

*The Power of
Language Learning:*

“ **101** ”

Inspirational Quotes

presented by

ESL BASICS

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To the polyglot in all of us

Foreword

My 15-year-old self knew this day would come: A day when I could read and compile quotes for a living. I used to fill journal after journal with inspirational quotes, dreaming of a time when I would have an exciting enough life to live what was springing up in my heart.

My 15-year-old self also knew that languages would always be a part of my life. It was that year that I first traveled over my own country's border, onto the colorful canvas of coastal Mexico. That year when ordering *carne asada* in broken Spanish at every restaurant in Mazatlán made something come alive in me. I was hooked.

What you have in front of you now are 101 quotes meant to inspire the language learner in all of us. You may be a newcomer to learning another language, or you may be a seasoned veteran with 11 languages under your belt. Wherever you are on the spectrum, these quotes will probably do for you what they do for me: inspire you to cross more linguistic borders. I've looked high and low to find 101 quotes that capture the brilliance, difficulty, and hilarity that come with learning another language.

My hope is that you will be filled with a sense of wonder from reading these quotes and that you will re-discover a love for communicating with your world.

Happy learning!

Andrea Giordano

Founder of ESL Basics

QUOTE 1

“A man who
knows two
languages is
worth two men.”

French Proverb

QUOTE 2

“Communication works for those who work at it.”

John Powell

QUOTE 3

“The tongue is
the only tool
that gets sharper
with use.”

Washington Irving

QUOTE 4

“Words are
the voice of
the heart.”

Confucius

QUOTE 5

“Those who
know nothing
of foreign
languages
know nothing
of their own.”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

QUOTE 6

“The sum of
human wisdom
is not contained
in any one
language.”

Ezra Pound

QUOTE 7

“You can never understand one language until you understand at least two.”

Geoffrey Willans

QUOTE 8

“To have another language is to possess a second soul.”

Charlemagne

QUOTE 9

“Language is
the blood of the
soul into which
thoughts run
and out of which
they grow.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes

QUOTE 10

“A different language is a different vision of life.”

Federico Fellini

QUOTE 11

“Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going.”

Rita Mae Brown

QUOTE 12

“Words, too,
have genuine
substance - mass
and weight and
specific gravity.”

Tim O'Brien

QUOTE 13

“Language
shapes the way
we think, and
determines
what we can
think about.”

Benjamin Lee Whorf

QUOTE 14

“Language is not an abstract construction of the learned, or of dictionary makers, but is something arising out of the work, needs, ties, joys, affections, tastes, of long generations of humanity, and has its bases broad and low, close to the ground.”

Noah Webster

QUOTE 15

“Language has
no independent
existence apart
from the people
who use it.”

David Crystal

QUOTE 16

“Learning a foreign language not only reveals how other societies think and feel, what they have experienced and value, and how they express themselves, it also provides a cultural mirror in which we can more clearly see out own society.”

Chancellor Edward Lee Gorsuch

QUOTE 17

“The limits of
my language
are the limits
of my world.”

Ludwig Wittgenstein

QUOTE 18

“One language
sets you in a
corridor for life.
Two languages
open every door
along the way.”

Frank Smith

QUOTE 19

“If we spoke
a different
language, we
would perceive
a somewhat
different world.”

Ludwig Wittgenstein

QUOTE 20

“You live a new life for every new language you speak. If you know only one language, you live only once.”

Czech proverb

QUOTE 21

“Knowledge
of languages
is the doorway
to wisdom.”

Roger Bacon

QUOTE 22

“One who speaks only one language is one person, but one who speaks two languages is two people.”

Turkish Proverb

QUOTE 23

“Change your
language and
you change
your thoughts.”

Karl Albrecht

QUOTE 24

“Learning another language is not only learning different words for the same things, but learning another way to think about things.”

Flora Lewis

QUOTE 25

“A special kind of beauty exists which is born in language, of language, and for language.”

Gaston Bachelard

QUOTE 26

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”

Nelson Mandela

QUOTE 27

“Language is not a genetic gift, it is a social gift. Learning a new language is becoming a member of the club - the community of speakers of that language.”

Frank Smith

QUOTE 28

“Americans who travel abroad for the first time are often shocked to discover that, despite all the progress that has been made in the last 30 years, many foreign people still speak in foreign languages.”

Dave Barry

QUOTE 29

“A basic rule of culture learning is that you will never be present in a new culture as a normal person unless you are first willing to be present as a weirdo. Weirdness is the only path to normalcy.”

Greg Thompson

QUOTE 30

“A language is not an academic subject. It is something that happens between people in flesh and blood.”

Greg Thompson

QUOTE 31

“If we could talk
to people in
their language,
we could see
them better.”

Don Larson

QUOTE 32

“Each time
a language
dies, another
flame goes out,
another sound
goes silent.”

Ariel Sabar

QUOTE 33

“With languages, you can move from one social situation to another. With languages, you are at home anywhere.”

Edmund de Waal

QUOTE 34

“The man who does not know other languages, unless he is a man of genius, necessarily has deficiencies in his ideas.”

Victor Hugo

QUOTE 35

“I wish life was not so short,
he thought. Languages
take such a time, and
so do all the things one
wants to know about.”

J. R. R. Tolkien

QUOTE 36

“Any idiot can learn a language, and knowing this means that I can accept that perhaps I have to be that idiot.”

Benny Lewis

QUOTE 37

“A degree of lying
- you know, white
lies - seems to
be inherent in
all languages
and all forms of
communication.”

Matthew Lesko

QUOTE 38

“I never had to learn English, French and German because I was brought up as all three languages. I had a private French teacher before I even went to school. That helped a lot.”

Karl Lagerfeld

QUOTE 39

“Foreign languages are another favorite topic, and as these men are bilingual they have a fair notion of what it means to speak and think in many different idioms.”

John Millington Synge

QUOTE 40

“Own only what you can always carry with you: know languages, know countries, know people. Let your memory be your travel bag.”

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

QUOTE 41

“It’s very hard
having a career
in different
continents and
two different
languages.”

Kristin Scott Thomas

QUOTE 42

“The surest method of being incomprehensible or, moreover, to be misunderstood is to use words in their original sense; especially words from the ancient languages.”

Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel

QUOTE 43

“We don’t just borrow words; on occasion, English has pursued other languages down alleyways to beat them unconscious and rifle their pockets for new vocabulary.”

Booker T. Washington

QUOTE 44

“I had to know
at least two
languages.”

Novak Djokovic

QUOTE 45

“Like all young reporters - brilliant or hopelessly incompetent - I dreamed of the glamorous life of the foreign correspondent: prowling Vienna in a Burberry trench coat, speaking a dozen languages to dangerous women, narrowly escaping Sardinian bandits - the usual stuff that newspaper dreams are made of.”

Russell Baker

QUOTE 46

“I’ve had a very interesting career. I get to do amazing things and work with amazing people and travel and learn languages - things most people don’t get the opportunity to do.”

Gwyneth Paltrow

QUOTE 47

“Even though I have spent literally years of my life trying to learn another language, any other language - and even though I have in the past claimed in several key professional contexts that I speak other languages - I am in fact still trapped inside the bubble of English.”

Lev Grossman

QUOTE 48

“When you grow up in a family of languages, you develop a kind of casual fluency, so that languages, though differently colored, all seem transparent to experience.”

David Antin

QUOTE 49

“Languages are something of a mess. They evolve over centuries through an unplanned, democratic process that leaves them teeming with irregularities, quirks, and words like ‘knight.’”

Joshua Foer

QUOTE 50

“The ability to produce is the result of language acquisition, not the cause.”

Stephen Krashen

QUOTE 51

“My wife wanted my children to have some Chinese culture and education. She believes the children need to learn two languages and two cultures.”

Jet Li

QUOTE 52

“There is a slam-dunk case for extending foreign language teaching to children aged five. Just as some people have taken a perverse pride in not understanding mathematics, so we have taken a perverse pride in the fact that we do not speak foreign languages, and we just need to speak louder in English.”

Michael Gove

QUOTE 53

“No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality.”

Edward Sapir

QUOTE 54

“Math and science fields are not the only areas where we see the United States lagging behind. Less than 1 percent of American high school students study the critical foreign languages of Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean or Russian, combined.”

Cathy McMorris

QUOTE 55

“I just know so many people who have six or seven foreign languages and have read everything and have musical training and they are still dorks.”

Joseph Epstein

QUOTE 56

“One of the reasons I came to Berkeley was because I saw so many students of all different colors speaking so many different languages and ferociously presenting all these different views. I thought, this is the 21st century and I want to be here!”

June Jordan

QUOTE 57

“After using four different languages on an album, it’s tough to decide which one I’m gonna actually learn to speak. I always study the lyric, make sure I know what I’m singing, and try to get the pronunciation as perfect as possible.”

Josh Groban

QUOTE 58

“It’s like there are all these languages available, especially in terms of image. Why confine yourself to only English? There’s all these languages and possibilities and concepts to speak or communicate with.”

William Wiley

QUOTE 59

“Languages are
true analytical
methods.”

Antoine Lavoisier

QUOTE 60

“It’s haunting to realize that half of the languages of the world are teetering on the brink of extinction.”

Wade Davis

QUOTE 61

“Never make
fun of someone
who speaks
broken English.
It means they
know another
language.”

H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

QUOTE 62

“Learning languages is like learning history from the inside out. It encompasses the battles of ethnicity, religion, compromise, politics. So much can be learned from language because it’s been shaped by history.”

Eric van Lustbader

QUOTE 63

“The only normal way to begin speaking in a new language is to begin speaking badly!”

Greg and Angela Thomson

QUOTE 64

“No one who set out to design a form of communication would ever end up with anything like English, Mandarin, or any of the more than six thousand languages spoken today.”

Joshua Foer

QUOTE 65

“Language acquisition proceeds best when the acquirer is “open” to the input, not “on the defensive”; not anxious about performance.”

Stephen Krashen

QUOTE 66

“Language is the means of getting an idea from my brain into yours without surgery.”

Mark Amidon

QUOTE 67

“No man should travel until he has learned the language of the country he visits. Otherwise he voluntarily makes himself a great baby - so helpless and so ridiculous.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

QUOTE 68

“What’s the trick to remembering that a sandwich is masculine? What qualities does it share with anyone in possession of a penis? I’ll tell myself that a sandwich is masculine because if left alone for a week or two, it will eventually grow a beard.”

David Sedaris

QUOTE 69

“At first when you’re learning a foreign language, what seems strange is that a different set of words exists for the things you know. But then, after a while, what seems strange is that so many words are the same, that two entirely different peoples, an ocean apart, would choose the exact same sounds. In the end, what causes the most trouble are the words that sound the same but mean different things: *déception*, *nostalgie*, *grâce*.”

Stephanie Grant

QUOTE 70

“Language is
wine upon
the lips.”

Virginia Woolf

QUOTE 71

“Language is
a virus from
outer space.”

William S. Burroughs

QUOTE 72

“French is the language that turns dirt into romance.”

Stephen King

QUOTE 73

“Use what
language
you will, you
can never say
anything but
what you are.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

QUOTE 74

“Language
is the dress
of thought.”

Samuel Johnson

QUOTE 75

“Language
begins with
listening.”

Jeanette Winterson

QUOTE 76

“Language is
the friendliest
of the things
from which we
cannot escape.”

Mason Cooley

QUOTE 77

“Our language is the reflection of ourselves. A language is an exact reflection of the character and growth of its speakers.”

Cesar Chavez

QUOTE 78

“All speech,
written or
spoken, is a
dead language,
until it finds
a willing and
prepared hearer.”

Robert Louis Stevenson

QUOTE 79

“Body language is a very powerful tool. We had body language before we had speech, and apparently, 80% of what you understand in a conversation is read through the body, not the words.”

Deborah Bull

QUOTE 80

“Language is a process of free creation; its laws and principles are fixed, but the manner in which the principles of generation are used is free and infinitely varied.”

Noam Chomsky

QUOTE 81

“I do know where
I’m going and
it’s just a matter
of finding the
language to
get there.”

John Irving

QUOTE 82

“Slang is a language that rolls up its sleeves, spits on its hands and goes to work.”

Carl Sandburg

QUOTE 83

“Language is the most massive and inclusive art we know, a mountainous and anonymous work of unconscious generations.”

Edward Sapir

QUOTE 84

“It is literally the case that learning languages makes you smarter. The neural networks in the brain strengthen as a result of language learning.”

Michael Gove

QUOTE 85

“Writing is an
act of faith,
not a trick of
grammar.”

E. B. White

QUOTE 86

“If you don’t know how to pronounce a word, say it loud!’ (William Strunk)...
Why compound ignorance with inaudibility?”

E.B. White

QUOTE 87

“A man only learns in two ways, one by reading, and the other by association with smarter people.”

Will Rogers

QUOTE 88

“Communication is a skill that you can learn. It’s like riding a bicycle or typing. If you’re willing to work at it, you can rapidly improve the quality of every part of your life.”

Brian Tracy

QUOTE 89

“A language is not just a body of vocabulary or a set of grammatical rules... Every language is an old-growth forest of the mind.”

Wade Davis

QUOTE 90

“The art of
communication
is the language
of leadership.”

James C. Humes

QUOTE 91

“Knowledge
is of no value
unless you put
it into practice.”

Heber J. Grant

QUOTE 92

“Language change is inevitable, continuous, universal and multidirectional.”

David Crystal

QUOTE 93

“We should learn languages because language is the only thing worth knowing even poorly.”

Kató Lomb

QUOTE 94

“A year from now you will wish you had started today.”

Karen Lamb

QUOTE 95

“If you find
yourself saying
‘But I can’t
speak English...’,
try adding the
word ‘...yet.’”

Jane Revell & Susan Norman

QUOTE 96

“One must learn
by doing the
thing; for though
you think you
know it, you
have no certainty,
until you try.”

Sophocles

QUOTE 97

“Language is
a city to the
building of
which every
human being
brought a stone.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

QUOTE 98

“One forgets words as one forgets names. One’s vocabulary needs constant fertilizing or it will die.”

Evelyn Waugh

QUOTE 99

“Language exerts
hidden power,
like a moon
on the tides.”

Rita Mae Brown

QUOTE 100

“You can get help from teachers, but you are going to have to learn a lot by yourself, sitting alone in a room.”

Doctor Seuss

QUOTE 101

“Language helps
form the limits
of our reality.”

Dale Spender

QUOTE 102

“Happy
learning!”

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