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Google DeepMind UX Research recruitment team

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Dear hiring team manager,

I am a passionate Qualitative Researcher with +8 years of experience owning qualitative research projects end-to-end in formal, computational linguistics. My research is primarily focused on the psychology of language and how language works in the mind—I work within graph theory to explain mathematical structures in languages. I am deeply interested in human psychology and incredibly excited by user research and the opportunity to understand human psychology through the lens of technology and AI. I can confidently say that I am an excellent fit for this role for many reasons, but here I outline how the research methodologies I use in linguistics translate elegantly to UX research.

Firstly, in-depth, 1:1 interviews are my number #1 source of data collection. I work directly with native speakers of Guarani to collect data about its grammatical structures. Later on, I develop formal, mathematical analyses of the computations which underlie these linguistic structures in the mind. The 1:1 interview is the cornerstone of linguistic fieldwork: they allow the linguist to take a deep dive into the language's grammar. In UX research, 1:1 and in-depth interviews allow the researcher to gain a more specific, targeted understanding of user experience. In both ling and UX, interviews are best suited for tasks or problems that do not require large numbers of responses/data.

Secondly, surveys are also incredibly useful in linguistic fieldwork. Surveys can be used to determine if a pattern is robust and holds across many speakers. They also allow the linguist to collect more quantitative results than interviews. Surveys also allow for flexibility on the speaker/user end because they don't need to schedule a time to meet, they can fill it out on their own time. In UX research, surveys serve the same purpose: they're used for specific tasks for which an interview may not be necessary or to determine whether a particular user behavior holds across a wide range of users.

Finally, linguistics also uses contextual inquiries. Storytelling and observational fieldwork involve asking open-ended questions to speakers and documenting how they use language in a context. Storyboarding asks speakers to tell a story using a sequence of images provided to them and observational fieldwork involves recording a natural conversation between two people. These contexts are the most open-ended and are used primarily for discovery. These methodologies often lead to amazing discoveries and realizations about the language which would have been impossible (or unfeasible) through interview or survey. The same holds for UX research: contextual inquiries provide unique insights into user experience and behavior that often cannot be uncovered through interview/survey.

In conclusion, I hope to have highlighted not only how my experiences as a linguist have shaped and improved my research skills, but how I think about research and approach research tasks. While I have extensive experience with these methodologies, I am eager to improve my skills and expand them as a UX Researcher at Google DeepMind. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Hunter Johnson