INDUSTRY PANEL:
WHAT CAN LINGUISTS BRING TO AI AND NLP WORK?

THURSDAY 28 JULY

15:30 – 16:45 (BST)

ICAME43
ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY
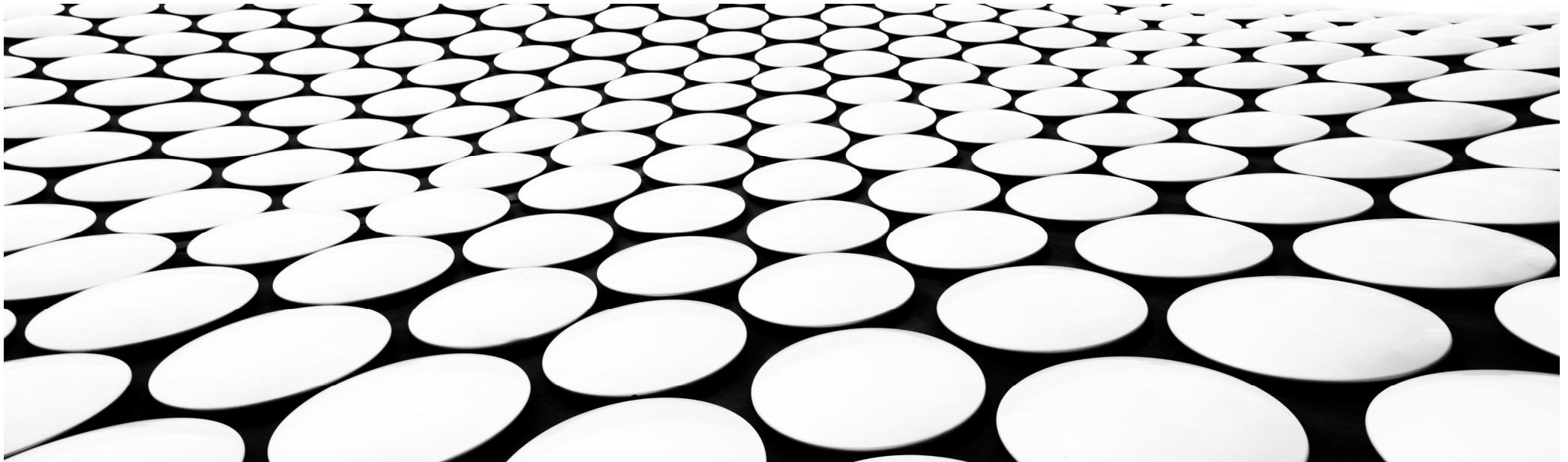
MAIN IDEA

- What linguists can bring to work/products in tech companies?

- Why linguists should be interested in tech companies!

  - Especially if linguists do not have a strong quantitative/NLP/programming background

  - What transferable skills acquired in linguistics research could be useful for these careers.

TIMELINE

- 15:30 – 15:35 General Introduction (Martin Schweinberger)

- 15:35 – 15:50 Speakers introduce themselves (app. 3 mins each)

- 15:50 – 16:10 Questions to the panel

- 16:10 – 16:40 Questions from the floor

- 16:40 – 16:45 Closing and outro

SPEAKERS

- Tamara Polajnar - SenseStreet Chief Science (on)

- Christos Christodoulopoulos - Senior Research Scientist at Amazon (Alexa) (on)

- Hadas Kotek - Apple Hadas Kotek (hkotek.com) Senior NL annotation lead (off)

- Ekaterina Kochmar - Lecturer at Bath University and founder and Chief Science Officer at Home (korbit.ai) (off)

- Sandy Ritchie - Google Research (off)

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Tamara Polajnar

CHIEF SCIENCE OFFICER

BSc Computer Science
University of Northern British Columbia

MSc NLP and Cognitive Science
University of Edinburgh

PhD Bioinformatics
University of Glasgow

Researching computational representations of semantics at University of Sheffield, NUI Galway, University of Cambridge, Royal Society of Chemistry

Sense Street

From unstructured market conversations to a fine-grained understanding of liquidity in capital markets.

Our natural language models understand the complex jargon used in capital markets enabling extraction of information from across the life cycle of a trade.

SCIENCE TEAM

2 LINGUISTS (3 more starting soon)

4 ML SCIENTISTS (1 more starting soon)

Christos Christodoulopoulos

BSc Digital Systems & Technology Education

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

MSc Artificial Intelligence

PhD Computational Linguistics

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

Postdoc Cognitive Computation Group

Research Scientist Alexa Knowledge Extraction & Understanding

alexa

2002 - 2006

2007 - 2008

2009

2010 - 2013

2013 - 2016

now

HADAS KOTEK

- Education: PhD in Linguistics (MIT, 2014)
    - Interests in formal syntax and semantics + experimental approaches
    - Basic coding in R, statistics, data visualization, experiment design

- Academic employment: McGill, NYU, Yale (2014-2019)

- Alt-Ac employment: Apple – Siri and Language Technologies, Natural Language, Data Science team (2019–):
    - Role involves (a) data science (b) project management (c) annotation (guidelines, training, etc) (d) knowledge engineering (aka ontology)
    - Currently also a Research Affiliate with MIT Linguistics (not salaried)

- Other areas of engagement
    - Chair of LSA COGEL, the committee on gender equity in linguistics
    - Mentoring (see PUMP initiative)
    - "how-to-industry" for linguists full semester workshop at MIT

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/hadas-kotek-phd/
Personal website: https://hkotek.com/
Twitter: @HadasKotek

EKATERINA KOCHMAR: SHORT BIO

- Co-founder of **Korbit Technologies,** building an AI-powered dialogue-based ITS

- Lecturer at the **University of Bath,** focusing on applications of NLP, ML, and AI in Education

- Previously, postdoc at the **University of Cambridge,** building Read & Improve – a readability platform for non-native readers

Sandy Ritchie
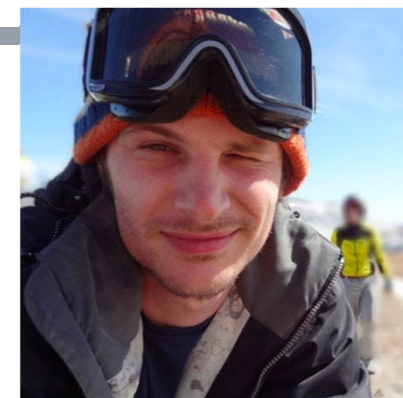
- Background
  - PhD in Linguistics @ SOAS (2016)
  - Thesis and publications on possessive constructions in Chimane (Bolivia)
  - Fieldwork with the Chimane community (2012-14)

- Linguist in the Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) team at Google since 2018
  - Developing end-to-end ASR systems for currently unsupported languages
  - Advising on data collection methodologies and evaluating data sets
  - Providing linguistic expertise on various areas including language grouping

- Other areas of interest
  - Outreach and community engagement work
  - Documentation of open source linguistic resources and data
  - Language maps

QUESTIONS

- Why should tech companies be interested in hiring linguists?

- Why should linguists be interested in joining tech companies?

- What can linguists add to tech companies and their products?

- How important are methodological (computational or quantitative) skills and how important are more qualitative, transferable, and language focused skills?

EVER MORE QUESTIONS

- Can you give examples of where your companies have hired linguists?

- Are you currently looking for linguists?

- How different is working in companies compared to working in academia? What are your experiences and what do others that have made the switch say?

- How do you think the filed will develop?

- What would tech companies like universities to do? Stronger focus on skills?

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THANK YOU

TO THE SPEAKERS

TO THE AUDIENCE

TO THE ORGANIZERS

TO THE SPONSORS