

Kolloquium\_ Universität zu Köln

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***Hesitation Strategies in Italian Discourse.***

Studies on hesitation phenomena in speech have pointed out that silent pauses, segmental lengthenings, fillers, and repetitions are naturally involved in the economy of speech and may play a beneficial role in both human-human and human-machine interactions. However, the relation between the formal and functional features of these communicative cues remains an issue under discussion.

My Ph.D. project investigates hesitation strategies that speakers more or less consciously use to manage speech. In particular, I aim to model the occurrence of hesitation phenomena in Italian semi-spontaneous discourse for technological applications, i.e. to implement hesitations in text-to-speech speech synthesis systems (TTS) so as to improve their communicative efficiency and naturalness.

Therefore, I will discuss some patterns emerging from the corpus-based analysis of silent pauses, lengthenings, and fillers at structural, phonetic, and functional levels. Idiosyncratic linguistic behaviours and formal contrasts for phenomena conveying different discourse functions were detected. Further experiments evaluating listeners' perception are planned to provide a better understanding of the contribution of hesitation pauses to discourse and communication.