A SILENT SONG

a silent song

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How do you communicate when words fail you? A SILENT SONG explores the challenges of communication and understanding through the eyes of two children, Broca and Wernicke, each named after and suffering from two different types of aphasia. Based in a small town that lacks the resources to help them, their caretakers hope that interaction between them will be beneficial. Broca, unable to express themselves verbally, and Wernicke, unable to comprehend spoken language, find a shared language in music. Through Wernicke's unique understanding, Broca's songs transform into fantastical worlds that reflect their emotions. But as these worlds darken, revealing a troubling situation that Broca cannot articulate, Wernicke must navigate impossible landscapes to interpret the hidden meanings and ultimately help Broca escape their silent struggle.

Synopsis

Why aphasia?

By highlighting Broca's and Wernicke's aphasia, A SILENT SONG addresses the the lack visibility for these conditions, even among other underrepresented issues. The game emphasizes the emotional and social struggles faced by people with these disorders to foster greater empathy and awareness among players. It aims to create a meaningful and respectful portrayal committed to treating stigmatized conditions with sensitivity. Building on previous work exploring dementia and memory-related issues, this narrative challenges stigma, promotes understanding, and celebrates the strength of human connection despite the difficulties.

The goal of the game is to unravel the mystery of Broca's silent struggle and help both Wernicke and Broca find a way to communicate their emotions and needs. Ultimately, the game aims to **raise awareness** about aphasia and the difficulties faced by individuals with speech-related disorders. By portraying the emotional journey of Broca and Wernicke, the game seeks to **promote empathy, understanding, and appreciation** for the complexities of communication barriers. The target **audience** includes gamers interested in story-driven experiences, healthcare professionals, educators, and individuals seeking to learn more about aphasia and related conditions.

Objectives

Game pillars

A SILENT SONG is a rhythm-based platformer that integrates dynamic music-driven mechanics with visually immersive environments. The game emphasizes accessibility and emotional depth, providing a balanced experience that caters to both hardcore gamers seeking challenging sequences and casual players who prefer a narrative-focused journey. With a strong commitment to representing speech-related disorders, the game fosters empathy and awareness through innovative gameplay and thoughtful design.

- **Innovative Use of Aphasia in Game Design.** Using speech-related disorders as a central theme that influences both the narrative and gameplay mechanics.

USP

- **Empathy-Driven Narrative.** A meaningful story whose main purpose is to raise awareness and challenge stigma associated with aphasia and related conditions.
- **Music as a Narrative and Gameplay Mechanism.** Music serves as an active component of both storytelling and gameplay, with rhythm-based actions that shape and are shaped by the game world.
- **Adaptive Environments.** Responsive world where environments dynamically evolve with music and players' actions.
- **Artistic and Imaginative Visual Style.** A unique and imaginative art style reflecting the inner worlds of Broca and Wernicke, enhanced by contrasting joyful and darker elements.
- **Dual Character Gameplay.** Players control both characters, each with distinct abilities, at the same time, requiring coordination and encouraging creative problem-solving.

- Making Wernicke **move, jump, crouch,** and **roll** in time with the music.
- Using Broca's voice to **create platforms, reveal obstacles,** and **adjust paths.**
- **Syncing actions** with rhythm through visual and auditory cues.
- **Performing consecutive actions** in rhythm to earn rewards and visual effects.
- **Changing music dynamically** based on player actions and level progression.
- **Coordinating actions** between characters in single-player dual control.
- **Teaming up** locally or online to control both characters and solve synchronized puzzles.

Mechanics
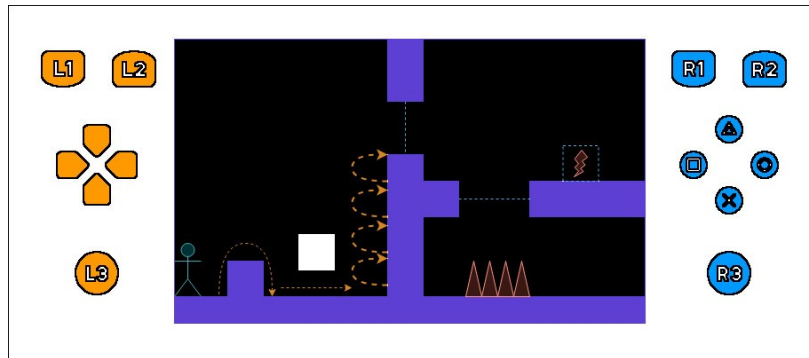
Level design

Early levels start with straightforward navigation and no hazards, allowing players to learn the basic controls and rhythms while focusing on one character at a time. As players advance, the game introduces more complex environments and hazards, gradually increasing the difficulty. In the later stages, players must manage both characters simultaneously, using all controls to tackle intricate puzzles and interactions.

Visually and thematically, the game evolves from bright, cheerful settings to darker, more challenging environments. This progression mirrors Broca's growing struggles and reflects the narrative's deepening emotional complexity. As the gameplay becomes more demanding, the changing environments symbolize the characters' descent into more profound emotional turmoil.

The narrative unfolds through the evolving relationship between Broca and Wernicke. starting with heartwarming moments that establish their friendship. As the game moves forward, the narrative takes a darker turn, mirroring Broca's increasing emotional struggles. Wernicke's concern for Broca becomes

Narrative

more apparent, and their efforts to help each other become a central theme. Key moments in the story include Broca's first successful verbal expression and Wernicke's growing understanding of Broca's situation. The story builds up to a dramatic climax where Wernicke takes crucial steps to seek help for Broca. Throughout, visual and audio elements enhance the storytelling, with changing environments and music reflecting the emotional highs and lows.

Accessibility

Balancing engaging gameplay with immersive storytelling and accessibility is crucial for creating an inclusive gaming experience. The game offers various accessibility features to ensure that players of all abilities can fully enjoy the experience. Customizable **difficulty settings** and control options, including **remappable controls** and **support for alternative input devices,** help accommodate diverse needs. **Visual cues, subtitles,** and **haptic feedback** assist players with hearing impairments, while **audio descriptions** and **high-contrast modes** support those with visual impairments. For physical and cognitive accessibility, options include **one-handed play modes, simplified controls,** and **adjustable game pace.**