

[OPINION] Transforming language skills into income: A lifelong journey for young people

Muhamad Khairul Zakaria, Dr Che Wan Ida Rahimah Che Wan Ibrahim
07/04/2025 14:00 MYT



The translation industry is evolving with AI, presenting opportunities for teenagers to learn new tools and stay updated. - Filepix/Pixabay

IN TODAY's interconnected world, there is a growing demand for translation services across various sectors, including business, technology, healthcare and tourism.

AI Brief

- *Translation work offers significant financial returns and invaluable experiences for young adults and university students.*
- *The translation industry is evolving with AI, presenting opportunities for teenagers to learn new tools and stay updated.*
- *Lifelong learning and mastering technology tools are crucial for staying competitive in the translation field and beyond.*

This is great news for young adults and university students who want to earn some extra money while getting better at their language skills.

What's even better is that translation work does not just offer significant financial returns, it also gives young people invaluable experiences that can help them land great job prospects later.

They will be building a worldwide network and stepping into a career that is both rewarding and fun!

The translation industry is undergoing a major shift with the rise of artificial intelligence (AI). But do not worry, technology is not our enemy. In fact, it is a huge opportunity for teenagers to explore and get ahead of the curve.

If they are ready to learn new tools and stay updated with the latest innovations, they will be in a great position to take advantage of the future of translation.

Thus, being skilled with technology makes individuals more competitive not only in translation but in any field that values digital skills.

So, it is crucial to embrace the idea of lifelong learning, which is exactly what Malaysia's educational vision promotes, a world where learning never ends! The more we learn, the more we will stay ahead in this evolving world.

Earning Money While Study

Many people might not realise it, but language skills are incredibly valuable! In fact, they can totally use them to start earning money while still in school.

There are tons of online platforms, like Upwork and Fiverr where everyone can offer translation services and pick projects that match their skills and interests.

These platforms give them the freedom to choose when they want to work, what projects to take on, and at what price.

It is super flexible! Moreover, platforms like Unbabel and Temedios blend AI with human expertise, giving young people the chance to work with the latest technology while improving their translation skills.

Working with international clients is a huge perk, it is a great way to expand the network and gain real-world experience.

Imagine this, while students are still in university, they could build their reputation as a translator, generate income, and learn how to manage clients from all over the world.

This experience will make them far more prepared for their career when they graduate!

How to Actively Hone Language Proficiency

1. Keep Practicing Language Skills

The longer young learners practice, the better they will become! Consider taking advanced language courses, joining translation workshops, or using apps like Duolingo and FluentU to keep their language skills sharp.

The more someone practices grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structures, the more confident they will feel when translating.

Young translators can even take it a step further by interacting with native speakers or watching movies in the language they are learning to get a feel for the culture and slang.

The key is to stay consistent and make language learning a daily habit. It is a fun way to improve skills!

2. Master Technology tools

These days, translators need to be tech-savvy. Tools like SDL Trados can make work much easier and more efficient.

By mastering these tools, young people will not only save time but also present them as professionals in the industry.

Furthermore, understanding how AI tools like Google Translate or DeepL can support translation work is important, too.

These tools can help with the right phrases, but unique human touch is what makes translations accurate and meaningful.

Mastering both language skills and tech tools will make them stand out and allow them to work smarter, not harder.

3. Stay on Top of Industry Trends

The translation world is constantly changing, especially with the rise of new technologies. To stay ahead, keep learning! Attend webinars, read the latest articles, and join translation forums to see what is trending in the field.

Young people can also take online courses or participate in events to connect with other translators and learn from their experiences.

The more they stay informed about the latest trends and tools, the more valuable they will become as a translator.

4. Understand Different Cultures

Translation is not just about swapping words; it is about understanding the meaning behind them and the culture they come from.

Watching movies in different languages, reading books from different cultures, and talking to native speakers can help learners understand context and expressions better.

Understanding the culture behind the language will make their translations more accurate and relatable.

Also, knowing the cultural context will help young translators avoid mistakes that might arise if they do not fully understand what is being said.

The more they immerse themselves in different cultures, the better their translations will be.

Conclusion: Small Steps, Big Impact

Translation is not just a side hustle; it is a gateway to a bright future. For young learners, such as university students, it presents a fantastic opportunity to develop valuable skills, earn money, and prepare for a successful career.

If these learners are passionate about languages, they can access a wide range of job opportunities, whether that is translating for international clients or working with global companies.

Keep learning, stay curious, and do not be afraid to embrace challenges as every experience will help them grow.

Remember, in today's challenging world, being able to bridge languages and cultures is a superpower. So, take advantage of the opportunities out there, sharpen skills, and get ready to take on the world!

Dr Che Wan Ida Rahimah Che Wan Ibrahim and Muhamad Khairul Zakaria are from RIG 4, Centre of Fundamental and Continuing Education (PPAL), Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT).

Views expressed here are strictly of the author's and does not necessarily reflect Astro AWANI's.