# Phonetically Augmented Virtuality in Second Life

## Accents2009 plenary by Włodzimierz Sobkowiak [Wlodek Barbosa in SL], Dec 13th 2009

**Abstract:**
In my Accents 2008 presentation I talked about and demonstrated some phonetic affordances of the virtual world of Second Life for EFL pronunciation teaching and learning; I also discussed some environment-inherent problems in this respect. In my 2009 presentation I go further along this path and show how SL objects can be augmented with pronunciation-relevant qualities, such as built-in audio, phonetic transcription, pronunciation exercises and drills, expository information on selected phonetic topics, etc. Together they make up what I call an integrated PAV system of Phonetically Augmented Virtuality, on a par with similar systems of Augmented Reality (AR) currently developing in Real Life. I also report on the pronunciation teaching/consuling work which I do under the label of "Pronunciation with Wlodek Barbosa" consultation meetings held every Wednesday on the island of Virtlantis in SL. Most of my PAVed objects were used during those sessions. They include, but are not limited to:

**1. Phonetic Dominoes**: Audio-enhanced 'magnetized' cubes can be dragged and linked to each other domino-style one by one to match the offset-onset sounds, e.g.: alcohol-lemonade-duck-cabbage-gin.

**2. Word Stress Block Game**. There are 19 cubes of two sizes: big and small. Each cube represents a syllable of one the seven words, which can be listened to when the cube is touched. Big cubes are stressed syllables, while small cubes are unstressed syllables. The learner drags the cubes to snap them together in such a way that they make up the entire word, with cube size matching the stress pattern of the word.

**3. Phonetic Walk-Through Grid Game**. This is a variant of phonetic domino. But this time, rather than dragging magnetized cubes to string them into a domino meeting some phonetic criteria, the learner <u>walks</u> through the grid so that s/he steps only on those stones which contain fore-stressed trisyllables: [Ooo]. The stepped-upon stone lights up and speaks its name.

**References:**
A short presentation of the PAV idea and implementation is available here:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDlWtCtQB8I and here: http://blip.tv/file/2315534/. A longer one, held in SL is available from my website as audio recording: http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/~swlodek/Second_Life.html. More ideas on EFL pronunciation in SL coming from Wlodek Barbosa: http://slactivities.ning.com/profile/WlodzimierzSobkowiak. My "Mówienie w języku obcym" Konin conference PowerPoint presentation on "Phonetic affordances of Second Life" is available here: http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/~swlodek/Afford.pps. More links on SL in EFL pronunciation teaching are available from my dedicated website: http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/~swlodek/Second_Life.html. The introductory slides for today's presentation (before going in-world) are available here: http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/~swlodek/PAVinSL-web.pps.

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## Pronunciation help with Wlodek Barbosa in SL: summary of themes, 53 sessions in all
**(self-access games with objects, like dominoes, not listed here)**

1. Br/Am accent differences, LFC/EIL, accent vs dialect
2. what is hard in pronunciation? needs analysis. stress placement in various languages.
3. silent letters, function words
4. word stress, Spelling Christian names
5. "Love is all around" - pronunciation tasks; Christmas Eve cuisine
6. Limerics activity, heterographic rhymes
7. tongue-twisters (warmer), reading a passage from Grimm bros tales
8. hard nuts notecard
9. 60 mispronunciations, /-s@r/ spellings
10. recap of past activities and notecards, finding object names in five phon categories
11. advantages of SL; notecard with errors discussed
12. 30 diff sentences, 30 easy sentences
13. devoicing story
14. sentences with velar nasal, call my bluff: which word did I mispronounce

15. sentences with aspiration, scavenger hunt for object name words with 9 phonetic criteria
16. [-ine] words notecard
17. phonetic 20 Qs
18. debriefing on last session: aspiration, word-stress, the [a] vowel; last-sound game
19. the [-ine] notecard, part 2: hard words, funny sentences; phonetic t-shirt game
20. phonetic t-shirt game (2nd round), phonetic dice game: explanation and testing
21. [-ism] notecard home
22. t-shirts advanced version (transitions)
23. Di_V notecard, 60 mispronunciations activity: dictation -- in pairs
24. homophones/homographs notecard
25. transcription, notecards; reading 30 easy sentences transcribed
26. John Ohala as special guest: linguistic jokes
27. British versus American English (cntd): 60 words notecard, "Get them all!" activity
28. Word stress: 4-syll, 5-syll, matching, finder game
29. Phrase stress: finder game, treasure hunt
30. Debate on EFL pron needs of students: why good accent? accurate vs fluent
31. Silent <b> in <-mb> words
32. Secondary word stress: recoding [,CVCV'CVC]-type strings to [o.O]-type strings

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## Phonetic dominoes: 9 cubes version
**I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand**

Audio-enhanced objects are linked to each other domino-style one by one to match the offset-onset sounds, e.g.: alcohol-lemonade-duck-cabbage-gin. Complications are discussed (e.g. 'linking' /r/). Correctly linked objects 'stick' into a flexible chain, wrongly linked repel each other. In both cases objects 'say their name' without any additional learner action. This original phonetic idea can be applied to any language units and structures. Their properties/features/functions can be the basis for their differential behaviour, e.g. irregular verbs will attract each other, or parts of a complex grammatical structure, such as some English tenses.

### Phonetic dominoes: implementation
I used Pedro McMillan's (SL) stackable cubes, which do attract, but do not repel. So, right now, the dominoes are happy to snap into any sequence whatsoever. According to Pedro (email communication): "the Stackable Graph Cubes would need a lot of changes to make them work" in the selective domino fashion, i.e. with movement <u>to</u> and <u>away</u>. Right now, there're only nine dominoes in the set. Arrange the nine coloured cubes domino-style to match <u>sounds</u> at the edges of words. Cubes say their name when left-clicked. Here's the list (in alphabet order): *apricot, cereal, cream, ketchup, lettuce, milk, pork chops, spoon, T-bone steak.*

### Phonetic dominoes: correct order
Dominoes rezzed on 20th Dec 2008 in my launchroom. This is the correct order: *apricot (red) ---> T-bone steak (dark blue) ---> cream (dark green) ---> milk (orange) ---> ketchup (yellow) ---> pork chops (violet) ---> cereal (light blue) ---> lettuce (light green) ---> spoon (grey)*

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## Word stress block game

In this game you will learn the correct stress pattern of some English words. There are 19 cubes of two sizes: big and small. Each cube represents a syllable of one the seven words, which you can listen to when you touch the cube. Big cubes are stressed syllables, while small cubes are unstressed syllables. Walk among the blocks, touch the cubes to listen to the words, feel the changes of stress. Then drag the cubes to snap them together in such a way that they make up the entire word, with cube size matching the stress pattern of the word. Thus, *apricot* should now look like this: [Ooo]. Each word is composed of cubes of one colour, to help you. As follow-up, provide other words with stress patterns like the ones rezzed, for example starting from *apricot* [Ooo] you may obtain: *animal*, *government*, and many others. The correct patterns are listed at the bottom of the notecard.

Correct answers: *cantaloupe [Ooo], cherries [Oo], coconut [Ooo], ketchup [Oo], lettuce [Oo], watermelon [OoOo], zucchini [oOo]*. Other [Ooo] words: *decimal, energy, exercise, family, general, history, melody, natural, numeral, paragraph, possible, temperature.*

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## Phonetic walk-through grid (word-stress version)

In this game you walk through a grid of 16 stones (4x4) in such a way that you find a path of seven stones which contain words of three syllables, with the [Ooo] stress pattern. Other stones contain words with either a different number of syllables, or with three syllables, but with a different stress pattern. When you step on a stone, it will glow and speak its name. Start with "Saturday" (red stone). You may walk horizontally, vertically and diagonally until you've heard all seven words. Below you'll find the correct order of steps through the grid.

Correct order of steps through the phonetic walk-through grid: *Saturday, blueberries, cantaloupe, coconut, apricot, January, February.*

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## Phonetically Augmented Virtuality, ver. 2

A number of objects in Wlodek Barbosa's launchroom and house in Virtlantis have been tagged with phonetic information, such as info on pronouncing difficulties, phonetic transcription of hard words, sound files and short quiz questions... The player's **first** task is to locate the object using the finder (found in the launchroom), by typing in public chat the correct spelling of its name <u>and</u> its stress pattern. To find *Table & Chairs*, for example, the player must type: #find Table & Chairs OooO. The **second** task, once the object is located, is to <edit> it and go to the <name> and <description> fields. The **third** task is to copy information, or answer the question about the located object, which is found in the <description> field, like this: name field: [Apple], description field: [what's wrong with this pronunciation of <apple>?] (this is one of five audio-enhanced objects with sound-files built-in; these are marked with * below; click on the object and listen to the recording). The **fourth** task is to bring back the list of located objects/pronunciations/problems to be discussed in class. The **fifth** task of the player in this game is to do the follow-up activity with phrase-stress patterns below. Beware: not all objects in my house and launchroom have been tagged (mostly because I have no perms to some of them). My domino blocks and walk-through grid have not been tagged, as it might confuse players using them. At the bottom of this notecard is the list of objects PAVed, with their phonetic information. Please <u>do not look there</u> before we're through with this activity!

**Find these objects by typing their names and stress patterns in public chat**
Spell them exactly as you see them spelled below!
(Example: #find Table & Chairs OooO)
1. *Apple
2. Banana Plant in Pot
3. beachgrass meadow
4. blowball meadow
5. Chalk Noteboard
6. *Dance Ball
7. Danka Aichi
8. Floor Lamp with Shade
9. *Fruit Plate
10. Hanging Potted Pothos
11. *Hanging Tube Light
12. Launchroom Platform
13. Library Chair
14. Mug of Coffee
15. Picture Frame
16. Popcorn
17. orange rug
18. red wine
19. Sia FirePlace
20. *SLEnglish Conversation Pyramid

21. SLEnglish Quiz Tool
22. Tropical Plant
23. WhiteBoard
24. Wlodek Barbosa's helper robot

**Follow-up activity: make phrases fitting these stress patterns**
(All of them appeared above, some more often than once).
1. Oo
2. OO
3. OOo
4. OoO
5. OoOo
6. OooO
7. OoOO
8. oOoO
9. OoOoo
10. oOoOoO
11. OoOoOo
12. OoooOoOoo
13. OooOoOoOo

**List of Wlodek Barbosa's PAVed objects, as of December 1st 2009**
(objects with built-in sound are marked with *)
# [name field] - [description field]
1. *[Apple Oo] - [what's wrong with this pronunciation of <apple>?]
2. [Banana Plant in Pot oOoOoO] - [vowel /a:/ in <banana> and in <plant>]

3. [beachgrass meadow OoOo] - [<beachgrass> = /'bi:Cgra:s/; <meadow> = /'med@u/]
4. [blowball meadow OoOo] - [<blowball> = /'bl@ubo:l/; dark /l/ at the end]
5. [Chalk Noteboard OOo] - [the /o:/ vowel in <chalk> and in <board>; no /l/ in <chalk>]
6. *[Dance Ball Oo] - [which <dance> is American English?]
7. [Danka Aichi OoOo] - [<Aichi> = /'aiCI/ (that's how she pronounces it :-)]
8. [Floor Lamp with Shade OooO] - [<floor>=/flo:/]
9. *[Fruit Plate Oo] - [which is the correct pronunciation of <fruit>?]
10. [Hanging Potted Pothos OoOoOo] - [no /g/ in <hanging> = /'h&NIN/]
11. *[Hanging Tube Light OoOo] - [which is the correct pronunciation of <hanging>?]
12. [Launchroom Platform OoOo] - [vowel /o:/ in <launch> and in <form>]
13. [Library Chair OooO] - [<library>=/laibr@rI/; diphthong /e@/ in <chair>]
14. [Mug of Coffee OoOo] - [vowel /^/ in <mug>]
15. [Picture Frame OoO] - [vowel /I/ in <picture>]
16. [Popcorn Oo] - [vowel /o/ in <pop> and vowel /o:/ in <corn>]
17. [orange rug OoO] - [<orange>=/orInJ/; vowel /^/ in <rug>]
18. [red wine OO] - [no phonetic problem]
19. [Sia FirePlace OoOoo] - [triphthong /ai@/ in <fire>]
20. *[SLEnglish Conversation Pyramid OoooOoOoo] - [which is the correct pronunciation of <pyramid>?]
21. [SLEnglish Quiz Tool OoOo] - [syllabic dark /l/ in <tool>]
22. [Tropical Plant OooO] - [in <plant>: /a:/ in British English, /&/ in American English]
23. [WhiteBoard Oo] - [the /o:/ vowel in <board>]
24. [Wlodek Barbosa's helper robot OooOoOoOo] - [<robot>=/'r@ubot/; full vowel in the second syllable]

**List of Wlodek Barbosa's PAVed objects with built-in sound, answers to questions**
1. Apple - 'clear' /l/.
2. Dance Ball - second: (i) /da:ns bo:l/, (ii) /d&ns bol/.
3. Fruit Plate - first: (i) /fru:t/, (ii) /frUt/, (iii) /fruit/.
4. Hanging Tube Light - second: (i) /'h&NgIN/, (ii) /'h&NIN/, (iii) /'h&NgINg/.
5. SLEnglish Conversation Pyramid - third: (i) /'pair@mId/, (ii) /'pIr@mi:d/, (iii) /'pIr@mId/.