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THE BELGIAN CONNECTION

Conceptual, theoretical and methodological insights from (Belgian) AVT research

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PREVIOUSLY…

- **Overview of descriptive-analytical research performed at Ghent University:**

    - Focus on Dutch inter- and intralingual subtitles produced in Flanders (Belgium) for the national broadcaster VRT.

    - The main goal was to find out whether the **colloquial variety** *tussentaal* is penetrating subtitles, and if so (in which contexts).

    - We used a typical **sociolinguistic, quantitative variational-linguistic methodology**, analysing frequencies of features considered typical for the (highly stigmatised) colloquial variety compared to frequencies of their (prestigious) synonymous standard-language alternatives, while taking into account different contextual variables such as genre, target audience, type of translation, source language of the speaker (profile-based approach; Speelman et al. 2003).

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PREVIOUSLY…

- **Main (descriptive) outcomes:**

    - Clear preference for Standard Dutch when interlingually subtitling English speakers, in documentaries and in children's programmes.

    - Preference for Standard Dutch when intralingually subtitling Netherlandic-Dutch speakers, in light entertainment and fiction programmes, with occasional use of *tussentaal* features.

    - High penetration of *tussentaal* features when intralingually subtitling Belgian-Dutch speakers, and in comedy programmes.

THIS TALK

- Taking into account the three focus areas mentioned in Alexander's and Elisabeth's position paper, are there any other relevant AVT insights in (Belgian*) AVT research which we might want to consider:

  1. A contextual analysis of the subtitler's job.
  2. A linguistic analysis of subtitles, specifically focusing on authenticity.
  3. The reception of subtitles.

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* The leading team in Belgium is Antwerp-based: Aline Remael and Nina Reviers
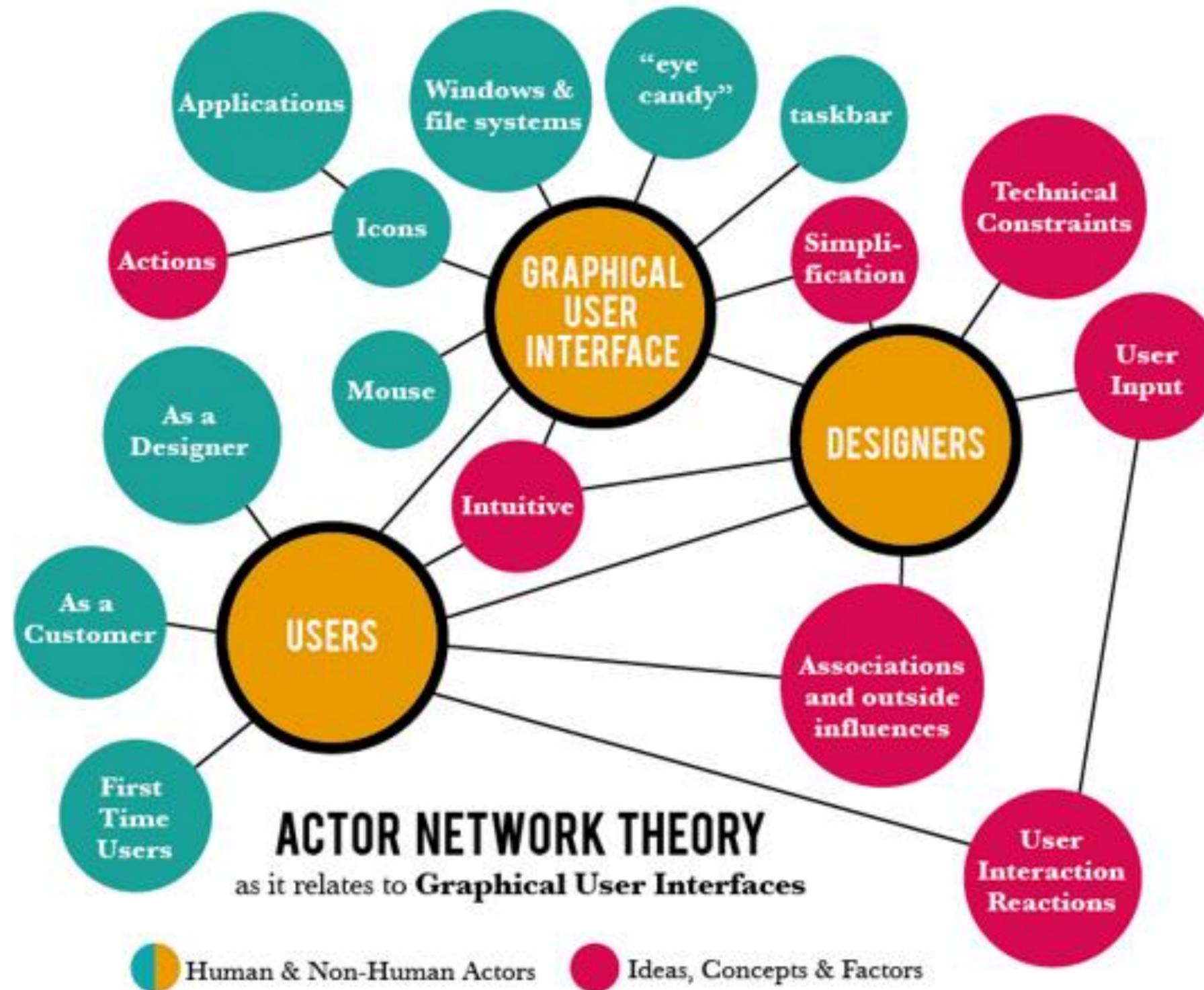
THIS TALK

- Taking into account the three focus areas mentioned in Alexander's and Elisabeth's position paper, are there any other relevant AVT insights in (Belgian*) AVT research which we might want to consider:

  1. A contextual analysis of the subtitler's job. ACTOR NETWORK THEORY
  2. A linguistic analysis of subtitles, specifically focusing on authenticity. CORPUS-DRIVEN RESARCH
  3. The reception of subtitles.

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ACTOR NETWORK THEORY

- There is no *grand theory* of audiovisual translation, but within AVT some scholars are exploring the sociological framework of actor network theory:

    - The social (and natural) world consists of constantly shifting networks of relationships, and there is nothing else outside these relationships.

    - All the factors involved in social relationships (so-called *actors*) contribute to the network in a non-hierarchical manner.

    - Actors can be human or non-human (e.g., technology, policy documents), and (can) consist of smaller actors (so-called *punctualisation*, cf. a car).

    - ANT is not really a theory, but rather a methodology for describing social networks; hence, it presupposes empirical analysis.

    - A successful theory is a (non-essentialist) theory that understands all interactions between the elements in the network (it does not attempt to 'explain' why and how a network takes the form it does).

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ACTOR NETWORK THEORY

ACTOR NETWORK THEORY as it relates to **Graphical User Interfaces**

Human & Non-Human Actors   Ideas, Concepts & Factors
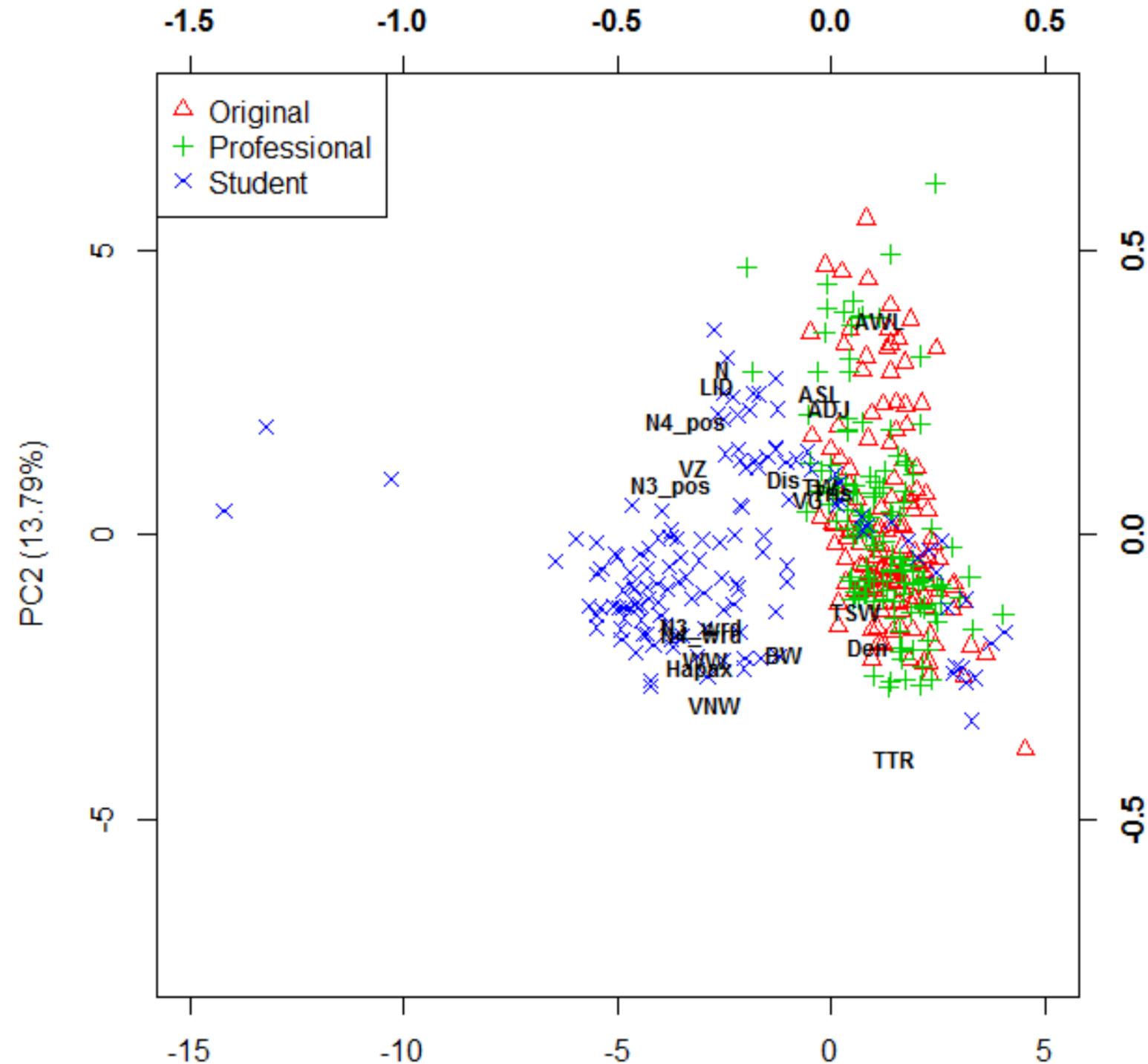
CORPUS-DRIVEN RESEARCH

- For the analysis of the product data, we might want to consider a quantitative, multivariate, corpus-driven bottom-up approach:

  1. Compile a subtitle corpus (and a reference corpus of spoken and written Dutch).
  2. Preprocess the corpora: lemmatisation, POS-tagging, syntactic parsing.
  3. Select a set of shallow linguistic features (e.g., POS, hapax legomena, TTR, readability indices…) and a set of features related to 'oral authenticity' (e.g. interjections, 2nd-person pronouns, private verbs, contractions, amplifiers, hedges, discourse particles…; cf. Douglas Biber's 1ste dimension: involved vs. informational production).
  4. Extract the frequencies from the subtitle corpus as well as from a reference corpus (e.g. a written corpus and a spoken corpus)
  5. Submit the quantitative information to multivariate statistical analysis (e.g. factor analysis, principal component analysis, correspondence analysis) to identify patterns.

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CORPUS-DRIVEN RESEARCH

Using this methodology, we compared the (hidden) linguistic behaviour of professional non-translators, professional translators, and student translators.

Distances in the visual output are directly related to the degree of difference in linguistic behaviour.

Interpretation of the visual output in terms of distances/deviance, heterogeneity/homogeneity.

De Sutter, G., Cappelle, B., De Clercq, O., Loock, R., & Plevoets, K.. (2017). Towards a corpus-based, statistical approach to translation quality: Measuring and visualizing linguistic deviance in student translation. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series: Themes in Translation Studies, 16*, 25–39.
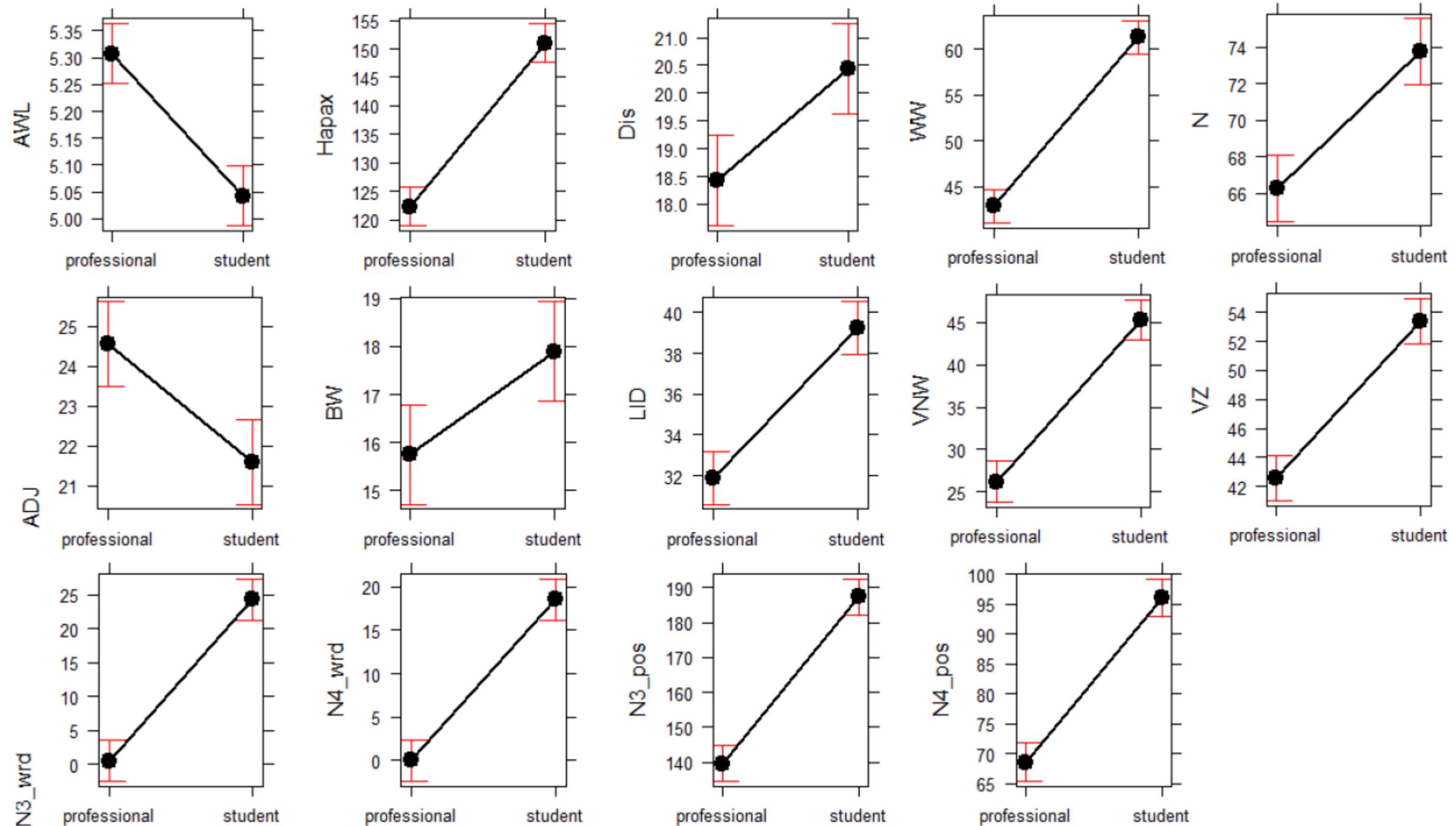
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CORPUS-DRIVEN RESEARCH

Figure 4: Plot of linguistic features with a significant difference between students and professionals (French to Dutch)

SOME OTHER ASPECTS TO CONSIDER?

- Instead of framing this proposal in the context of subtitling practice and research, we might want to frame it in the context of **media accessibility for all**, which stresses the societal need more.

- Focus on post-editing (e.g., S.Live!), respeaking, prosumers in subtitling practice, in order to answer the growing need of increasingly more and more diversified subtitles?

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