

A photograph of a forest floor. In the foreground, there is a large, dark, moss-covered log or rock. To its right, a small, bright green plant with round leaves is growing out of a bed of moss. The background is a soft-focus forest scene with sunlight filtering through the trees, creating a bokeh effect.

'Rrtamì a Lì'fyaolo' leNa'vi

**A sociolinguistic study of the Na'vi
language community on Earth**

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Study Purpose

This research project attempts to understand who speakers of Na'vi are (including age, gender, nationality, educational background), why they are learning the language, how they have learned the language and their thoughts on the future of the language. Questions were based on a similar survey done with Klingon speakers (Wahlgren, 2004); however, Wahlgren sought to interview "fluent or advanced" speakers of Klingon and, as a result, he only received 17 responses to his internet survey.

Results of this survey will be presented at the American Anthropological Association's annual meeting in Montreal, Quebec, Canada in November of 2011. The title of that presentation is "*Fan or Fanatic?: Who are the speakers of Na'vi?*" In this presentation, I will discuss how fans, in general, are often pathologized as fanatics and I will use the results of this survey to illustrate how diverse the community of Na'vi speakers actually is and the many different reasons speakers have for learning the language.

Study Procedures

The Na'vi Research study was posted as a on-line survey on June 13th, 2011 and ran until July 31st, 2011. The survey was originally posted in English, but, on advice from community members and with their help, it was eventually translated into seven other languages, including: Na'vi, Russian, Ukrainian, German, French, Hungarian, and Italian. A complete list of translators is listed in the acknowledgements section of this document.

Also, due to an ethics board regulation, participants were originally required to be 19 years of age or older (the age of majority in British Columbia where my university is located). However, due to the high number of under-aged individuals who expressed an interest in filling in the survey, this age limit was eventually erased and a version of the survey specifically for children was created.

There were twenty questions in the survey and this document provides the results for questions 1 to 10. Questions 11 to 20, which mostly deal with speakers opinions about the development of Na'vi, will be analyzed at a later date and reported in a subsequent document.

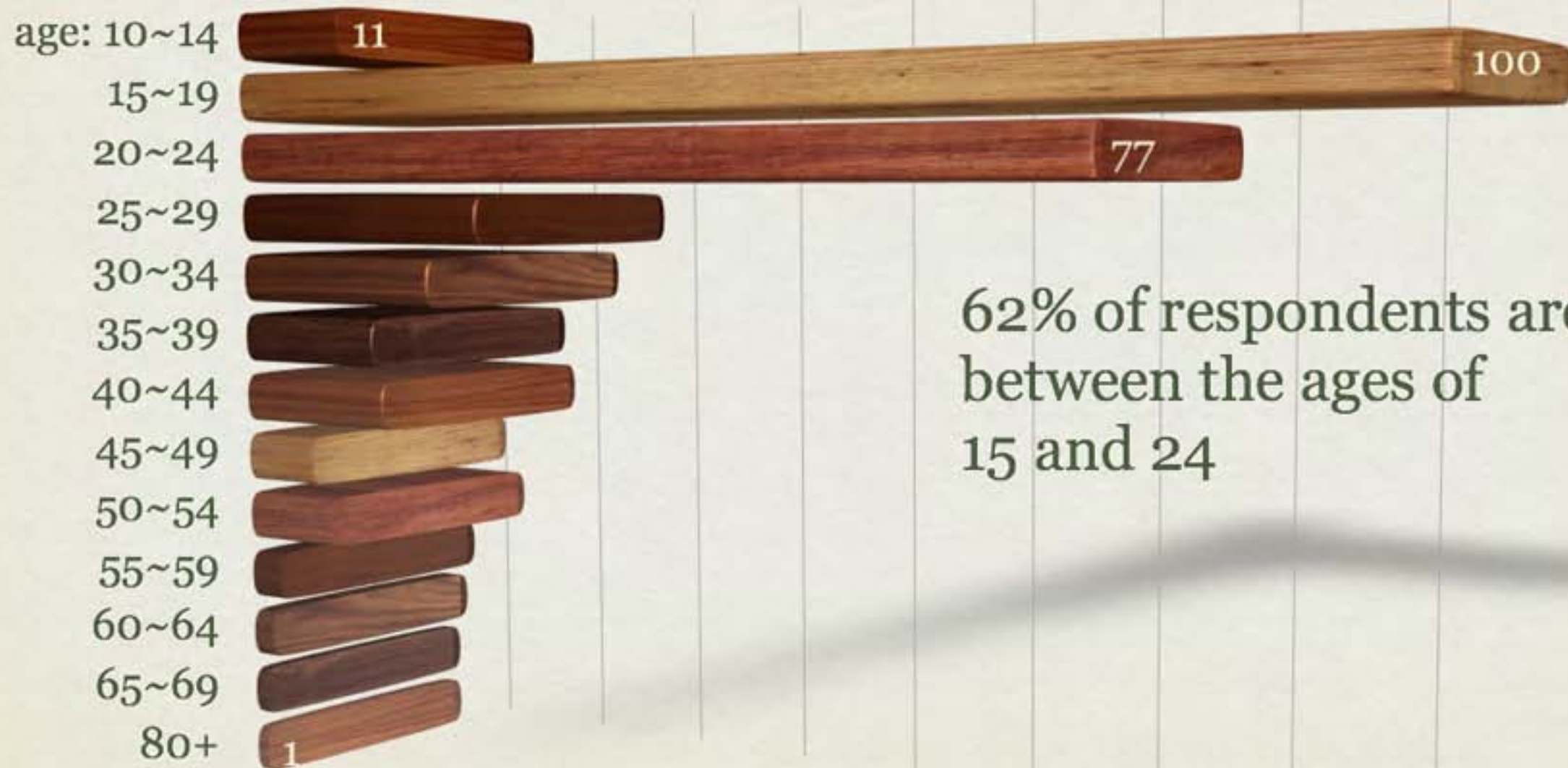
Total number of responses to the survey

293



* Three respondents completed the survey solely in Na'vi.

Age ranges of respondents in years



62% of respondents are
between the ages of
15 and 24

Gender breakdown

- Males
- Females
- Other

Generally speaking,
males outnumber
females 3 to 1



Level of education



Respondents by national identity

*Sì'eyng a ka
txampxì 'Rrtayä*

Responses from a broad
swath of the planet

38 countries
total



Countries with 10 or more respondents

16%



Countries with only one respondent

<i>Tsyameyka</i>	Jamaica
<i>Ayrlän</i>	Ireland
<i>Skotlän</i>	Scotland
<i>Kimru</i>	Wales
<i>Switsrrlän</i>	Switzerland
<i>Norge'</i>	Norway
<i>Ersterayhi</i>	Austria
<i>Hrrvatska</i>	Croatia
<i>Slovensko</i>	Slovakia
<i>Lietuva</i>	Lithuania
<i>Yisra'el</i>	ישראל
<i>Pakistan</i>	پاکستان
<i>Nepal</i>	नेपाल
<i>Intonesia</i>	Indonesia
<i>Maleysia</i>	Malaysia
<i>Taiwan</i>	台灣

16 total

42%



About those who responded in Na'vi

10

Gender

Fnetute



Close correlation to percentages for all respondents.

Respondent Ages

Zìsìt aPolpxay



Nationalities

Hllpxìltu



Expertise in linguistics

- Na'vi
- Hungarian
- Italian
- French
- Russian
- German
- English



Some expertise
fifnetxeleti ftolia



Familiarity with
other languages
smon li'fyao alahe



No expertise
ke ftolia nìno kaw'it

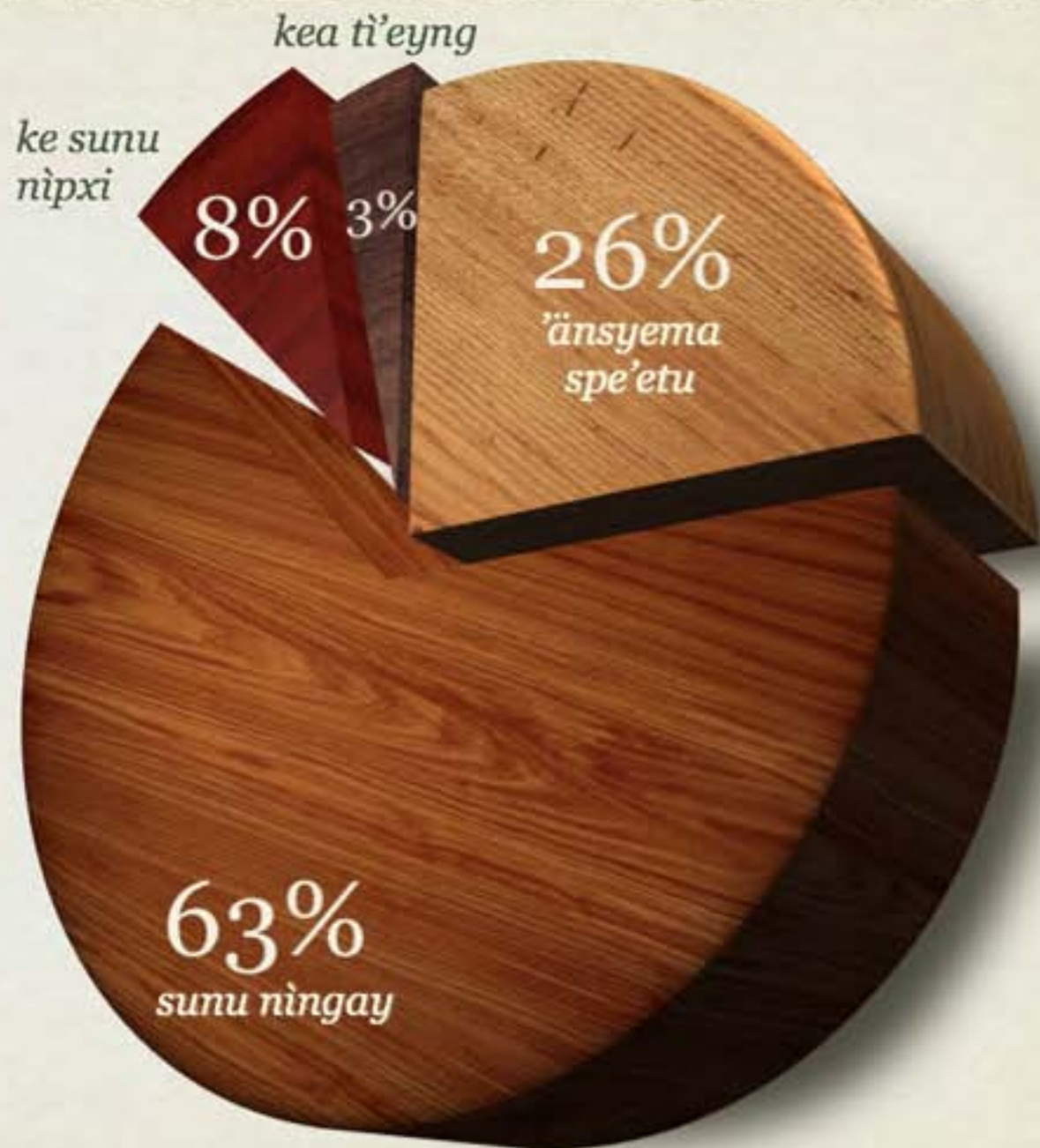
*As reported by all respondents in all languages.

Affinity for *Avatar*

- Huge Fan
- Fan
- Not a Fan
- No Answer

These results speak to respondents' self-reported relationship to the 2009 film *Avatar*. It shows whether they identify as a fan of the movie, or not; and if so, to what degree.

8% of overall language learners do not feel a strong attachment to the film itself. For the **Russian** language responses this ratio jumps to 35%.



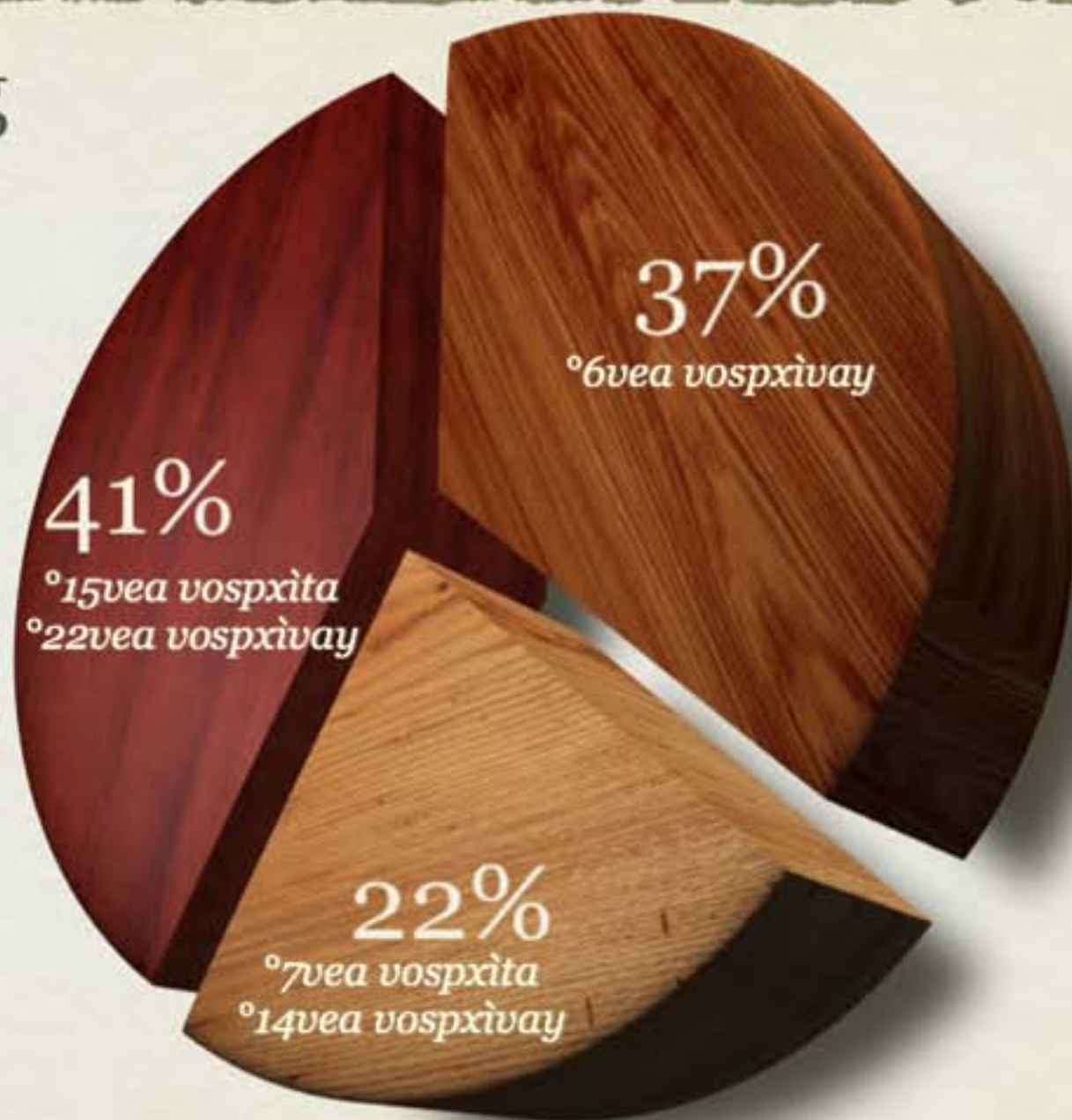
Length of time studying

- ≤6 months
- 7~12 mos.
- 13~18 mos.

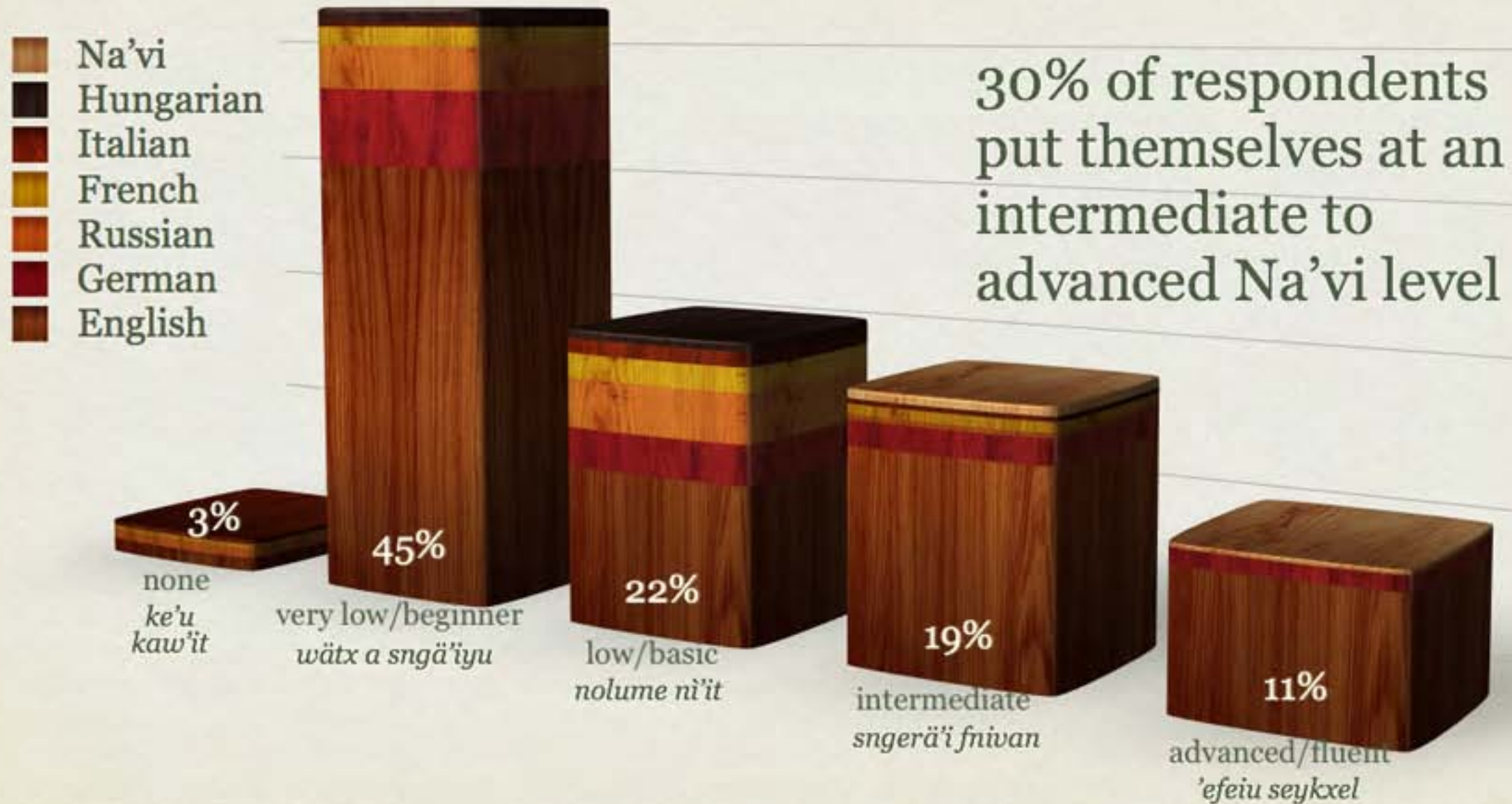
Points to consider for this data:

- 1) Some people rounded to a time-frame (*e.g.* about a year), while others gave exact dates.
- 2) Some mentioned when they started, but the time they dedicated made actual study time less (for a year, but hours studied about 2 months).

If this occurred, the time started was used as the classification basis.



Na'vi proficiency confidence by response group



How respondents learn

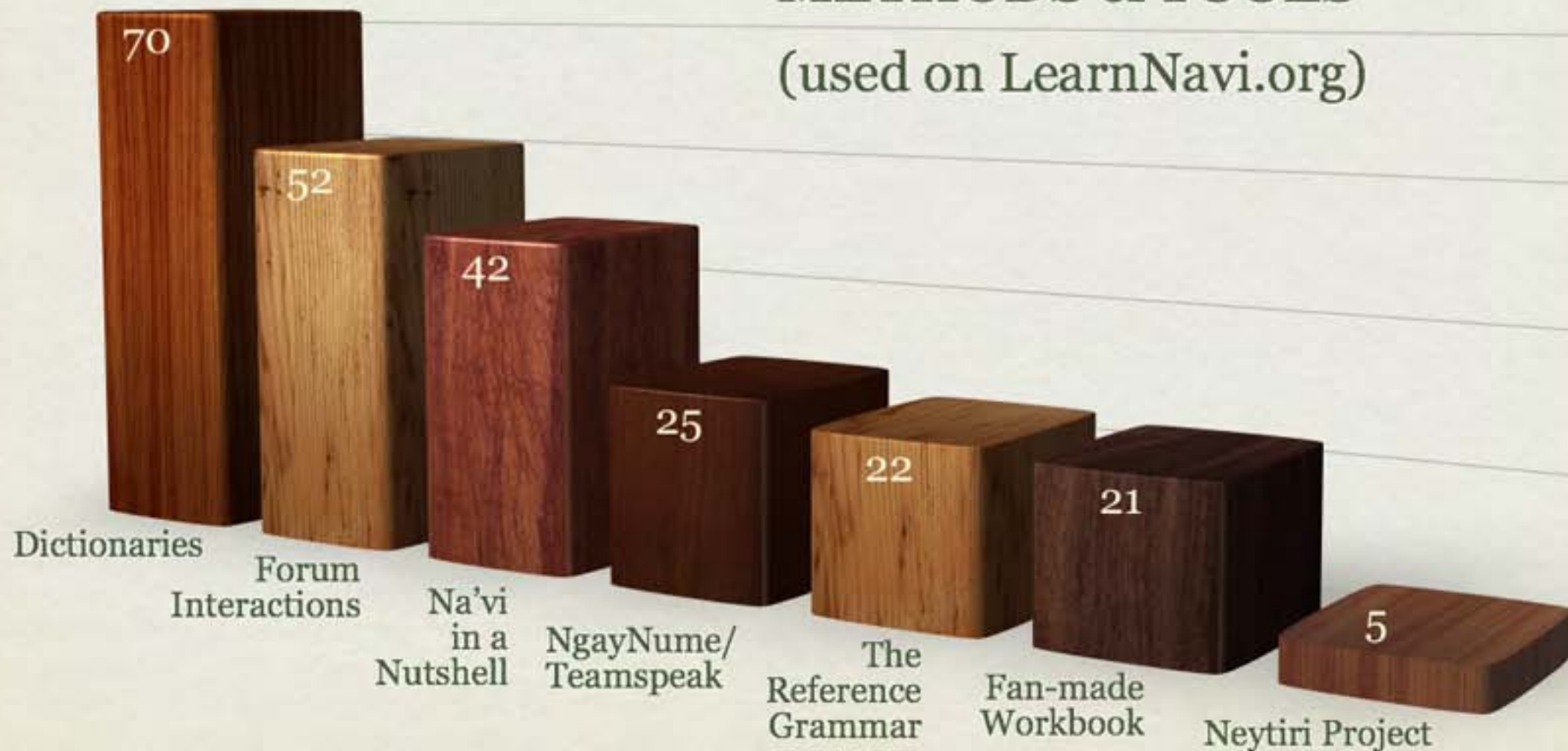


* Russian language site

How respondents learn

METHODS & TOOLS

(used on LearnNavi.org)



How respondents learn

OTHER RESOURCES, SITES, & METHODS

Spoken conversations/meet-ups/Skype	30
Avatar movie	21
Flash-cards	17
Written conversations (email/chat)	16
Self-directed study	16
Translating stories, songs, etc.	13
Audio recordings	11
Na'vi language app for iPhone/iPod	6
Writing original stories, songs, poems, etc.	4
<i>Avatar Survival Guide (ASG)</i>	3

Games	3
Avatar-nation.net	2
MaSempul petition and answer	2
Other blogs	1
TreeOfSouls.com	1
Pandorapedia.com	1
Fieldworks language explorer (from SIL)	1
Seed of language	1
Avatar-jamescameron.xooit.fr	1

Why respondents are studying



* (1) Previous exposure to/background in linguistics or language learning
(2) Interest in constructed languages ("con-langs")
(3) New exposure to languages and linguistics

Why respondents learn

RANKING OF ALL MOTIVATIONS

Fascination with the language (cool, awesome, interesting, love, like, beautiful, etc.)	118
Fan (because of the movie/world of Pandora)	93
Fun/Hobby	65
Because of how it sounds	40
Previous exposure to linguistics or language learning	36
Friendly Na'vi community	34
Because it's a "con-lang"	23
Learning Challenge	20
To learn about other languages and linguistics	18
Because it's "new"	14
In-group language (in family/group of friends)	9

To speak it	8
To better translate the movie	8
To show off	6
To write (songs, stories etc and be creative in the language)	5
It's nerdy/geeky	4
To escape reality	2
Because it's not tied to any nation, culture	2
To play role-paying games online	2
No reason (written out as such)	1
Blank	20

The “con-lang” factor

23 individuals called this out as a relevant factor in their motivation.

“I love learning languages -- learning to express myself using new patterns, new words, and new sounds is like gaining a whole new self. I've also developed a liking for building artificial languages as a hobby, and when I saw the first sketch of the language online, **I knew Na'vi would become very significant in the conlang (constructed language) community.** Plus, if I work hard, I can become one of the ‘experts’ in the language. I already know that could never happen for me with any Earth language!”

“I was excited to learn it was a proper conlang, and studying it revealed to me a lot of linguistics that made me better understand the grammar and construction of languages I already spoke.”



“I love to learn new languages, and I think Na'vi sounds beautiful when spoken. **I've created my own language from scratch, too, so I have a particular fondness for artificially created languages.**”

“I toyed with learning Quenya and Sindarin and tried out Esperanto, but Na'vi is the only conlang that intrigued me enough to stay with it.”

APPENDICES

- Head counts on responses by all nationalities
- Noteworthy quotes on motivations
- Acknowledgements/*Irayo*
- References

Head counts on responses by all nationalities (38 countries total)

American	90	Chinese	3	Israeli	1
German	34	New Zealander	3	Jamaican	1
Russian	24	Polish	3	Lithuanian	1
French	16	Belarusian	2	Malaysian	1
English/British	15	Belgian	2	Nepalese	1
Italian	11	Danish	2	Norwegian	1
Hungarian	8	Dutch	2	Pakistani	1
Australian	7	Finnish	2	Scottish	1
Canadian	7	South African	2	Slovakian	1
Swedish	5	Austrian	1	Swiss	1
Czech	4	Croatian	1	Taiwanese	1
Ukrainian	4	Indonesian	1	Welsh	1
Brazilian	3	Irish	1	Other (i.e. ethnicity)	22

Noteworthy quotes (1)

- *"Following my heart. It seems weird if I couldn't speak Na'vi."*
- *"I was deeply impressed by the movie. I wanted to do something that would bring me nearer to Pandora. When I 'found' the language, I started learning it, the community was great and I found a lot of new friends with whom I feel connected, even though I never saw most of them in person. So, I started learning because of being a fan and am still learning because the community keeps me at it. Also the language sounds ingenious and it's not that difficult, really, so that you get results quickly ;) :)"*
- *"I don't learn the language just because it's fun to talk with others in it but also to keep the connection to the movie and the Na'vi - with this language you feel a bit closer to Pandora. Other than that the LearnNa'vi-community is just incredible. In comparison with other communities, I noticed most of all that they treat each other much more tolerant here."*
- *"To flee from reality."*
- *"First of all I love the movie very much so it's naturally interesting for me to learn the language of that beautiful world. Also, the language has some beautiful concepts in it. Also, the grammar is quite weird sometimes and this makes the language challenging and interesting. The words have a nice sound. In addition, the people in the forum are supportive and fun to talk with and it helps you learn and want to keep learning."*

Noteworthy quotes (2)

- *"For me, Na'vi is more than just a cool (or geeky to some) thing to learn; It's a challenge. Unlike other languages you can't roll up to Night school or a Community College and say "teach me Na'vi." You've got to think for your self. It's a challenge and also it's fun to hiss and say 'Tawtute' at people."*
- *"Even though I'm not a fan of the movie, I like the sound of the language and it is something unique to work on."*
- *"I'd say I study it first because it sounds great and novel. Secondly because it functions as almost a link (a bond? Hah) between our world and Cameron's creation. Third, it is a great tool to have when you don't want someone to particularly know what you're saying ;)"*
- *"Because I love languages, and studying them is like a hobby for me. I also found so many friends and people with similar interests on the learnnavi-forums, and it was that community that made me stay and truly learn this language."*
- *"As a way of furthering my knowledge of the Avatar universe as a fan, a way of showing my support for the ideologies presented in the film by the Na'vi."*

Noteworthy quotes (3)

- *"It is fun, and I hope to use it to speak with my friends with nobody eavesdropping!"*
- *"Because it's interesting, sounds beautiful, and presents a fun challenge. I can learn at my own pace, and meet great people along the way."*
- *"Why not? I study things that interest me."*
- *"Because I'm an Avatar fan."*
- *"Insight into multiple real world languages."*
- *"First: I love Avatar and Na'vi people. Second: I love LearnNavi community. And I already learned a lot and don't see reasons to stop."*
- *"Learning Na'vi has connected me with an online community that I would have otherwise not become involved in. Also, I somewhat enjoy being "that girl who speaks an alien language." Learning Na'vi has given me a base for learning other languages and for understanding how language works. As an English Literature major, I believe that understanding how language works is essential to communicating efficiently."*

Noteworthy quotes (4)

- *"Because it's nerdy! I've always had a layman's interest in linguistics because my good friend is getting his Ph.D. in linguistics now, and he fills my ear with weird tidbits about different languages.... My linguistics friend is passionate about studying endangered languages and, among other things, bolstering such languages in their communities, so I became interested in whether a constructed language like Na'vi could take off. This causes some strange comparisons—why should random people all over the world spend time and energy learning a made-up language, instead of any number of endangered real-life languages? Part of the reason, for me, is that I don't really have a 'license' to learn any real-life languages unless I were adopted by the people that speak them, or something. But there are no reservations about Na'vi—anybody can pick it up. And it's been a truly world-wide community! At a summer meetup in California last year, we had people fly in from Sweden, Germany, and France... as well as from all corners of the US! Maine, Wisconsin, Florida, Texas... It's fun to be part of this really weird small community and talk to people I would never have met otherwise."*
- *"I fell in love with Avatar and everything about it. When I found out that there was a whole language that went with it, I said to myself 'I HAVE to learn this!' Studying Na'vi has been a long and difficult path, but the friends that I've made along the way have made it all worth-while. I consider them my extended family."*
- *"Dr. Frommer in his GRID 2010 speech said the following: 'We can't go to Pandora, even though many many people would like to. But we can maintain a connection with Pandora through the language and for many people, speaking the language is a way to maintain that connection.' This was pretty much my initial reason for studying Na'vi. I fell in love with Pandora and the Na'vi people and this was a way to stay connected. During this past year, while I still strongly feel that way, the LN community itself has become important to me. I also love the way the language itself is continuing to grow with the support and involvement of Dr. Frommer and LN members. And while it is at times somewhat perplexing (to me!) to learn, the Na'vi language itself is beautiful."*

Ayngengaru suyì irayo

Sincere thanks to all of the Na'vi speakers who filled in the survey, but especially *Britton Watkins* (Prrton) for help with graphic design (including the first photo in this report), results analysis and Na'vi language translation; *Taras Gaidukov* (Kemaweyan) for help with Russian, Ukranian and Na'vi translation; *Stefan G. Müller* (Plumps) for help with German translation; *Marianne Larose* (Ftxavanga Txe'lan) for help with French translation; *Andrea Petrovits* (P.A.'li Makto) for help with Hungarian translation; and *Biso Riccio Federico* (Ryceve Vrrtep'itan) for help with Italian translation.

I would also like to say **irayo** to *Paul Frommer*, the creator of Na'vi, for his support of the research.

And, finally, **irayo** to the students in my Fall 2010 Pidgins, Creoles, and Created Languages class at the University of British Columbia's Okanagan Campus (*Laura, Elizabeth, Aimee, Rebecca, Rielle, Cari* and *Josie*) for their role in inspiring me to conduct this research.

If you are interested in learning Na'vi visit: [**www.learnnavi.org**](http://www.learnnavi.org)

References:

Wahlgren, Yens (2004). Klingon as Linguistic Capital: A Sociologic Study of Nineteen Advanced Klingonists. Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis. Department of Sociology. Lund, Sweden: Lund University, accessed at: www.angelfire.com/trek/yensw/PDF/thesis.pdf