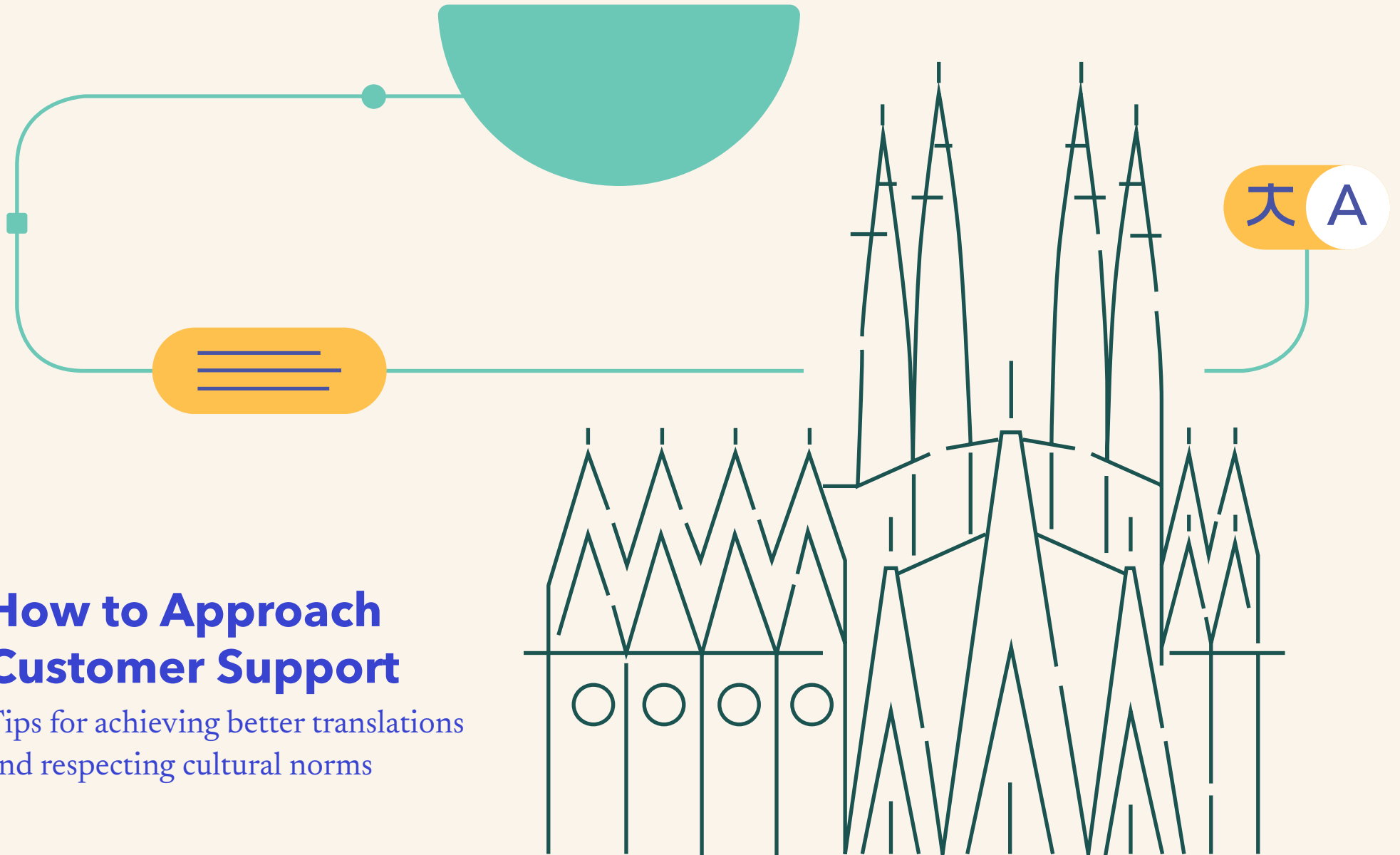


# SPANISH



## 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.

Expanding your business to Spain or Latin America (or both?) In this guide, we aim to help you achieve clarity in communication with customers in Spain and the 18 Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America. People from all these regions speak Spanish, but there

are several cultural nuances that need to be considered before you expand to these regions. Whether you aspire to expand to these regions or already have a presence in Spain and want to expand to Latin America (or vice versa), our goal is to prepare you for the differences you'll encounter when you connect with your customers in these regions.



# About the Spanish Language

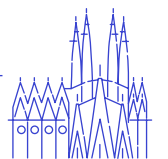
Spanish is the (or an) official language of Spain in Europe and 18 countries in South America including Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Panama, as well as of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, along with Spain in Europe and Equatorial Guinea in Africa. Over 559 million people around the world speak Spanish. Spanish is the second most spoken language in the US: 13% of the population speak the language.

MUCHO

GUSTO

HOLA.

¿CÓMO  
ESTÁ?



# Core concepts in Spanish culture relevant to customer service

## NATIONAL IDENTITY, PRIDE, AND DIGNITY

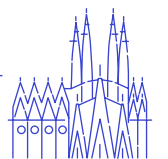
A common concept among European Spanish and Latin American Spanish societies is honor. People from Spain and Latin American countries might feel immense national and cultural pride, even if they don't approve of the government. A vast majority of them also speak some dialect of Spanish at home, which also forms a crucial part of their identity. Although they all share the same language, each of these countries is unique. In Mexico, there's even a saying "como México no hay dos," which means "there is none other like Mexico."

## UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

Spanish and a majority of Latin American societies are highly averse to risk and uncomfortable in ambiguous situations. Customers prefer to know all the information beforehand and choose permanent solutions over temporary fixes. Most of these cultures prize formality (as evidenced by their use of titles) and rules above all else, especially in official interactions. Detailed planning and preparation are a must before communicating with these customers. Spontaneity or "winging it" might be considered disrespectful.

## TRUST

In many of the Spanish cultures, people prefer to see you not as a representative of your company, but as a person. For this reason, well-developed personal relationships or glowing referrals from people they trust go a long way in cementing your business interactions with your customers. Customers might expect to know, trust, and even like you as an individual before getting into negotiations.



# Best practices for optimizing machine translation output

When writing in English with the knowledge that the content will be translated into Spanish, 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"

---

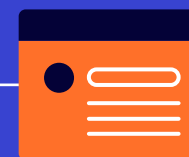
7 Be consistent, especially with terms like "email" that can be written multiple ways

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)



# SPANISH (EU)



# Best practices for communicating with Spanish (EU) customers

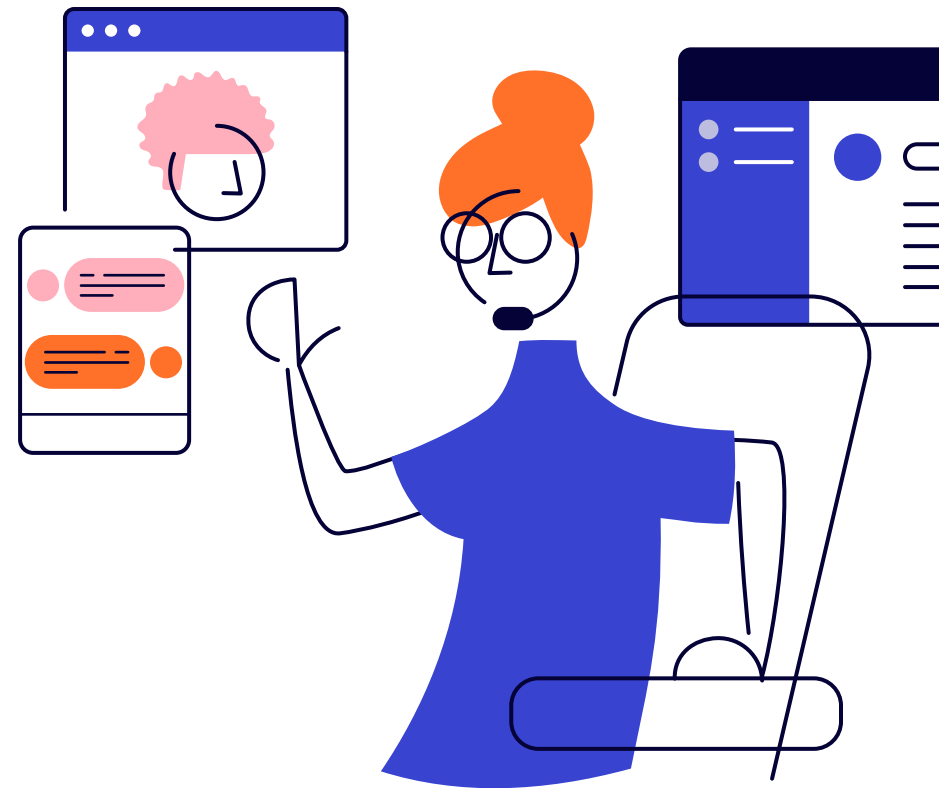
SPANISH (EU)

## USE THE RIGHT SALUTATION

Address your Spanish customers with the right greeting, followed by their first name, their first surname, and finally, their second surname. It's also common to use “Señor” or “Señora” (Mr./Mrs.) or “Estimado Señor/a” (Dear Mr./Mrs.) with only the first surname or both surnames. If the person carries an academic title, use that instead with the right surname(s). Use “Usted” (the formal “you”) in your first conversation, until the customer tells you they prefer something less formal.

## PREPARE FOR SMALL TALK

Spanish customers like learning personal details about you as a person. This means they might ask you personal questions about yourself before they show an interest in learning more about the company. Be open to answering them authentically and politely, but avoid taboo topics such as politics or getting too personal. Humor is appreciated, but offensive language is not.



# Best practices for communicating with Spanish (EU) customers

SPANISH (EU)

## FOLLOW THROUGH ON VERBAL AGREEMENTS

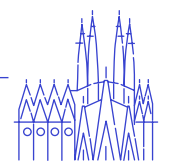
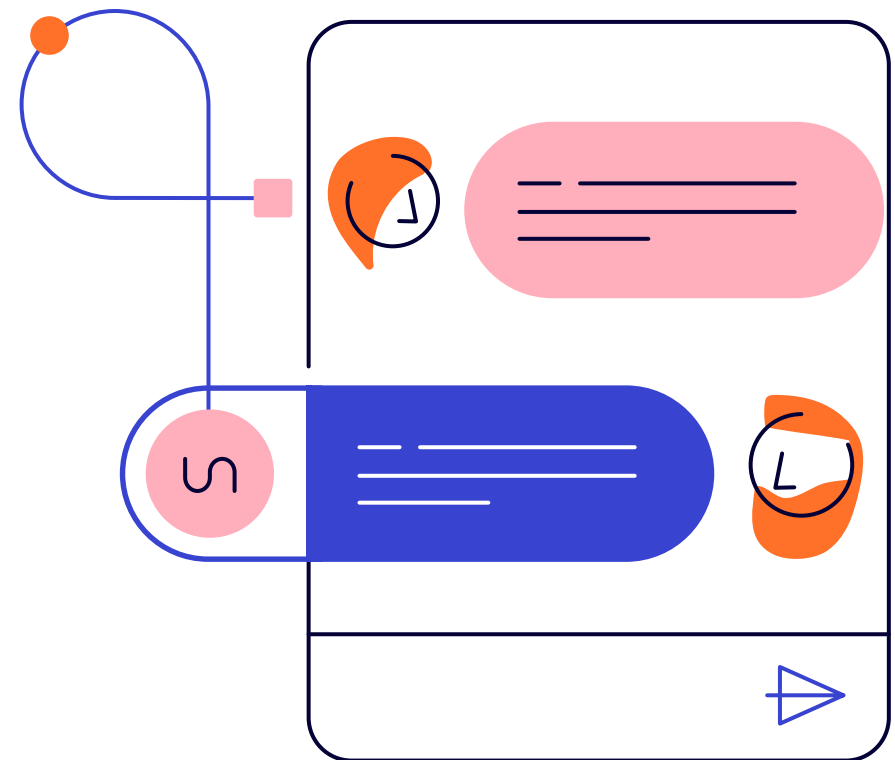
The Spanish prefer to reach oral or informal understanding before drawing up a formal contract, so spoken language carries as much weight as written. When you make claims or promises, you're expected to keep your word.

## MAKE ALL AGREEMENTS AIRTIGHT AND DETAILED

The Spanish are very thorough and highly likely to review every detail that you provide. They'll also study all options from different angles to ensure they're making the right decisions. While this might seem like an intimidating level of attention to detail, they just want to make certain that they fully understand all implications and commitments.



To best communicate with your Spanish customers, greet them correctly, answer their personal questions politely, make sure that you follow through on your claims and promises, and prepare for a thorough inspection of all details you provide.





# How to write in English for Spanish (EU) machine translation

## 1 USE FORMAL AND INFORMAL GREETINGS AND CLOSINGS

In Spanish (EU), the register varies depending on the company and its customers. Here are some examples.

### FORMAL REGISTER GREETINGS

#### not advised

- Hi/Hey!
- How are you?
- How was your day today?

#### advised

- Dear Mr. Jones/Ms. Navarro/Mrs. Smith,
- Good morning, Peter.

### FORMAL REGISTER CLOSINGS

#### not advised

- Goodbye!
- See you!
- Have a great day!
- It was nice working with you.

#### advised

- With kind regards,
- Yours sincerely,

### INFORMAL REGISTER GREETINGS

#### not advised

- Hi/Hey!

#### advised

- Hello,
- Good morning, Peter.

### FORMAL REGISTER CLOSINGS

#### not advised

- Bye!

#### advised

- See you later.
- See you soon.



# How to write in English for Spanish (EU) machine translation

## 2 AVOID EMOJIS

### not advised

- Good morning, Stefannie :)

### advised

- Good morning, Stefannie.

## 3 AVOID INTERJECTIONS

Interjections are another marker for informal tone and should be avoided when writing to a Spanish (EU) audience.

### not advised

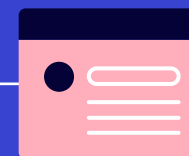
- Oh, I'm so sorry about that.
- Ah, that's alright.

### advised

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



# SPANISH (LATIN AMERICA)



# Best practices for communicating with Spanish (Latin America) customers

SPANISH (LATIN AMERICA)

## DO YOUR RESEARCH

Latin America is not one homogeneous country. While most of the Latin American cultures are characterized by the attributes listed in this guide, they also have their own expectations, traditions, and customs. What works for a customer from one country might not be appropriate for another.

## KNOW THE ENVIRONMENT

It's important to discover what kind of background your customer is coming from. If you're talking to someone in a formal, status-conscious environment, address them by the right professional title. Respect their position and authority by being formal in your approach. Times are changing, however; for a customer from a more modern, dynamic environment, formality might not help them connect with you, so you might have to switch up your tone to business casual.



# Best practices for communicating with Spanish (Latin America) customers

SPANISH (LATIN AMERICA)

## COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

---

In every interaction with your customer, make sure to provide detailed information about every aspect of the product or service. Support all your claims with evidence. Even though they might be informal and put their personal relationship with you above all else, Latin American customers expect their business deals to be waterproof – and preferably done on paper.

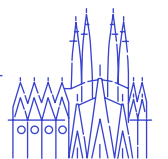
## EXPECT RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING AND CONFRONTATIONS

---

If your customer has had years of experience using your product or service, expect them to feel like they've developed a relationship with your company. Do your research, and feel free to share details about yourself when they inquire about your family or interests. Personal boundaries are not as rigid – but don't assume they're nonexistent. Your newer customers, on the other hand, might be defensive and confrontational when they approach customer service. It's your responsibility to earn their trust and win them over with your warmth and reliability.



For a successful interaction with your Latin American Spanish-speaking customer, it's crucial to know which Latin American country your customer is from, use the right greetings and titles, ensure that you build a solid relationship, and communicate in a direct and detailed manner.



# How to write in English for Spanish (Latin America) machine translation

SPANISH (LATIN AMERICA)

## 1 USE FORMAL AND INFORMAL GREETINGS AND CLOSINGS

In Spanish (Latin America), the register varies depending on the company and its customers. Here are some examples.

### FORMAL REGISTER GREETINGS

not advised

- Hi/Hey!
- How are you?
- How was your day today?
- Hello,

advised

- Dear Mr. Jones/Ms. Navarro/  
Mrs. Smith,
- Good morning, Peter.

### INFORMAL REGISTER GREETINGS

not advised

- Hi/Hey!

advised

- Hello,
- Good morning, Peter.

### FORMAL REGISTER CLOSINGS

not advised

- Goodbye!
- See you!
- Have a great day!
- It was nice working with you.

advised

- With kind regards,
- Yours sincerely,

### FORMAL REGISTER CLOSINGS

not advised

- Bye!

advised

- See you later.
- See you soon.



# How to write in English for Spanish (Latin America) machine translation

## 2 AVOID EMOJIS

### not advised

- Good morning, Stefannie 😊

### advised

- Good morning, Stefannie.

## 3 AVOID INTERJECTIONS

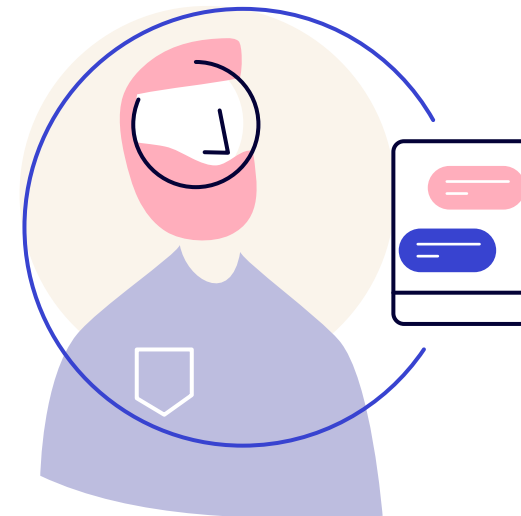
Interjections are another marker for informal tone and should be avoided when writing to a Spanish (Latin America) audience.

### 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.





A 天



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.

