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all right so the goal of the interview is like to figure out figure out your phd path actually what kind of things you have decided throughout your your phd depending on how far you are on your phd3 so that's like one of the questions first question i will ask you like the basic information about you what share you in what kind of research focus you have okay so let's start first things first so yeah so research field what is the what is the focus of your phd thesis so because i'm in my first year of the phd right now so i don't have like i'm open to ideas right now because as i explore different fields i'm gonna decide on my thesis hopefully by the start of the next year the second year but right now i'm working on nlp specifically relation extraction from large corpora so what what did you do before you start your phd so i have transitioned from the industry to academia right so in 2015 i graduated with my bachelors in computer science and engineering and soon after i worked for a year at sap after that i went on to do my masters and specialized in machine learning and then after that i went on to work for red bull as their data scientist working for the international brand marketing team so it was more business oriented data decision making than like core artificial intelligence and so the start of this year 2019 i came to madrid i was the lead data scientist for startup and and i mean eight nine months after that i started my phd here right and do you have any kind of experience in research before no you know so my entire work experience has been a little less than three years so i don't have much research experience okay so no publications of such such something not as sad you know okay so actually when it comes to deciding on the thesis topic you need to have like a proposal right and how far are you in your proposal design or do does your supervisor suggest you with anything right now i don't i actually don't even have a clue how to begin to write the proposal or anything so what i'm doing right now is working on a specific field like extracting extracting relations some specific relations from text and then what i'm going and what i'm trying to do is do based on this experimentation write a paper and in that process i learn the technicalities and what you the kind of skills that you need in order to write a good paper like whether it's accepted or not but that will be my first step right now right so what is that it wasn't recommended to you by your supervisor

she or he no it's he i mean oscar is my supervisor and mariano who's in the lab he's my he's my tutor the one who okay guys that's what final sure i think oscar is really a carefree guy right so yeah he's he's nice i mean he's the one who actually decides the the like the path i'm going to follow but then in the end he is the one who mostly interacts with my tutor instead of me directly i mean we do have talks but it's mostly once a month yeah but it's mostly them interacting each other about my progress right so the more closer interactions is actually through through your tutor yes right so what kind of things do you talk to each other about with with your with mariano so so he was the one who first gave me some paper like when you started out on my phd journey it's not it's been like around three months now so when i started out he just gave me some papers to get acquainted with the field that i would be working on okay so initially the papers then trying to understand the academic literature then trying to actually try to understand and implement them because it's not just about the concepts it's about the field of linguistic it's about the field of computer science it's about the field of math like mathematics applied to the those linguists and computer science different kinds of algorithms so then there was this

implementation phase and now finally when i've got that down so it's mostly he guides me about what kind of data sets i should use what kind of metrics i should use and what is the the research mentality that i should have and i'm pursuing a certain experimentation so that in the end the results that i would have would be something which i can explain to the community at large the academic community so yeah i think i think that that one really helps you a lot in in terms of you know guiding you through examples and things you have to go through and kind of touch on so so we have the the feeling of which direction you should you should you take for example or yeah it's also based based on your preferences as well so you you want to do kind of the deep stuff on on natural language processing right yeah so um

marino

spotlight to you yes yeah it's it's actually because it has the energy in it right yeah it does i mean because part of my work was to detect some noun pairs and i was using first i was using wordnet for it but then he said that you know if we have something which is already there right i suppose you're also familiar with things like you know the was that gate number gate because i i even though i'm working in the ontology engineering group i'm i'm really not that aware of what anthology is in knowledge group that's one that isn't about unknown words it's it's a program that where you can create a corpus of of terms and and then annotate them with you know part part of speech parts of speech

yeah so i think i think you you will get into the point when you need things like that okay i i had a subject where we had to use this these two and it was really really cool yeah but it was not only for english which is a shame but that's the start okay so um

i'm very interested in like you know the the reason for for you to decide to or to opt to into your doing your phd so what did you even choose to begin with so so i've got like i had solid tv like two years experience working in a corporate and and then i had worked for startups as well but in the end something that i realized it took a while but i realized that it's just when you're working for a big corporate and you even when you're working for a startup then the things that you do are basically the same day in day out because once i mean there is a learning curve in the beginning once you learn that though i mean for a year or maybe two years you're doing the same thing every day just on different like the use cases are different but then in the end what you're doing is basically the same so it was becoming it was rather mundane very boring very monotonous and then i mean when i started a phd one of the main things that i had in mind was that because it would take some time to get to the state of the art and then researching on that even advancing on that is something which is new like you do something new each and every day and that is what actually inspired me to do the phd yeah yeah so it's the same thing for me you know like i'm at the corridor i'm very curious about anything and curiosity is like one of the the major you know motors yeah motivations for me to do what i do i'm working on mysteries and and you know crimes and detectives you know things like that so i you know like so if if now right now i i can't i'm not doing if i'm i'm not now i'm not doing my phd then i can't imagine what what else what i would do i would like sit on chair and like mumble on some popcorn or something yeah it's not it's not a lab that i wanted so curiosity plays a big role yeah in in my case

for deciding to to to do the phd even though at first i didn't know what a phd is what what is takes to to do a phd or so so now so yeah so for me it's like kind of an explorery process for me so i i explore i keep seeing new and new things along the way yeah it's not like i have a plan a plan b plan c or and the steps decided what i should do in sequence but no i i like to keep exploring until i until i die basically yeah so there's a common thing between us so i'm very glad but when i when i when i talk to many other people they they say things like you know i don't know if for for fun but they say like they they decided to do a phd because they wanted to deal to delay their life decisions because they didn't know what to do oh okay no things like that yeah so yeah for me it's but we or i think we all have a common this definition for a phd which like it has to produce new knowledge right is the the basic at the basic level yeah so but no did you have any anyone that encouraged you to to go for it or is it i think just not in the field like i've always been working on aia and even trying to self-learn but then in the end when you look at the innovations and the res innovation space you gotta have happening with because because i used to read a lot of science fiction also like i read a lot and so one thing once i came across a very good article about elon musk in which he said that whatever he does is basically inspired by isaac asimov the one who wrote some science fiction novels and and then it struck me because if someone of that stature can you know he can implement all of that based on what he studied read as a kid and then fantasized about them like why can't all of us so like if it is something if it's the ultimate goal of seeing all of these like for example you've got you've got you know for me it's i just used to think that the pinnacle of everything pinnacle of everything that man is doing right now like even advancements in artificial intelligence computer vision nlp i mean the pinnacle of everything is robotics in the end because that is something which aggregates everything into one single system so it's just for me trying to get to the bottom of that to be able to be part of a team which actually develops something like that in the future i need skills that go beyond normal software engineering and just knowing or using the products that already exist right and then that is what inspired me and the only thing that i had when i wanted to transition into this was that i thought maybe because i was i was earning i was financially independent but i thought that like if if some if by any chance if i found myself floundering because i mean the stipend's not that much to be honest so then what would i do then because then would it change my mind would it like make me feel that i had probably made the wrong decision then but i think it was just my parents also they my dad told me that you know it's it's an honor to be doing research in a field and you'd be the first like person to do a phd in our family so like you have our support and in case you find yourself following then just let us know and we'll help you so that was something which gave me the yeah i mean i mean i totally agree like research is not for everybody but everybody has the capacity to to do research but it's not for everybody because the circumstances you know like are not always the same but to be able to

do this to to to pursue a phd life it is really a privilege and each and every one of us i think we should honor it like you said you know so yeah but it is actually the basis of you have a vision and you want to achieve that yeah however crazy that vision is it doesn't matter even even it's like ethereal even it's outwardly yeah yeah i think it is really what what pushes forward us species we have to do research to be able to continue

okay

so most of the things for you were the things that motivated you the things that inspired you were coming from external sources right is there is anyone close to you that support you in in this in this course in in this journey i mean my family of course okay and then i've got i have my friend one of my best friends lives with me right now in madrid he's working for a start up so like he also supports me a lot like he's like he should if you're doing something and if you want to do that then nothing else should matter it shouldn't be a constraint right and does he have the same mental enemy mental frame of mind i mean he does he's not really an academic person but then he's more very business oriented he has because he's there he's a marketing he does marketing so i mean even though he does not understand my motivations to go into research but i think he supports me nonetheless because he thinks that is what i want yeah you see that's that's why i wanted to do this because i want to uncover the life of us of phd students for other people to understand us right because not only your friend but a lot of other people who have a friend that is pursuing a phd they're like what the hell why why are you doing that right they can't see what what are the things that we deal with and what keep keep us motivated yeah yeah so i wanted to gather some knowledge on this stuff and you know i'm going to follow this project of yours really closely so like if you can let you know how i can follow it how i can check what's the progress yeah it still has a lot of things to be done but i hope that soon enough i will have something that can i can show people like some kind of mock-up stories you know to to be able to at least show the use cases of the of the output okay so i have some several questions like but you have already answered like well the most important people you work with which is obviously your supervisor and your tutor

so do you have any other academic activities beside your research for from from from the beginning until now do you have to like do assistance in teaching no not right now i mean i think it'll come on in the like later during the next year but i thought not this year not right now so yeah devoting 100 of your energy to come up with you know like the proposal yeah yeah okay that's good in in my case i had had this topic uh

figured out even before i started my phd because this is actually the incentive of my supervisor he had some some like a version of this figured out and and marked out and he just gave it to me and i i took it and i worked out more even more and it has evolved into a form that you heard today i didn't explain it very well but i think you got it you didn't get into the details but i got the gist of it yeah okay what do you think are the perks and the pains of in doing a phd what is what is what it what is in it for you and what is in it that makes you unhappy so i think the perks for me would be that i mean i get to do something which i actually like doing rather than something which would get me my daily bread you know like something with which i can earn some skill that i can sell so in a way that is good because i mean i'm doing i'm doing what i want to work on i am working on the different kinds of projects learning different things and i mean pains would be that i mean coming from transitioning from industry of course the first pain which comes to the mind is of course the financial stability but but over time i think you get used to that because you understand that your trade it's a trade-off basically because you're doing what you want to do for and you're losing out on yeah so have you seen this this axis of

finance financial stability and flexibility right i mean this is like this the defined financial access is the y axis and then the flexibility or freedom i mean for for for the job for for finance sector for engineering and for research right so finance engineering and research so it's like it's basically the metrics like this yeah so so when you have a finance job in the bank or insurance or something like that yeah or you have really high income like finance but but you you don't have any flexibility or you don't have any freedom because you you are talk to or you what you are you have to do yeah you you cannot like you have to follow all these rules and policies like you you have an nhs but but instead of that you have a lot of money but on the other hand when in research yeah the the the the pay the the finance is low but you have the freedom you have the what's called fail-safe environment that you can do mistakes and fail and try again and fail try again and nobody will fire you right part of the process process yeah so so it's a fail-safe environment to me research and then of course in the middle is the engineering it's like you can you can experiment but you can explain when intuitive to the extent you fail every time you need to deliver something right yeah it's in the middle so what would you say did you transfer from engineering to to that research right or something i would say right yeah yeah so basically something similar that i had but for me it was like everything happened at once you know like i i finished finished my master i had my startup i went to went to work and then i als also started my phd so it was like oh like too too much too much at once you're juggling your way there yeah

anyway like have you experienced things like yeah i think it's still still too early for you to to have the those kind of negative things that will come to you but i think it's good for to prepare for it because based on the experience of the people who were before you it's a real painful journey i like to call it an odyssey you know obviously the the thanks for the heads up though

that's like it okay last two questions uh

actually the this question you have already answered so we will skip to the last question no do you consider joinery after maybe when you start your next semester maybe you will start writing down your thoughts experiences you that you would would get i think it's really has a lot of benefits in in journaling like when when i did some literature review on phd students and how they live their lives then i find a lot of kind of blogs on the internet that that where they just put their you know like thought of the day you know today i i i met this peop this person is really helpful something like that but i think wouldn't it be a problem for like people who are not so comfortable with like sharing because i'm a very private person so like sharing any kind of information yeah but i mean it's like a personal thing yeah yeah but actually you do not have like you can filter your your thoughts on what you want to put out and what you don't want to put out yeah but in in general these things this generally thing journaling thing helps with well your well-being of course yeah but because you you can you can like dump dump the the the negative thoughts get it get it all out and then be done with it right so and sometimes it really helps in terms of self-reflection as well so i've seen a lot of people talk about that and i mean phd students that did this and they really really recommend i recommend that people should benefit from from this technique of when the stress level is right maybe i'll give it a try yeah i think you should give it a try sometimes and if you you do just let me know i'll be more than

happy to follow sure sure okay so i think i think that's it thanks for thanks for being here thank
you awesome thanks a lot thanks man