Talaera's English Guide for Software Developers

How Communication Skills Can Land Your Dream Job

Talaera

Online Business English Training

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Great communication is at the heart of all successful software teams

As a software developer you are in one of the most in-demand jobs on the market. Technology is at the center of the digital revolution and coders are the creators making it happen. But there is also fierce competition to get hired for one of the top-paying jobs.

One key skill that sets the top international candidates apart is their **communication ability in English**. This is often confused with language ability. But language ability is just your command of grammar and vocabulary. Communicative ability goes much further. In fact, this communicative ability is one of the most sought-after soft skills among software engineers. But why? And how can it help you land your dream job?

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Communication ability is at the heart of all successful teams of developers. Big names like Google want a software team that thrives. And they know this happens when team members collaborate well: great communication ensures that a project is clearly defined and that all stakeholders know exactly what problems they have to solve in order to achieve the project goals.

You don't have to be a grammar nerd. Great communication is more to do with your ability to describe a problem clearly and concisely and communicate this to other team members. Annoyingly, while this may come naturally to you in your native language, in English this often takes much more practice.

But it's worth the effort. Not only will these communication skills put you on the radar of your dream company, but they have a host of other benefits, too.

Get that promotion. For better or worse, performance reviews at major tech companies are heavily biased towards English native-speakers. So the better your English, the more likely it is that you will get that promotion.

Make yourself future-proof. The quicker you start improving your English. the quicker you'll be future-proof. If you think learning English is already important now, how important do you think it will be in five years?

This Talaera English guide will help you understand the key communication challenges non-native software developers face. We will also provide practical steps for boosting your English skills and landing your dream job. Happy reading!

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What Are The Biggest Communication Challenges As A Non-Native Software Developer?

Great communication is at the heart of all successful software teams

As a non-native software developer, you face a lot of challenges. One of the main ones is communication. So, we talked to our software developer students to understand their biggest language struggles. Our research shows that the following six are the main language challenges that you will encounter. Can you relate to any of these?

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1. It's harder to pass the cultural fit interview at your dream company

There's no point acing that Google technical task if you bomb the cultural fit interview. And coming up with fluent responses to questions like "Why do you think you'd be a great cultural fit for this company?" is difficult to do on the fly. But it's often communication ability that sets the good candidates apart from the great ones. If two candidates both have five years' experience coding Android apps and similar references, **the applicant with the best communication ability is going to get the job**.

Top-paying companies will not hire you if you can't show that you will be able to collaborate well on a team: this means demonstrating your understanding of a problem, and describing your own abilities in a team context. In short, your communication ability.

2. You're less likely to get an internal promotion

Companies all claim to treat everybody equally. But this doesn't mean that they can eliminate subconscious bias towards non-native speakers. Everything from your foreign accent to your grammar mistakes shape how your native-speaker colleagues see you. This bias means that it will be **harder for you to get that internal promotion**. This is because performance reviews and ability assessments are biased towards native-speakers - they are written and carried out in English.

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3. You experience misunderstandings with other team members

It's likely that you attend quite a few meetings every week: stand-ups, weekly calls with other teams in other locations, and sprint planning sessions. Not only this but there is a ton of written communication involved in software projects like emails, Slack or even via commits to a Github repo. With all this communication, there is a lot of potential for misunderstandings, ranging from the relatively harmless to the more serious.

Either way, **a team member with poor communication ability can really slow project progress**. This is not good when the team has sprint goals or other targets to hit.

4. It's hard to understand user docs and other resources quickly

You know the feeling when you are searching for something really specific. Perhaps you wanted to read the "setState" documentation in "React". Or maybe ask a question in a Stack Exchange forum. But around 99% of the time the answer is going to be in English.

Whether you are researching user docs, NPM package pages, READMEs or forum answers, **poor English ability will decrease your ability to research and resolve issues quickly**. This slow progress can be frustrating, particularly when you already understand the technical side of things perfectly.

5. You can't create globally-understood code, apps, and web projects

Most coding languages are in English. But if you are working in a team of all non-native speakers, you may write your comments or user docs in your native language. This is ok for internal use but what about your international users? And what about your awesome projects outside of work?

Maybe you've authored a really cool NPM package, web app, or plugin. If you can't write clear documentation in English, then **international users are not going to adopt your features** - even if they rock. You also can't add these projects to your international project portfolio.

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6. You can't make your voice heard on a project

In an ideal world, dealing with the product owner, scrum master or project manager would be easy and they would always understand you perfectly. But this is not the reality. A lot of what you do is behind the scenes and sometimes intangible for non-coders.

Not explaining yourself and your actions clearly can make the collaboration with project stakeholders even more difficult than it should be. Not only this, but **when you do have a great idea, you may find it harder to get it approved**. Bummer.

Phew! The worst is over now. Let's move on to the more positive stuff!

What Are The Main Benefits Of Great English Communication Skills?

Looking at the benefits may be the way to find motivation

We'd all love to speak perfect English. But finding the motivation can sometimes be tough. Based on our own successful students working in IT at some of the big name companies, we have compiled a list of the **main benefits of great communication** they have enjoyed due to boosting their English skills. Often looking at the benefits makes it easier to find the motivation to commit to learning.

1. Earn more money by landing your dream job

If you have great communication skills, then global companies will love your international skill set. You'll be able to make a killer project portfolio in English and pass cultural fit interviews with confidence. Remember communication ability is one of the most desirable soft skills at the big name companies. So commit to boosting your English skills and **you will dramatically improve your chances of landing that dream job**.

And even if you don't get a callback from your dream company, improved communication will help you get an internal promotion. Most employee reviews are held in English so give yourself an edge over your international colleagues.

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2. Hold presentations with confidence

Do you have a sprint review coming up? Or perhaps it's your turn to present a new feature to the team? While this can be nerve-wracking, there is no better way to **impress your native speaker colleagues** by volunteering to host an upcoming presentation.

Holding presentations with confidence is a great way to show you are an active contributor and that you can hold your own with your native speaker colleagues.

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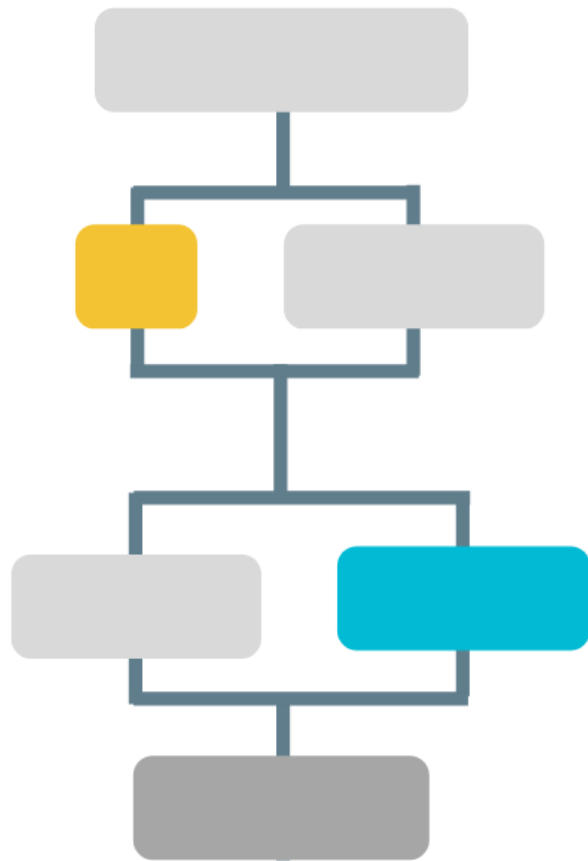
3. Contribute to a better project flow

No matter what workflow you use, the key to a successful project is communication. Whether planning the next sprint or adding issues to a Kanban board, **better English means more efficient project work**.

Being able to rely on your own communication skills will boost your confidence and allow you to concentrate on what you do best: coding. The more you increase your communicative abilities, the more collaboration will go from a chore to something you look forward to.

4. Perform faster research

Get more done quicker. English is the lingua franca for almost all user documentation, READMEs, and coding tutorials. Boosting your English ability will allow you to perform research faster.

You'll be able to understand user docs, readmes, tutorials, question forums more easily and will spend less time translating and more time committing code.

Search....
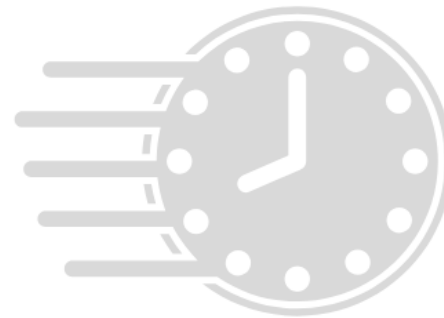
5. Create English user docs and READMEs for a global audience

English is not only the key to understanding user docs produced by the global community; it is also the key to writing your own! If you write READMEs, user docs and project pages in English, the global coder community will be able to enjoy your awesome projects.

This will **increase adoption rates** and it also means that you can use these projects when **applying with your portfolio at an international company**.

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6. Get more projects greenlit

You may have a bunch of awesome ideas for cool projects and features. But **it's your great communication skills with your team lead or product owner that will get your project approved**.

You can use your communication skills to convince stakeholders of why your idea is the one the team should for. Make your voice heard and get those projects greenlit!

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What Can You Do To Boost Your Communication Skills?

Looking at the benefits may be the key to finding motivation

Talaera specializes in helping global tech professionals improve their communication. We have developed many effective strategies to help our students working in IT to achieve their goals. The next six learning solutions are some of the most effective to help you boost your skills today.

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Tip #1

1. Always learn English in context

One of the main reasons people struggle to learn a language is lack of context. Traditional teaching methods focus on grammar and the context is simply taken from the class textbook. But you need to **create your own learning context.** Take a problem you already want to solve and try solving it in English.

Merge learning English with the branches of your everyday life (pardon the pun). Watch coding tutorials in English. This means you learn specific vocabulary in a context you will use later. This will give structure to your learning and you'll also be more motivated to get through it.

2. Solve your own specific problems

What do you actually need to know? One of our students recently said he wanted to learn the correct way to use time phrases. This was important to him for talking about project lead times. Having this specific mini goal helps to focus your learning. This is a type of problem you can solve in less than thirty minutes.

Start by creating a list of the things you would like to learn (time phrases, email greetings, common phrases used in READMEs). Now, you can systematically begin to fill in the gaps in your knowledge. There are a lot of great articles online - like on the Talaera blog - that can help you achieve these mini goals.

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Tip #3

3. Find a learning partner and create an English learning #channel

Perhaps there is someone on your team that is in the same situation as you. Why not get together help each other improve your English? You can motivate each other to learn and add structure to your learning. You can even join a Slack channel with other English learners, or create your own. This is a great way to find and share interesting resources.

Tip #4

4. Get your talent manager to invest in language training

Investing in language training pays off and companies know it. Software developers at Paypal, Google, Gett, Check Point are already enjoying Talaera's custom English training for tech professionals. We focus on communication ability. We enable you to communicate with colleagues and focus on real-life problems: big picture stuff. And the best part is, you don't even have to pay for it yourself. Win-win!

So why not tell your talent manager to add English training to the list of personal development opportunities? If they need some convincing, refer them to this ebook.

At Talaera we offer individual online business English for international companies that need a personalized plan that can adapt even to their busiest employees. If you are interested in finding out more, click here.

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5. Audio shadowing using the power of the podcast

Do you listen to any podcasts in English? If so, then try the following easy method to quickly improve your pronunciation: Play a podcast and find a piece of audio. A relatively simple phrase works best. Repeat this piece of English out loud right after you hear the audio. Just imitate the voice without thinking about the meaning too much. Repeat this a few times. Try and do this every morning and over time you will train your ear to pronounce words more accurately. And if people at the metro stop to look at you weirdly, just tell them it's for a good cause!

The reason podcasts work so well is because there is no visual to distract you. But feel free to try this simple method with all audio or even TV shows you like.

6. Check out your local language meetups

In most cities, language lovers regularly organize free meetups. Usually these are in an informal, social context, but they can be a great way to boost your English. Here are some tips to get the most out of a language meetup.

Try and find a group with similar interests (not necessarily work-related); this provides common ground for conversation. Try and find a group that is around your current language level or a little higher. Too easy is boring, too hard is also no fun. Don't be afraid to try multiple groups until you find the one that fits. Also ask your talent manager. They usually have amazing tips for the city you are located in.

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Conclusion

Whichever way you look it at, **learning English is a crucial skill for you as a software developer**. Whether it's landing a job at a top company like PayPal or Google or simply getting better at project collaboration, great communication is the key to success. Improving your communication skills will also help you create a global portfolio of projects that you can showcase to the world.

And this trend is only going to continue. So **in order to make yourself future-proof, you need to have great English skills**. The workforce is becoming increasingly international and more and more companies are going remote. This means that great English communication has never been as important or as desirable in tech jobs.

Learning English will diversify your skills and put you ahead of the rest. So add improving English to your Kanban board!

And why not partner with the best in the business? Talaera already helps software developers at many successful international companies. Better still, get your company to pay for it. Let your talent manager know today that you're interested in English classes.

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Online. Personalized. Effective.