

Contest: My Experience of Languages

An activity of "Languages give us different ways of thinking about the world"

Read **"Languages give us different ways of thinking about the world"** (page 21, *What's Up* May 2025). Kelly Zhang shares with us her experiences of learning English for the first time only when she was in elementary school (which is like primary school here). She also talks about keeping up with her own mother tongue. Ms Zhang is now a famous bilingual writer and translator. Reading about her journey in language learning can inspire us to think about our own. And, that is what this contest is all about — your own unique experience of languages.

1. Think hard about all the languages in your life. These would be the language(s) spoken at home, at school, and your English Language and Mother Tongue classes. You may also have listened to songs or heard neighbours talking in languages you don't know yet.

2. Jot down in point form:

- The languages you know.
- Languages you hear around you but do not understand yet.
- Your feelings about your encounters with different languages.
- Any insights you have about what languages mean to you.
- Any other thoughts about languages in your life.

3. Compose a brief essay about your experience of languages. Note: It should be about your personal, real-life experiences. Look as far back as you can remember. Your essay can use your points above, but they can be in any order.

4. The word limit for your essay is 250. To keep within your word limit, draft and redraft your essay. Pay attention to flow. Make it an exciting read!

5. Submit your contest entry.

- Email your essay to **ourcontest@whatsup.sg**.
- For the subject, put "Contest: My Experience of Languages"
- Include your full name, class, and school in your email.
- Submit your email by 6 Jun 2025.

Winners will receive a copy of Kelly Zhang's book *Take Me to Laolao*. All the best!