Lernu.net: demographics, behavior and motivation

YEVGENIYA AMIS, M. SC. STUDENT, MARKETING, UQAM (ESG)
Goals of the research

Demographics

Motivation

Behavior
Phases of the field research

1: Secondary data
- Server data
- Google analytics
- Facebook

2: Primary data
- Focus group
- Survey
Collection of primary data

**Focus group**
- 32 people
- 8 countries
- Forums in 4 languages
- Open ended questions
- Behavior and motivation

**Survey**
- Approx. 400 respondents
- 57 countries
- EO, EN, FR, RU, ES, PT, JP
- Demographics, behavior and motivation
Diverse!
Lernu.net audience: highlights

Approx. 195,000 registered users (with account) from all countries
Approx. 200,000 unique visitors every month
Approx. 10 million pages are visited every month
450-500 new registrations every week
Approx. 1-3% of all visitors create an account
If there was such a thing as an “average” user...

Male
If there was such a thing as an “average” user...

Male

In their 20’s and early 30’s
If there is such a thing as an “average” user...

Male
In their 20’s and early 30’s
With a university diploma or a student
If there was such a thing as an “average” user...

Male
In their 20’s and early 30’s
With a university diploma or a student
Interested technology (e.g. programming)
If there was such a thing as an “average” user...

Male
In their 20’s and early 30’s
With a university diploma or a student
Interested technology (e.g. programming)
The only Esperantist in the family
If there was such a thing as an “average” user...

Male
In their 20’s and early 30’s
With a university diploma or a student
Interested technology (e.g. programming)
The only Esperantist in the family
Likely from U.S. or Brazil
Language aficionado

Very interested languages

Interested in constructed languages
Esperantist: a person that doesn’t need Esperanto?

Not quite!
Pareto principle: 80% of all outcomes are produced by 20% of all causes.
... but active users are really active!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Duration</th>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>Pageviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-10 seconds</td>
<td>6,363,713</td>
<td>6,872,113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-30 seconds</td>
<td>706,175</td>
<td>1,975,356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-60 seconds</td>
<td>688,126</td>
<td>2,534,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-180 seconds</td>
<td>1,343,773</td>
<td>7,284,642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181-600 seconds</td>
<td>1,603,294</td>
<td>15,065,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601-1800 seconds</td>
<td>1,595,799</td>
<td>26,414,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801+ seconds</td>
<td>1,050,533</td>
<td>50,761,550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why people sign up for Lernu.net?

Exercises
Exams
Dictionaries
Maintaining one’s level of Esperanto
Forums
  ◦ Learning other perspectives
  ◦ Advice from more experienced Esperantists
Chatting / corresponding with other users
To learn a language that is egalitarian... but not because of idealism!
Why people learn Esperanto?

- Curiosity
- Internal Idea (philosophy)
- "Springboard to other language"
- Widen one’s horizons
- Simplicity and logic
- Travel
- Entertainment
- Limited success with other languages
Motives: as diverse as the community itself

Experimenting

Can an artificial language be as efficient as a natural language? Can I think in a language that is not my own?

Religion (e.g., Bahai)

“Esperanto helps me better understand my own language”

To feel different from the others

Other hobbies

Love, belonging, friendship
Motives: as diverse as the community itself

- Speaking a "Secret language"
- Reconnecting with family history
- "Ideal language to troll"
- "Understanding my non-English-speaking students"
- Reduce old age dementia
- Esthetics

AND MORE!
Motivation is not static

- Practical reasons
- Curiosity
- Simplicity
- Structure
- Idealism
- Family
Concluding thoughts

- Community
  - Diversity of the community
  - Sense of belonging among users
  - Volunteer recognition
  - Recruiting volunteers and donors (crowdsourcing)

- Complexity of motivation
  - Different motivation of other users
  - Motivation throughout the age
  - Motivation depending on where a person is in the Esperanto cycle

- Reactivation of users
  - Giving a reason to come back after they learned Esperanto
It's a community, but not in the sense “in group” and “out group”

“I think there is a Lernu community, but not in the sense of having a unifying vision or sense of strong relationships with an "in group" and "out group". It's a community in the way downtown is a community - a place to go where you know people will be; some you might know, others you might not. You can lurk, or argue, or pitch an idea, or tell a joke...it's one of the few Esperanto language sites with a large enough "community" to pretty much guarantee there will be something interesting and new each day, and if that's not enough there's a Tujmesaĝilo (chat) for immediate communication”

jaldrich
Contrast with a previous experience

“Anybody coming across Esperanto for the first time (and this tends to happen accidentally) can very quickly see that it isn't going to take long to become reasonably and usefully proficient. This often contrasts with a previous experience of learning a national language where even after many hours study it is still daunting to manage even a simple conversation. As to Lernu.net, this is probably the best resourced site for learning Esperanto on the Net and doesn't even require shelling out for a course book or a dictionary.”

Sudanglo
After only a few weeks of Esperanto I feel more comfortable than after years of studying Spanish.

“I had heard about Esperanto a long time ago but never gave it much thought since I had never heard of someone able to speak it. I started getting more interested when I met someone who could speak it and I asked plenty of questions about it but what really pushed me to actually start learning was from Benny Lewis who suggested that learning Esperanto as your first second-language could help when learning other languages. I’ve always been fascinated with language but have never really gotten anywhere when it comes to speaking/comprehension. I started learning Esperanto for this reason but the more I study the more hooked I get on Esperanto. After only a few weeks of studying I feel more comfortable than I ever was after years of studying Spanish.”

Deltasalmon
Glimpse into thinking differently

“The base of that motivation is curiosity. I may never actually get to set foot in countries where I could be in another language's environment. But when I thought about the ideas of language and how we use it to communicate and structure our thoughts, I very much wondered, "What is it like to think in a language other than English?" I am now capable of thinking in Esperanto some, although I do it best while reading Esperanto literature or listening to Esperanto podcasts. It's still a bit difficult for me to break out of thinking in English. But I continue to make progress and feel that Esperanto has given me a glimpse into thinking differently.”
“After a while I'd say I developed a bit of a sense of community with some of the other regulars. If there is a Lernu table at a congress it is the first place I'd go to. Lernu is my point of contact to the Esperanto community at the moment, since the Midwest US is quite devoid of Esperantists at this time.

[...] The "Esperanto people" are in some ways more linked, in a philosophical sense, to other Esperantists than Americans are to other Americans, but in other ways, such as cultural heritage/etc., we are more diverse. I like to think that, at a certain level of education/enlightenment we all end up sharing more in common than not, even when our popular cultures differ greatly.”

Kaŝperanto