If you exclude application/, then everything under it will always be excluded (even if some later negative exclusion pattern (“unignore”) might match something under application/).

To do what you want, you have to “unignore” every parent directory of anything that you want to “unignore”. Usually you end up writing rules for this situation in pairs: ignore everything in a directory, but not some certain subdirectory.

# you can skip this first one if it is not already excluded by prior patterns

!application/

application/\*

!application/language/

application/language/\*

!application/language/gr/

****Note****  
The trailing /\* is significant:

* The pattern dir/ excludes a directory named dir and (implicitly) everything under it.  
  With dir/, Git will never look at anything under dir, and thus will never apply any of the “un-exclude” patterns to anything under dir.
* The pattern dir/\* says nothing about dir itself; it just excludes everything under dir. With dir/\*, Git will process the direct contents of dir, giving other patterns a chance to “un-exclude” some bit of the content (!dir/sub/).

<https://stackoverflow.com/questions/5533050/gitignore-exclude-folder-but-include-specific-subfolder>