

Phonetics Colloquium at UdS
on Wednesday, **21 October 2026**, 14:15
Building C7.2, room 5.08

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GerTTS: Can a legacy tool still be useful in contemporary research?

GerTTS is the German version of the multilingual text-to-speech system developed at Bell Labs in the mid and late 1990s. GerTTS does not speak anymore. Its signal processing and speech generation capabilities for concatenative synthesis have long been obsolete and its speech quality far superseded by end-to-end speech synthesis techniques. However, its linguistic text analysis functionality has been kept alive and is still available, if only in the UdS domain and on the LST file servers.

In this talk I will present GerTTS's functionalities, especially in the domains of morphological (inflection, derivation, compounding) and phonological analysis (syllabification, phonetic transcription). To the best of my knowledge, the granularity and accuracy of these analyses are unrivaled for the German language to this day. I will also offer a look at what's under the hood: GerTTS is implemented using flexible linguistic descriptions whose forms vary depending on the task at hand, such as annotated lexicons, inflectional paradigms, grammars for productive compounding, probabilistic syllabification, or pronunciation rules, and which are all converted into weighted finite-state transducers.

My presentation will include interactive demonstrations using the GerTTS web server (at <https://gertts.coli.uni-saarland.de/>) and script-based tools that can be integrated into automated processing pipelines. The main purpose of the presentation is to allow our team to form an opinion on whether (or not) the GerTTS tools can still provide useful functionalities for contemporary research and teaching and should continue to be maintained - and which degree of effort this maintenance would entail.