Episode #3: Getting Your First Job Beyond Academia (LCL Audio)

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Laurel Sutton: Hello, and welcome to another Linguistics Careercast, the podcast devoted to exploring careers for linguists outside academia. I'm your host, Laurel Sutton. This episode is an audio version of a virtual panel held at the Linguistics Career Launch in the summer of 2021. The moderator is Emily Pace. The title of the panel is Getting Your First Job Beyond Academia. In this discussion, we’ll talk with linguists who are in their first career role after graduating. We’ll talk about the transition from school to work, what they wish they’d known while job searching, and what it’s been like to job search during the pandemic. There are three panelists: Sophia Chan from ETS Canada, Mark Norris from Grammarly, and Tripp Maloney from inVibe Labs. Links to the presenters’ LinkedIn profiles are in the show notes. Topics we’ll cover in this panel will be analytic linguistics, job titles, job search, dealing with rejection, remote work, networking, negotiations, and transition to industry. Apologies for some of the bad audio quality from this; it was taken from a Zoom recording. And reminder: this is a 90-minute panel, so it’s a bit longer than our normal episodes. And now, here’s the panel.

Emily Pace: Welcome, everyone, to our panel about first jobs beyond academia. I'm Emily Pace. I'm the principal linguist with a company called Expert System USA, and I'm one of the LCL organizers. I will be the moderator for today, as well. So, we are going to be talking about getting that first job after you get your degree in linguistics. This is always a very popular question that students have because it feels like there can be so much more that goes into that first job search. We have three wonderful panelists with us today. We have Mark Norris from Grammarly. We have Sophia Chan from ETS Canada, and we have Tripp Maloney from inVibe Labs. All right, so Mark, would you mind starting off and introducing yourself?

Mark Norris: Sure. Hi, everyone. Like Emily said, I am an analytical — well, she said I'm at Grammarly. I'm an analytical linguist. That's my job title. I’ve actually only been there now for about three and a half months, and I previously was on a contract at Amazon with the job title “Language Data Engineer.” And I did all of this after leaving an academic career after teaching at OU for five years.

Emily Pace: Thanks, Mark. Sophia, would you like to introduce yourself?

Sophia Chan: Hi, everyone. My name is Sophia, and I am at ETS Canada, working as an assistant research engineer. This is my first job ever, actually. I started around seven months ago. Yeah, first full-time thing, job searching during the pandemic, of course, so I'm super excited to be here.

Emily Pace: Thank you so much, Sophia. And Tripp.

Tripp Maloney: Hey, everybody. I'm Tripp Maloney, I am a senior analyst at inVibe Labs. I was fortunate enough to be able to evade the pandemic job search. I started in September 2019. This was also my first job after school, after graduating with a M.A. in Language and Communication from Georgetown. And I've just kind of been holding that down for getting close to two years now.

Emily Pace: Good, so we'll get to hear the pandemic perspective and the non-pandemic perspective for hunting for that job. Hopefully one day it will be over and we will be back to that regular process. So, I want to start with a question for all of you. How did you find that first job after graduating with your linguistics degree?

Tripp Maloney: I know for me, it was very much a web-based idea, looking a lot at like Linguist List, paying very close attention to listservs that I was a part of, looking at job postings that came out from that. And actually, the way, my route to inVibe was very much related to being on the Georgetown linguistics listserv and finding out while I was on a camping trip that, “Hey, there's this position at inVibe showing up,” and so scrambling to just like grab a resume I happened to have on my phone and submitting it via that way. It’s certainly not what I would recommend, although it did end up working, but that was very much sort of the process of like looking through LinkedIn, looking through people that I was able to meet in grad school and just kind of understanding the lay of the land, figuring out where I can like plug in as a linguist. And yeah, those are the three primary things: listservs, LinkedIn itself, and Linguist List—all of those I got interviews through.

Emily Pace: And was that listserv, was that your department listserv, or was that multiple different ones?

Tripp Maloney: I was on a couple of them. The stuff that was showing up most that was most relevant was a linguistics department listserv.

Mark Norris: So, just to build on what Tripp said, the other thing that can be really helpful in trying to find your first job is to know what titles to be looking for, and so a good way to dig into that is to try to talk to as many people you know that studied linguistics and keeping track of what the job titles are, and also, even people that you don't know, just looking for people with linguistics degrees on LinkedIn can help you understand what job titles are available to me. And the tricky thing about this is that they're not translatable across companies, necessarily. So, you really have to kind of get to know — I mean, I was job searching for 13 months, so I kind of started to get to know, “Oh, at this company the job is called this, and at this company, the job is called this,” and you sort of start to piece together what those titles are. So, I even started building a spreadsheet of like, “What are the job titles I need to be looking for?” because I just couldn't remember all of them.

Sophia Chan: I totally agree with how job titles are different at different places, and I think I met a lot of people who — I was in Seattle when I was job searching — I met a lot of people who worked for Amazon, and it seems like even within Amazon, there's like a lot of different — or any big company — it seems like, within different teams, there are, even if just for the same title, the way the role is defined is a little bit different. And then on those teams, like I saw Emily say through Slack also that it really depends on the people you meet, like how much they know about linguistics. I think some of the language engineering roles were posted like… I feel like they're posted by managers, like, who may or may not have a linguistics degree or may or may not have interacted with linguists within their organization. So, I think meeting the people, meeting linguists who maybe they happen to know someone on the team who can give you more information about what this team is like, but also like not being disheartened if people don't get back to you, because it's just like the field is changing so quickly that new jobs are being posted every day, and people are learning more and more about linguistics every day. There are lots of, as I was applying, I kept on seeing new roles pop up, and just like keep on plugging away at it, I guess.

Emily Pace: And Sophia, how did you hear about the job that you have now? Where did you see that?

Sophia Chan: I believe that I was looking up linguistics. I think I stumbled upon the ETS website somehow by looking for, I think it was on LinkedIn that I found the job. I think I was just going through a lot of job postings on LinkedIn.

Emily Pace: So, LinkedIn is a great resource. We've had some sessions throughout LCL on resumes and LinkedIn, so definitely work on that and have that if you don’t already have one. I want to pick up on something that Mark said that that was echoed in the chat: 13 months. And I'd like to talk to all of you a little bit about just how long your job process took and sort of how you managed it from a logistics perspective and from an emotional perspective as well. One of the questions we've gotten a lot from our attendees so far is, “When do I start my job search? If I want to have a job, when I finish my degree, when do I start looking?” So I would love to hear from all of you on that.

Mark Norris: I think it sort of depends on how you're defining “job search.” OK, so if you're talking about applying, submitting applications for things, I think it's wise to be starting that like four to six months before you're ready to be done. But one of the things that caused my job search to take a really long time is that I didn't really even put a toe in the water until I had moved from Oklahoma to where I'm based now in San Francisco. I'm talking not even interviewing people I know, not even having these informational interviews to figure out what's out there, to figure out what are the terms that I know from linguistics that are in use in industry but they're called something else. Like all of these important things that are relevant for interviewing and for tailoring your resume, those sorts of conversations — that, I think, start ASAP. I mean, ask people if they'll just talk to you about what they do at work for 30 minutes, and the more you let that information wash over you, the more it will start to feel familiar and comfortable. And I think, yeah, so, like, I think that, you can sort of start right away, certainly, if you think of the job search as not only like I'm submitting applications, but also, “I'm getting comfortable talking about these concepts and talking about how my linguistics is relevant for whatever this job is.”

Emily Pace: That's a great piece of advice: to start early. Tripp, Sophia, thoughts to add here?

Tripp Maloney: Definitely some things I would like to echo of like, one, just gaining information, the application process as a learning process. I really can't agree with that more. That's definitely how it worked for me. For me, it was, I was very fortunate, just kind of ending up with a windfall sort of opportunity. My job search didn't really last all that long. Trying to remember specifically, I came in for an in-person interview back when those were a thing in July, after graduating in April and having started really looking around more intensely, I would say, starting in February. So it was about a five-month process for me, but two of those months really did overlap pretty hard with me finishing up my degree. And yeah, just learning about the process. Even if you're, just getting as much time talking to people as possible, I say, would be very helpful. I'd say, like even the interviews where things didn't necessarily go great or I didn't necessarily get a follow-up gave me a good idea of like, “OK, here is how X firm or, you know, this arm of industry in general is talking about things,” because I really do want to follow up on something that Sophia mentioned is like, as people get a greater familiarity with linguistics, there is this tendency, at least in my line of work — which is market research more specifically, I should should've clarified that earlier on — some of those little bits of linguistic sort of terms or terms that we like to use — stuff like ethnography and deep listening — kind of get like co-opted and become something that doesn't necessarily match with your own academic definition of what those are. So, it's a very much kind of almost a false friends situation, for people who are in translation, but it's in terms of just like interchanging targets, that the more you do it, the more you know it, the less likely you are to end up saying that, “Oh, yes, I can do ethnography,” and they have a completely different image in their head of what you're talking about.

Emily Pace: I want to build on this question a little bit with, I think, a slight variant, which is how many interviews you went through before getting your offer, either for the job that you have now or if there were other jobs that you interviewed for and you went along in the process. We have a lot of curiosity about how long those interviews are and how many commitments you'll have. Sophia, would you want to start with this one?

Sophia Chan: I think my job searching began kind of like when I started my masters in September of 2019 and I started looking, I think, around probably October, November, December, shortly, very shortly after I started school. And I applied throughout the year, and — it was kind of a special case because it was an internship. But it took me until I probably went, I did like, I would say, like at least 10 or 20 interviews during that time, if not more, and like talking to people and sending out tons of job postings I never heard back from. And then I actually received my offer for an internship in March of the following year, and it was in a position that I actually initially got rejected for. And then they gave me feedback on my interview process, which was very helpful. But then they later said that the candidate had to drop out, so I got to fill their spot, which was super lucky for me. But then, like, as the pandemic rolled in, I started getting — the interviews I had scheduled began to be dropped because people didn't have funding for the positions I was applying for. They said that they're no longer hiring. So that was, it felt like a lot of my classmates were going through the same thing, like, people who would have gotten jobs by now, usually, in other years, just like sitting here, you're not hearing back for a long while. I think now I'm seeing like people get into positions that they wanted to get into. But then after my internship, I had three months where I was applying, probably like I was like a full-time job applier. So, I was applying to jobs every single day, like trying to send out resumes every single day, and I still didn't get any job and, it was like, I had applied at the end of my internship to my current company, and they were the only ones who got back to me out of every job I applied to this summer.

Emily Pace: I think that's a feeling in a process that many of us have gone through of not hearing back. Mark and Tripp, anything to add here?

Tripp Maloney: I can definitely, yeah, add in the sort of prospects of, yeah, sort of different stages of frankly like rejection and which are sort of progressively more helpful. Like, yeah, one is you just kind of send a resume out into the ether and you just don't hear anything back, and it's sometimes difficult to even tell us, like, “Was there anything wrong with this resume, or is this just circumstantially not like the kind of job I was going to be optimized for anyway?” And I think, yeah, I mentioned, I think when I was talking earlier at any time that you actually are like talking to somebody, I would say those are the times when you're really doing a lot of learning and doing, getting a lot of understanding, even if it’s, there were a couple of things that I applied to that I was really not 100% interested in, but at least just kind of developing the skills of talking to people, hearing from, “OK, here is what X firm is doing. Here's how they're talking about these skills. Here’s how I can kind of translate my linguistics background into that, depending on whether or not that's something they're particularly familiar with.” And yeah, just sort of anything past, any feedback that you can get is good feedback, even if you are just talking to peers, whether it's fellow linguists, other people in your life who aren't linguists, sometimes that's just as important to say, “Does this make sense to you? Does this track for you, or does this look like a paper that I wrote as opposed to, you know, a personal statement that's meant to be read by somebody who doesn't have the same background as me?”

Mark Norris: I'm not sure how many I had ultimately. I think my issue was people just not really getting in touch with me at all. And there was a lot of silence, and, you know, you got to sort of pay attention to what sort of appetite you have for this. When I was a full-time job applier, I didn't apply every day because I could not, and especially after months and months and months, I couldn't handle it. So, once a week I would take a day and figure out what are the jobs that are open and I would apply for those jobs, and the other days, I would do other things, sometimes that was development, sometimes that was just trying to be happy because job searching sucks. So, “What can I control?” That's kind of how I tried to have the mindset. I mean, ultimately, I think I had maybe like interviews with like four or five different companies before I ended up getting my contract offer from Amazon. And the interview experience for a contract job offers and full-time job offers is so different; for contract jobs you'll often have, like I had one one-hour interview that was a little bit technical and a little bit sort of just conversational, and that was all. Then I was offered the position. Whereas for my offer at Grammarly. the whole process unfolded over a period of, I want to say, six to eight weeks. And there were multiple, multiple interviews that happened during that whole process. And a couple people said this, “I have been second choice, too. I've been second choice,” and it's hard not to be disappointed because you really want that job, but I was in a headspace at that time where it was like, “This means I can get a job. This means I'm hirable. This just didn't happen to work out, but I just have to keep putting, giving myself those opportunities and hoping that then I'm going to get one that bends my way.”

Emily Pace: I want to pick up on a theme that a few of you have touched on and that someone brought up in the chat as well, which is managing that frustration when you go through a whole process and you don't hear anything. You know, it's one thing to apply for a job and not hear back from that initial application, but how do you manage, sort of individually and personally, that process of putting in so much time and energy, and then and then a no or nothing?

Sophia Chan: I think it really helps to connect with people who are going through the same thing. I think, just like one conversation with people who have been through the same thing or maybe not going through right now. I think when I was in my, I had heard a lot of rejection and wasn't hearing anything back — I reached out to like Linguists in Tech and they were a group of people who had graduated from UW before me, and they had gone through the similar processes, and were now working and they were just things like, “Do you want to sit down and have a coffee with me and, like to talk a little bit about, or I can help you with your, I can help you with your, like, touching up your resume?” Just little interactions like that really helped me pull through.

Mark Norris: Yeah, as I sort of touched on in that previous, in my previous answer, there were… I mean, just to be completely frank, there were months during my job search that where I was pretty unhappy about how it was going, and what really worked for me was trying to remember every moment that there was a disappointment how much of this was out of my control. And it's a thing that we say a lot, but for the job search, especially, like if nobody calls you, it doesn't mean you're not qualified. And I'm sorry that that's true. Like, it sucks that that's true, but it is true. You have recruiters who are sort of the first gatekeeper towards passing your resume on, and sometimes the job description doesn't exactly match what they're looking for. Or sometimes the job posting is still on LinkedIn, but they actually already have somebody who’s negotiating and you don't know that, or there's so much that you really can't control. And, like, when you're second place, like, in my case, someone just happened to have more experience than me. They really liked me, but they had to go with the person who had more experience. And what can I do about that? The answer's nothing. So I really… Whatever you need to do is, we're all sort of individuals, to accept that there's so much in the job search that's out of your control, and what you can control is talking to people to get more experience talking about these topics, stealing language from people's LinkedIns and resumes to make yours sound better, and putting in those job applications. And that's sort of the end of the list of what you can do yourself. I also want to quickly echo Sophia’s point about making friends who are going through this, too. I randomly — this woman on LinkedIn just randomly added me, and then she started messaging me, asking me about how my job search was going, and it sort of developed into this thing where once a week we were sort of checking in with each other and saying, “How's it going?” and whatever else. And also, those can be great opportunities for networking. So, then ultimately there was a contractor position available at Grammarly, and I was able to pass her resume to the recruiter for that, and she got hired. So, now I'm actually working with her, which is cool, too, and it's just been nice to sort of support each other this whole way. And then you sort of, that is a good way to kind of stay connected with people.

Emily Pace: I want to switch gears just a little bit to talk about the level of degrees that everybody has and sort of how that influences your process. And we have Mark, who has a Ph.D., we have Tripp and Sophia who have master's degrees, and we all know that sometimes a job ad will say, you know, “This degree is required” or “this degree preferred.” So, sort of, what was your experience like navigating through that process with the degree that you have?

Tripp Maloney: In some cases, I think there were some applications that were a little bit more vague on like what was required. Particularly, I think some in the more technical space where it's just like asking more about competencies as opposed to degrees. I actually did end up applying for and interviewed for a couple of computational-linguistics-focused jobs, even though that's not like on the name of my degree. It's just something that I was able to list to a skill because I did sort of like a secret specialization in it during my last couple of semesters of just doing a lot of like Python NLP work. And so that can kind of work in some spaces. I do think in some places it really, I think it does depend on the field that you're in, whether or not the, which acronym you're carrying as a suffix is going to really be a hard barrier or not. I can't really speak with any confidence about, like, what opportunities are available for you if you have a bachelors, but I will say for masters, it definitely did seem like it was opening up the field a good bit more. And then you would also see, and I'm sure Mark can speak more to this, of like positions where it's like a Ph.D. or industry experience, and those start to become a little bit more interchangeable, which I know, since we're talking about, like, first jobs, that’s sometimes something that can be a little bit disheartening. But I do think one thing that I would say about that is you can see something like, “Oh, I really want to aim for that,” so, just getting in the door somewhere, and just putting a little bit of putting some time in and sort of developing towards that is absolutely like a viable option to take. I work with people who have that sort of same position. I work for kind of two people at once. One of them is Ph.D. who has three years of industry experience. The other one has the same degree as me with ten years of industry experience. So, this is very much kind of an exchange rate of, like, getting in, getting some work done, not at the same firm, but just like gaining that sort of experience.

Mark Norris: Yeah, I think that the point about industry experience versus having a higher degree and sort of moving up that way, I think is a really good thing to underscore; these jobs that often, the sort of flashier jobs like language engineer and analytical linguist, and those kinds of things at the big companies, a lot of times they really are looking for people who have PhDs or like an M.A. that's specifically computationally focused, I think, if they don't have industry experience. But the thing to keep in mind, though, is, I know, is several people where you look at their resume and their first role was something like the annotation level, like a machine learning data linguist at Amazon or working with Lionbridge or Appen doing annotation, and sort of year after year, they kind of are moving themselves up the ladder, so to speak, and then they're able to get a role like language engineer or analytical linguist. And so if you don't have as much training, the sort of plus side is that you're actually more likely to get these annotation jobs because, I think a lot of companies are a little bit hesitant to hire people with higher degrees for the annotation jobs because they think they're just going to leave them. So, which is, I mean, it's not because they're the worst jobs in the world. I don't think that they're — I was told… Anyway, annotation jobs are sort of, that’s the fact of the matter, as I've seen it, that usually people who are working as annotators have bachelor’s or master's degrees more often than having PhDs.

Sophia Chan: I've actually seen at my workplace that a lot of people come in with general linguistics or we have a producer, which is kind of like a… I don't know if this term is used widely, but it's like a product manager. It was built by a person with a PhD in syntax. And so because we work with language data all the time, I think it's important to have that sort of understanding. There's also people who started their PhDs but then decided to switch to industry, a couple of people who I can think of off the top of my head and people who finished their MAs in Applied Linguistics or a different type of linguistics have been involved in projects and they moved into, and then after they are in that role involved in the project, it seems like they have more flexibility to move into whatever, go into whatever type of creative field like they want to do in those. So, I guess, yeah, it's kind of like, it seems like there are a lot of places where these types of organizational skills and, like, knowing about language can come in.

Emily Pace: I want to switch to a different topic on the job search on the job search front, which is about geographic restrictions. So I think all three of you are in relatively large metropolitan areas, and this is always a burning question, “Do I have to move to the Bay Area? Do I have to move to Seattle?” What are your thoughts on that part of the process?

Tripp Maloney: For me, I was — and I guess I'll also kind of give what's probably the least relevant explanation just because again, pre-pandemic, and I think the remote world might be turning this somewhat on its head, from what I can tell. But for me, I was definitely restricting my search to at least Eastern Seaboard time zone. I started applying out of Washington, D.C., had a pretty good idea that I didn't want to remain there but didn't want to go too far just because family and my partner at the time were kind of like East Coast bound, and so I was going to be sticking with that, which, you know, gives you some options, but not an incredible number of options. I would say that I was still able to find work related to linguistics in sort of that band, D.C.. I think there were a couple of firms in the Carolinas, Philadelphia area has a lot of market-research-based stuff. That's where a couple of big firms are. This where InVibe is. That's where I am now, Philadelphia. But yeah, I would definitely say, at the time I was like concerned about, like, “Do I have to move?” And even in places that didn't require it, where there was still some sort of like flexible position at the time, which, of course, has changed completely as of last March, I did not want to be in like a remote situation, so I was trying to think about like, “OK, where can I live? Where can I be close to work? And where can I sort of like, remain accountable in that space?” And then, of course, that changed, and where my firm used to be a little bit more insistent on either Bay Area or Philly, where the two offices are, now we have people in Richmond, Baltimore, and I don't think that's because like anything particular about those areas. It's just that's where the applicants came from and they are just able to remain there because it is, you know, a remote setting.

Emily Pace: That's a great point too, Tripp, so Mark and Sophia, if you'd like to also talk a little bit about the geographic side of it and then the remote side of it, too, now that that's more of an option for people.

Sophia Chan: I'm originally from Vancouver, Canada. Seattle was my first time leaving the country. And after I went there, It was pretty hard for me to find a job in Seattle. It was quite competitive there, I think, because of all the people moving there to go to find tech jobs. I imagine it's similar for San Francisco. But the internship that I got with ETS was based in Princeton, but I did it remotely, and the job I have right now is based in Toronto, but I'm doing it remotely.

Mark Norris: So, I was geographically restricted in my search because one of the main catalysts for my departure from academia was so that my personal life could be a priority. And for me, that meant staying in San Francisco and… Which like, I mean, you know, I was like, “Of course, there'll be one million jobs.” Well, the problem is there were two million people trying to get those jobs, so it was not as straightforward as I thought it would be. But I think there are jobs that… Certainly now there's so much that's remote, but even before, I think there were jobs that require or that are good for linguists in tech that are not based in Seattle or San Francisco, and so I think there is a broader variety than you might have expected. And I certainly would… I mean, my recommendation would be that you search for a job wherever you feel comfortable searching from and then be prepared to move if that comes, rather than just moving just to San Francisco and assuming that that will be where it pans out, just because you want to be more flexible than that, I think. And a lot of annotation jobs now especially are just completely remote. You can be wherever to do that work, and so if that's the route that you're going to take, then that's a great option. And then I also think because a lot of language in tech jobs are sort of more on the software side of things, a lot of those roles, I think companies are really seeing that it's fine to be located sort of wherever. I can say that for the future of remote work, for at least Grammarly, the plan is that we will be based wherever we like, but with a lot of travel. So, we're going to be in-person somewhere between six and ten weeks, maybe, per year at one of the hubs that Grammarly maintains. We’ll come together for things like quarterly planning, for things like project kickoffs where we all want to be in the same place, but then otherwise we can sort of live wherever we want. There are restrictions for tax reasons, but other than that, it's sort of OK. And I think… I mean, we don't yet know exactly what it's going to look like because they're still sort of figuring it out. Grammarly was a company who early in the pandemic was saying, “No, no, no, we're coming back, we're coming back. This is not going to be a permanent thing,” so it's sort of new for us, too. Yeah, so I just think there'll be more opportunities, certainly for remote work than there were before.

Tripp Maloney: And I'll just say, sort of, like, even outside of the more tech-focused world, because where I am, I'm really mostly doing sociolinguistics in sort of a market research context. One thing that was really interesting about like the onset of COVID was, for my work, which is more specifically like working in healthcare, you almost didn't really notice right from the outset. I mean, we started working from home, but there's very, very little about like what you do in a market research context that really necessarily involves like being on site, being in person. I mean, the closest client contacts you normally get are either everybody coming to a board meeting or, as we do now, just having a Teams meeting or a Zoom meeting, depending on what they how they feel about netsec and stuff like that. And I will say, from seeing how clients have absolutely sort of embraced the work from home aspect of things, other than a few people, it seems like the general culture, even outside of necessarily the tech world, in these more remote-able jobs, there isn't a particularly strong push back towards meeting in person. I know my company is currently like talking about maybe meeting up on an infrequent basis, maybe like even once a week, or less if you're not actually in the Philly area, where there's the still benefits to having some sort of in-person aspect of the work, but it's getting easier and easier to, I think, have people who are going to be 100% remote. I know one of our tech people we just hired lives in Indiana, who works with everybody else in I think Costa Mesa, California. And other than the time zone difference, that's been a really easy transition in. So, yeah, not even in the tech world — there does seem to be this push from, that I'm seeing towards enjoying the benefits that remote work gives.

Emily Pace: So, I actually do want to add in one more thing before we sort of finish up the search part of it, which is, what did you learn during the process for finding your first job that will affect how you search for your next jobs, and sort of what was your biggest takeaway and what might you do differently next time?

Tripp Maloney: I would say search optimization was definitely a learning process, and being in industry is only helping that, I think, for whatever future job searches I may take part in. I have a much better idea of what kind of things you potentially look for. Where I'm working is currently like a little bit more like explicitly linguistic in nature, like our CEO is specifically interested in linguists. But I'm still able to see when we're interfacing with clients like, “OK, what do we have to translate this into in order for them to understand?” So understanding like, “OK, there is absolutely a linguistic component to research design. There's a linguistic component to IDI moderation,” things like this that I had absolutely no idea what they were before I started in my line of work, but they’re kind of things where I have something of a skill set for now that I'm just becoming more and more aware of and like, “OK, these are the things in a job description that I used to have no idea what they were, and now I not only know what they are, but I actually have some skills that are somewhat applicable to them.”

Emily Pace: Sophia, Mark, any tips on what you learned in that first round?

Sophia Chan: I think that my first time around, I was very much like, “I’ll apply to all jobs and any job.” But now I actually think that I would be more focused on… I want to say that, like, I would be more focused on tailoring my search, but that's also difficult because, like Mark said in the very beginning, you don't really know what these jobs are about until you apply to them. But, I think it would be more OK with like just talking on the phone with recruiters, like finding out more about the position before actually diving into the interview to see if it's a good fit for me, because I know now that, like some jobs are just, I was trying to make things… I was trying to make things work because I wanted a job, but I guess sometimes even the recruiters or the people interviewing me could see that I was just applying for the job because I wanted the job.

Mark Norris: I kind of want to answer a slightly different question, which is, if I could try to get my first job again, what would I do differently? Because now that… Once you get your first job, I mean, I’m… Once you get your first job, then all of a sudden everyone is significantly more interested in you because you have an industry job on your resume. And so they're like, “Oh, this person is hirable and desirable by at least some people in the industry.” And so I think, just to echo something I said earlier, that networking is really about having quick conversations with people and asking them, “Please tell me about what you do at work.” And you don't have to say like, “Oh, hello, I am so and so, and I am a great candidate,” or whatever. You just get to know people, and you listen to how they talk about their job. And over time, you will start to be like, “Wow, I actually can talk about this now, and I can talk about this, and I do understand how machine learning models work from in the broad strokes,” or these kinds of things where at the beginning of your job search, you sort of had no idea. And it's really hard to google this stuff. I mean, I feel like we as linguists are very used to having good results when we google things about linguistics because it's mostly reasonable, but when you start googling these kind of tech terms, you just have such a broad range of pedagogical abilities, and some of the stuff you find can be just completely impenetrable. So the way to break through that is to have conversations with people, and I really wish I would have started that so much earlier so that I would have been better prepared for my interviews. I really like Sophia's point about kind of not applying for everything. I did cast a wide net. I mean, I applied for UX design stuff and like taxonomy positions. The near job that I got was as a taxonomist for eBay, and those, I think, were right for me. But there were times when I was even considering hardcore data science and thinking that linguistics was applicable for that. And to an extent it is. But realizing, like, I actually don't want to manipulate data sets full of numbers all day, and that’s, I'd rather have there be language data. And so I did realize like, “Maybe I don't want to apply for everything.” And I think that's true and kind of an important thing to remind yourself when you are in the thick of like, “God, am I ever going to get hired?” is to be like, “I have to believe that I will, and I have to believe that it's OK for me to not apply for something if I think I wouldn't like it.” That is an OK choice to make.

Emily Pace: Thank you for sharing all of those things that you learned. Definitely, I think the takeaway here is that there will be so much of a learning curve in applying for your first job throughout that process, and then into your next one and even your next one. You know, your career path will be a continual learning curve of where you want to be and who you want to work with and how you find those jobs and all of that stuff. We'll switch now a little bit to, OK, so you've gone through your interview process, you've gotten an offer, and now you are negotiating for it and you are trying to figure out how your time should be compensated. I'm wondering a little bit about your experiences there. Did you sort of have an offer from the company and that was the offer and you took it, or you tried to negotiate and your negotiation worked, or maybe it didn't work? I think we have a lot of anxiety in that first job about, you know, “What am I worth in this economy that we exist in, and how do I make sure I have enough, a high enough salary to pay my rent? But I also really need a job.” So I'd love to talk a little bit about that part of the process with whoever would like to go first.

Mark Norris: I'll go first this time, if that's OK, so one piece of advice someone with more industry experience gave me that I'll say off the bat is when they give you a number, you don't say any, you don’t give any positive evaluative judgments about the number, even if you think it's great. You say, “OK, thank you. That's interesting,” or something like that because you… And if early in the interview process, they ask you for a range, do whatever you can to not give them a number, just say, “Well, I've done my research, and I expect to be competitively compensated,” whatever. It's really a strange cat and mouse game. But the key thing is that for most jobs, whatever they give you is not what they're able to give you. And so if you just kind of have that in mind, that's I think the right approach. I will say for my contract job, I tried to negotiate and was told that amount is fixed by Amazon. So that was sort of like slam door. For my Grammarly position, I actually ended up having two offers. I'm sorry. It's just how it played out that I had an offer for a full-time position at Amazon at the same time as Grammarly, which is sort of the ideal scenario for negotiating. And I know that we can all think of, for negotiating, comparing the how much money they're paying you and whatever else. And OK, if one is more, then you would say, “Hey, I'm getting more from this company,” and then you would say, “Can you bring it up?” But a tip that a friend of mine gave me during this negotiation process is that you can also use other things like time to your advantage, so it takes time to consider these offers and it takes time to make up your mind. So for Grammarly, I ultimately said, “You know, I have this other offer and I need to counter and consider it, but we can sort of skip all of that. If you can increase my base amount for my Grammarly offer, I'd be happy to sign right away.” And so rather than saying, “Oh, they're paying me more,” I was like, “Listen, I'm going to drag you through this whole rigmarole, or we can just cut through that and sign right away.” And that actually worked. So this was a tactic that I had never considered before, and that's why I'm sharing that with y'all. But the key thing is, you must try. You must ask at least once. Even if you're like, “This is great, I would do it for this much,” you should still ask.

Tripp Maloney: I guess I can go next; I'm thinking, there were three very different scenarios where I got deep enough into the interview process that compensation started getting discussed. And so each of them were kind of different, both in terms of like how it was structured and like who started. So the first one that sort of came my way was a job that was going to be paid on an hourly basis. And they basically asked me to, like, describe the range and start and I — unfortunately, since this was my first time — I did actually name that and tried to do some, like, back of the napkin math, because I was thinking in terms of annual, and had to like, convert that to hourly, which I would recommend that you do that ahead of time if you think that's going to come up, because it very much helps to know what's going on there, because I think I both might have not calculated correctly, and I think that might have ended up like stopping the conversation altogether, although I'm really not quite sure, because after that point, I really just didn't hear from those, that firm again. So, it was one of those situations where, like, there was no negotiation process. I don't know if it was the price negotiation was where things fell through or if it was another aspect of my application. It just kind of happened. The next one was basically there was a fixed price from the interested firm that they named. And frankly, it was a bit of an eye-popping number for me, so I didn't really say anything about it and I was just like, “All right.” And then I proceeded to bomb the coding interview. So, that's just kind of how it ended up going on. And where I am, it was more of, I think, a traditi… a straight-ahead like negotiating process where I kind of finally figured this out, where I got offered a number and I basically… I did not have the benefit of having another like simultaneous iron in the fire with compensation. That's definitely the ideal situation to be in; aim for that. But I was able to talk about saying like, “OK, here's what my expenses are. Here's what I'm going to have to move up. This is what I think I'm worth with my skill set,” and I was able to negotiate the price up about 8% of what they were initially offering. And that did work. It wasn't like getting my first raise early. It ended up actually working out quite well. So, I would definitely echo what Mark said. There is very likely to be room to negotiate. This will vary firm by firm, but I don't think it's ever going to be a situation where you're breaking etiquette to try to negotiate, because even firms that are hard and fast are going to have a little bit of explaining to do when they say, “Yes, this is hard and fast,” and I need to explain this by saying “Yes, this is what Amazon is doing. It's not in my hands.” And yes, it is a very sweaty conversation, Samantha, that's a very good call, because that was also one of the scariest moments of my life when I was on the phone like, “I think I'm worth about X more.” And, you know, I think I poker faced it pretty well. It worked, but man, it's terrifying.

Emily Pace: So, Sophia, anything to add here?

Sophia Chan: I think that my situation was like very like I wish that I had been on this panel before I got my job offer, because it was also an eye-popping number for me, but I think I was the third employee that was hired as part of ETS Canada, so at that point they, I think they had done some research about the industry standard in Canada and then adjusted their salary to fit that. So then I did it, it felt like… And because I didn't have any offers, I didn't feel like I had anything, like a case — because I was asking and trying to learn about how to do negotiations and stuff, but people were saying that I should look up like how much people are paid for this job in the area where I'm being hired, and I really couldn't find… I think the offer that I got was just slightly above the standard that I saw on Glassdoor, so I accepted it, and that was it. I think that it would be a good call to make sure that it's at least meeting whatever people are reporting.

Tripp Maloney: Sorry, just one quick thing. I don't want to belabor the point for too long. I do also just want to point, I see people mentioning Glassdoor in the chat and like the idea of doing homework beforehand. I will also just sort of echo that sometimes that doesn't necessarily apply to all cases. In my case, since I work for a pretty small company, the actual tier position that I was joining at did not really exist prior to myself and somebody else who was hired at the same time. So, there wasn't really a Glassdoor review to look at. So, in that case, I think you can still do research and have some due diligence going on, but it might not necessarily be married to the specific position that you're looking at. If you're looking at a larger firm, of course, you might have more transparency there, but sometimes you do have to, I guess, get a little bit creative in thinking about like, “OK, what's this like? What's an equivalent position somewhere else?” and try and operate with that as a baseline.

Emily Pace: Good point from Tripp here that Glassdoor is your friend, but it may not give you all of the information that you need, and it's just one thing to look at. And we've had some questions here about what kind of a rough range might people who have linguistics degrees consider to be good versus low, I think especially because as linguists, we tend to have a lot of different job titles. We work in a lot of different industries, not necessarily looking in your specific industry or your firm, but with sort of what your general feelings are about that range of something that's something that's too low, and where do you start to get into a good salary? I will also add to this to this as well that that will very heavily depend on where you live, because I think Mark's answer in the Bay Area and Sophia’s answer in Vancouver are very different, possibly, from what a good salary would be if you live somewhere with a much lower cost of living. So just want to point out that as well for everybody here today, that geography plays a huge role in what is a good salary.

Mark Norris: I can only speak for the ones that I applied for, and a lot of the contract gigs that I was interviewing for were like the mid- to high-30 an hour was what I was being quoted for those, and people were routinely telling me that is not good, they should be higher than that, but that's what I was seeing. The contract position I ultimately accepted was actually 50 an hour, and so that was, I knew that that was good, and so when they said there no room to negotiate, I was sort of like, “Well, I already know that this is competitive for this kind of role.” So that was OK. I can say for someone having a Ph.D. trying to get a role like language engineer or analytical linguist or those kinds of things, total compensation should be above 100. It really should. It should probably even be like 120 is maybe a sort of good middle range. My offer from Amazon was 110 all in, and everyone was like, “That's ridiculous. That's too low.” And so just to give you a sort of sense of where these things are for those. Yeah. Yeah, I'm telling you, it's a crazy world, people; I'm seeing these reactions in the chat. It's a crazy world.

Tripp Maloney: I guess I can hop in with a slightly different perspective coming from, like, a master's degree and where that I will kind of preface by just, sort of, repeating the cost of living in the area where you're at is going to impact this, I feel. And what I was sort of given to expect was, I would say, probably around 50% of what Mark was describing, where I was getting offers and like figuring things out, and the eye-popper number for me was 80. I can just sort of, like, put a name to that, which for coming out of an MA in a relatively like… Decent thing. I was like, “OK, that's seems pretty good.” And I was also thinking in terms of just, like, expenses and how to balance that out. And I would also recommend that people try to at least phrase things in terms of value. Somebody in the chat made a very good point about that. I forget who, when you're talking about pay, that's a good way to do it. I would say what I ended up starting with, where I am now is, was 60,000 a year, and building from there, that’s something that you can expect to increase via raises and experience. And I think if I'm counting right, it should end up tracking towards — once I have about a PhD’s time worth of experience, if raises continue —that's going to end up being equivalent, so just try and think about it like plus or minus five years of raises. Yeah, I would say where I am in an urban area that doesn't necessarily have a ridiculously high cost of living, and maybe I'm just completely desensitized from having done grad school in D.C., which I know isn’t the Bay Area. But at least on the East Coast, it does seem like it's about as bad as it gets. And Philly is significantly more affordable than that.

Sophia Chan: So, the offer that I ended up getting was 130 Canadian, which was… I was very satisfied with that. Yeah, I was very shocked, actually, I didn't expect that much. And then, I feel like people straight up, like, people with bachelor's degrees in computer science generally, I think in general it's 100k out of school with a bachelor's. So I feel as though like linguists working in tech should be compensated in the same way.

Emily Pace: I want to pick up on a question from the chat here about companies that don't mention anything about salary until the offer point. So, at what point did you, or did you, bring that up as part of your interview process?

Tripp Maloney: I guess I, again, I kind of gave a bit of an indication of like my different sort of forays into this where some… It seems like it's a bit different, where the first interview I had with one firm, they were talking about compensation right out the gate, whereas my current work did only start really talking about dollar value beyond competitive once we were actually like getting into the offer phase post me having already done sort of like a trial presentation for them. I honestly, I like the idea of that being a bit more transparent, but I just realized that's not necessarily going to be the reality in most places, and I am really not 100% sure about how that applies in the tech world, where it might be a little bit more of a focus on those sorts of things if we're talking about, I guess, a different range of figures.

Mark Norris: Yeah, I mean, I suppose you could, if you're dealing with a company that's not being forthcoming about this, I suppose that once you get past like the initial screening interview, or even with the recruiter, when you get a chance to talk to the recruiter, they're a great person to ask if there is any information about a salary range because it's sort of their job. So if they're being really cagey about it at that point, then that's where you have to sort of decide, like, “Does this sound like the kind of place that I'm interested in working at?” And when you're looking for your first job, it's like impossible to imagine saying no to someone who's interested in you. So, I understand why you would kind of want to continue. And then I think ideally then when you do your future job searches, you're never doing them when you're unemployed; you're sort of building on your career as you go. And so then it's less of like, “I wasted time,” and more of like trying to find a good fit for your next for your next role. So, it's kind of hard, but ask, and if you're worried about who to ask, ask the recruiting team rather than the hiring team.

Emily Pace: So thinking more of transitioning, what was the most difficult thing that you had to learn in that transition, from school to working in your first job, whether that was skills or something about the environment or just the overall transition out of academia to industry? What did you find most difficult about the transition?

Tripp Maloney: First thing that's coming to mind for me are sort of just like very basic logistical things, like the fact of it being, you know, a 40-hour-a-week job being different from sort of the more scholastic environment where you're having, you know, a few classes and a lot more of like self-directed reading, research, writing kind of on your own. I know for me that was a pretty, ended up being not as bad as I was expecting it to be because I was like, “I’m only spending about X amount of time on,” when I'm in grad school, and then moving to, “Oh man, it's going to be like nine to five. There's commute and have to get up earlier.” And I would say that was relatively straightforward to get into. The thing that ended up becoming more challenging to me, and it's something that I think it's just a skill that we're all particularly in the world of linguistics trying to do, is, like I said, understanding what other people are saying and then also making yourself understood — learning how to sort of shed some of your, like, more academic trappings and be able to get straight into, “So what?” when you're talking to people, say speaking in terms of value, speaking in the language of industry as opposed to the language of academics. Because I'm fortunate that half the people I talk to are linguists, whereas I feel like that number really doesn't get much higher than that unless you're actually in academia. You know, I still have to make a concerted effort to speak differently to that other half of people who aren't going to be coming from that same space and basically learn how to break down a term that they either have a bad idea of or have never heard before into something that's easy to explain and be able to communicate those concepts without necessarily teaching a course every time you get in the room with somebody, because then people are going to be afraid to be in the room with you.

Sophia Chan: I think my transition was also like kind of logistical related; it was more kind of like time management for me, because I guess, like, when I'm working on a project by myself in school, there’s, I can just keep on going. I really had to — I think I'm still learning this — but to be like, kind of remember that other people have things to do in their days and that I don't want to keep them on Teams for too long. So, it's a little bit like kind of learning to like set reminders for Teams, like look at my calendar, make sure my notifications are off during meetings. All of that was really kind of weird, but I think people understood that you're still figuring out your calendar, don't know like when some things, like when I delete this meeting, I can't get it back anymore. Learning, like, the language of the company, I guess. Like someone sent me, there's a thing within ETS called the ETS Alphabet Soup, where people list all the different acronyms that are used to help people out.

Mark Norris: Yeah. I would say the things that I've noticed the most, one, are the way… Like, I think I have this idea that in industry deadlines were a bigger deal than they were in academia. And I'm a big, like, opponent of that viewpoint now, because in academia, there are deadlines that matter there. If you have to teach a class, they really… You cannot just not teach your class. And if the homework is due at that time, it's like basically due at that time or there are serious penalties. And in industry, the big difference is, people like to talk a lot about deadlines, there's a lot of urgency with which they talk about things, but only some of those things actually have to happen by a certain day. And so, I've had a lot of issues so far in my industry career with, like, I'm really hustling to finish something because I think people really want it, and then they don't touch it for like four days. And I'm kind of like, “Oh, I don't understand why I was working so hard on this if you didn't actually need it. And so, kind of understanding that in industry, there's a lot more of multiple people all telling you they need something immediately, and it's not necessarily true that they do. And so, you have to kind of sort this out. Luckily, there's also… They're not likely going to fire you immediately, you know, if you do happen to drop a ball, and that's the thing I'm having to remind myself, too. And then the other kind of weird thing is, specifically coming from a Ph.D, I was so used to essentially running my own business. So, every problem that the projects I'm working on is my problem, and if I don't fix that problem, then it doesn't get fixed. But the whole thing about teamwork is that, like, sometimes you're working on something really hard, and you know it's really hard and it's not working, and it's actually not your problem to solve. You need to point it out, but you don't need to expend your mental energy trying to solve that. And that's really taking me a lot of time to learn, because individual research is so like internally focused. And so those are kind of in terms of working on Teams, like, I think I have a lot to learn. I mean, I'm a very sociable person, but I have a lot to learn about working on Teams because I've become so self-reliant that it's like learning about more about, like those aspects of teamwork that has been the biggest transition for me.

Emily Pace: So, we've got about 20 minutes left, and I want to open it up to some more audience questions. So, if you have asked a question in the chat and you feel like it hasn't been answered yet, please ping us again. Or if you'd like to turn on your video and audio and ask a question live, we'd love to have that, too. Yeah. Aubrie, I see you raised your hand, why don't you go ahead?

Aubrie Amstutz: Hi, everyone. So I have a question that I put in the chat earlier back when we were talking about interviewing. In the different stages, were there any moments that really surprised you or you felt very underprepared for? And how did you kind of handle those gracefully?

Mark Norris: Can I go first? I have a story that I like to share, which is, I thought I was going to have a 30-minute informational interview, and then at minute 25, the person said, “OK, I'm going to send you a Google Doc. We're going to do a little coding interview now,” which I was not anticipating and had not practiced for. And, I mean, I was coding regularly at work at that point. So, it was sort of, like, “OK, well, let's see what we can do.” And then it turned out to be a package that most analytical linguists would be familiar with, working with CSVs, the csv package, csv module. I actually use a different module called pandas, and so the specific syntax of csv is like, I can figure it out if I can pull up a web page, but not in this sort of like coding interview. And so what I didn't say is, “I did not expect that this was going to happen.” I mean, that was true, but it sort of didn't matter at that point. So I was, “OK, well, I'm not actually super familiar with this module. I would normally use pandas to do it. I think this is what the code is doing.” Ultimately, I said in the interview like, “I know that I can figure this out, but I'm not able to do it right now; like I can't do it in front of you, but I know basically what this code is doing.” And it ended up that that was enough to advance me to the next round. So, the key thing when this sort of like unexpected thing happens would be to not say, “Oh my God, like, this is not what I expected,” to just do your best. And if that's good enough, then it will be good enough. And if it's not, then there is also a point of it that's sort of like, “I don't think I want this job. If that's the level they're expecting, then I maybe don't have it, and I don't want to feel stressed out at work all the time.” So, you often… Someone put this in the chat, and you hear this a lot, like, a lot of people told me, like, “Think out loud. They want you to think out loud, they want to hear how you think.” And I'm sort of like, “OK, what exactly does that mean?” And it just means any of the processing that you're doing in your head, like, “This is confusing. And I'm confused because x, y, z,” say those things out loud. I had a very helpful interviewer once who was like, who asked me a couple of times, “It seems like you're confused. What are the things that you're deciding between?” And that helped them to be like, “Oh, any time that I'm like, not talking because I'm thinking really hard, I'm just going to say out loud what I'm deciding between.” And I think that is a way to work through the stuff where a clear answer does not immediately spring to mind.

Tripp Maloney: Yeah, I'll just speak briefly, and I hope this is somewhat on topic, too, with the question you're asking. I’m trying to think about in an interview, there wasn't a whole lot that I can think of where it was just like a moment where I like stumbled, and then I was able to kind of recover out of it. Like I mentioned, I’ve had a couple of coding interviews, both of which didn't go fantastically well, just because I got stuck in the weeds on it, which I would just say as a general advice, if you're going to get stuck on it, Mark’s advice is very good — saying what you're thinking, being as communicative as possible is the best way to get them to understand where you're coming from, and if you're making mistakes, why you're making them, and why that’s not necessarily a bad thing. One thing I will say is sort of like, was more of an interview issue that I ran into was really to an application process I went through where I had that coding interview. It went not great, and I ended up not being eligible for the full-time position they were going for, but I was called almost immediately afterwards in relation to a contract position. However, I had left the house to take a walk, and in the time between me coming back and seeing that message and replying, that position had been filled, and that was definitely the single most like demoralizing moment of my job hunt. And I would just say if that sort of thing happens to you, you're not the only person it's happened to, and it's OK because you just kind of… I did take a couple of days to kind of get back into it, but it's just the kind of thing that can happen sometimes for really fast-paced, high-powered firms. It's never anything personal, and you know, you're still you, you still have those skills, and to just find what actually will work. And be there for that next phone call.

Emily Pace: Sophia, anything to add on this one?

Sophia Chan: I really like the points that have been raised so far, like talking through, and also, yeah, sometimes stuff happens and it's… Sometimes, like, I've had interviews… I feel like it just really depends on who's interviewing you. Like, some people really didn't like it when I expressed uncertainty, about what I was doing and some people were OK with that. And it really makes you think, like, “OK, if they're not OK with me, like, talking this way, then maybe it's not a good fit. Like, if they always want me to know everything or like speak in certain terms, I don't think I could work in a place like that.” So, sometimes it's just not a good fit between the interviewer and you, and that's OK.

Emily Pace: Khia, do you want to ask a question?

Khia Johnson: What I'm curious about is, like, thinking about what you've highlighted as very competitive markets in places like Seattle and San Francisco, what sort of advice would you have about how to differentiate yourself or sort of set yourself apart from the million and one applicants that you're up against?

Mark Norris: So I think one thing is, one great piece of advice that I got from Meg Risdal, who once said, “Hey, if anyone wants to talk to me on Twitter,” and I talked to her and she was very helpful, in terms of trying to think of, like, “What special can I do?” I think maintaining a web presence even beyond LinkedIn is a really good idea, because if it happens that a recruiter actually spends enough time to google you or to find your website or whatever, just to give them something to chew on if they get sort of curious about you. So I actually started a blog with some blog posts that were very like this kind of blog post like, “Oh gee, how do we find data?” and that kind of stuff. And at the time, I was sort of like, “Ugh, is this really what I want to be doing?” But now I can see that, like, if you just give recruiters something to chew on when they find your presence somewhere where you're more than just your resume or your resume plus a photo on LinkedIn, I think that's a good way to sort of help yourself stand out. And if, speaking specifically from the technical side of things, like, if you have any sort of technical stuff that you've done, just throw it up on a GitHub. I mean, don't worry about whether it's flashy enough. If it's not flashy enough, then you wouldn't make it through the interview process anyway. So, just put it out there so that they can find it and they can be curious about you, which is one of the things that's the hardest to do, is get recruiters to actually take an interest and move you forward. So, that would be in terms of, like, how to stand out is to just add more to your presence online.

Sophia Chan: I think I kind of want to say something similar, except like, for your resume or cover letter, you can also do things that sort of draw on your unique experiences and, like, I don't know, like the combination of your unique experiences. Everyone kind of has their own unique set of skills, and the cool thing about it is, like, there's lots of opportunities. I think when I was there, I was contacted by some recruiters and those positions that I was contacted for ultimately got filled by my classmates, but then, like, looking back, the sets of skills that they had were, like, really suited for that position. So I think as long as you kind of, like, stick to what your special set and look for what you like, you'll find something.

Emily Pace: Anybody else that people… Sorry, any other questions that people want to chime in on in our last few minutes here? Yeah, Marina.

Marina: Yeah, just a quick question. I was wondering whether you were applying your first jobs with a referral or through LinkedIn or a company website, because this year I applied to, like, a bunch of internship, like, either through the website or referrals, but I couldn’t find one that suited me well. So, I was curious how that worked for you all.

Mark Norris: I had some referrals, and I had some where I was contacted from LinkedIn. The sort of bigger companies, I get the impression that referrals are just sort of whatever; you don't have to know the person particularly well. But I also found I didn't necessarily get a lot of mileage out of that. So, I think I was referred for a language engineer position at Amazon like six times, and I didn't even get called by a recruiter. That was actually really hard for me, because I didn't understand why they wouldn't even want to talk to me. But I have heard for those big companies that, like, if you don't have a referral, I've heard, like, “Forget it. Just don't even try.” It's what I've heard, and that seems like a silly piece of advice, like, why would you not try? But just don't expect that you would necessarily hear anything from the big companies without a referral, because they just get so many applications and the recruiters kind of have to have to manage that somehow.

Emily Pace: And Jennice, I see you've raised your hand. Why don't you chime in?

Jennice Hinds: I was wondering, well, two questions. First, did you ever have to give references from previous employers or from your professors or supervisors, anything like that? And then also for Sophia, I was just wondering, like, did you go to school in Canada and then got the job in the U.S., or were you already going to school there?

Sophia Chan: For the first question… I remember having to give some references, but not for every job, and I think they usually came in at, like, a later stage in the process, if I remember correctly, and it was usually two or three that I had to give. And I did my master’s in the States in Seattle, and that's how I came across the opportunity in the States. But ultimately, I was… Actually, I applied for the position in the States, but then I was hired for the Canadian branch, I guess, or it's actually a consulting company that branched off of the main ETS and, I'm trying to remember, like, what that whole, like, navigating the international part, because I said that I wanted to live in San Francisco, and then my first choice was San Francisco, my second choice was Princeton, and then my third choice was Canada. But because I left the States… I was on an F1 visa for my student time and then I was approved for an OPT, but then because of COVID, I kind of decided I would come home to Canada. So, I left the country at that point, which is why it was easier for me to work in Canada after that. I know that you can get the OPT, which gives you more time to job search, and then that there's a three-month, if you go to school in the States, and then there's that three-year OPT extension for tech that you would be eligible for.

Mark Norris: My references were checked after the final round interview when they wanted to move forward with an offer basically, that's when… And that was only for Grammarly that they were ever checked. For a contract, I don't think they would check, and I'm not sure if they did for my other full-time offer.

Tripp Maloney: Yeah, I think I would echo that. I have given references on a few different occasions. I've never heard from the people I put in whether or not they had ever been reached out to. So, I think it is kind of a crapshoot as to whether or not they will actually end up following up on those.

Emily Pace: All right, well, it sounds like everybody's going to have a great success looking for their first job then. All of the questions have been answered. Thank you so much to our panelists — Tripp, Mark, and Sophia — for coming today, for being so open about sharing your experiences, and I think for really contributing a lot to what we're doing for Linguistics Career Launch and trying to help you get that initial momentum for people going into their careers. So, we're so, so grateful for your participation, and thank you as well to our audience, for being a great audience and having so many questions and being so interactive throughout the whole time. I will speak on behalf of myself and all of our panelists to say that we wish all of you best of luck in your first job searches.

Laurel Sutton: Linguistics Career Launch 2021 was a one-month intensive program intended to familiarize linguistics students and faculty with career options beyond academia, in business, tech, government, and nonprofit organizations. Videos of all our recorded sessions are available on our YouTube channel. LCL 2021 was organized by Nancy Frishberg, Alexandra Johnston, Emily Pace, Susan Steele, and Laurel Sutton. You can get in touch at linguisticscareerlaunch@gmail.com.