



## JISC RSC Scotland South & West Case Study @Cumbernauld College

### Using Logitech Webcams with Video Effects with Supported Learning Students

#### Summary

Logitech produce webcams with video effects software, which includes avatars and facial accessories. These effects mean that the user can be seen wearing objects such as a pirate's hat, crown or Elvis hair and glasses. Cumbernauld College has used the webcams to support drama, IT and teamwork in courses for students with learning difficulties.

#### About Cumbernauld College

Cumbernauld College has two campuses. The main campus is situated in the centre of Cumbernauld town, close to many local amenities including the Tryst Sports Centre, Broadwood Stadium, Cumbernauld Theatre and the town centre shopping complex. The second campus is based in East Dunbartonshire.

#### Background

Logitech produce some webcams with Video Effects software such as avatars and facial accessories. Once the webcam software has been installed on a PC, the webcam user can choose from a range of head accessories such as pirate hats, tiaras, noses and beards.

Avatars include wizards, cartoon animals and vehicles. The face-tracking feature of the software ensures that the accessories and avatars follow the user's head movements and facial expressions.

These webcams have been used in Cumbernauld College for several years for learner engagement, e.g. Freshers' Week and activity days.

It was discovered during Freshers' Week that students with learning difficulties responded particularly well to the avatar software and would speak more freely about themselves through the medium of an avatar.

Supported Programmes students already enjoyed drama activities as part of their course work, including audio drama (edited with Audacity sound-editing software) and puppet theatre, which was filmed using Flip cameras and edited using Windows MovieMaker.

Linda Aitcheson, lecturer in Supported Programmes and Colleen Hurren, Learning and Teaching Technologist discussed the use of the webcams and it was decided that they would be used with a Supported Programmes class firstly as part of an IT taster programme.

If the webcams were well received, they would be used for drama work.

It was envisaged that the students would choose avatar or facial accessories from the range in the software – these props would hopefully trigger story ideas for the students to create their own stories and scripts.

### **The Activity**

The class chosen to use the webcams had good IT skills and few physical disabilities. After a few introductory lessons, it became clear that the webcams had potential to enhance drama work as students took to the software very and were very engaged by them.

Events took a different turn when the chosen class was then merged with another class which was different in many ways: the new group was from another school in a different geographic area and the students were less able and had more severe disabilities.

It was decided that the merged group should move to a larger room with a Smartboard so that the avatars etc. could be projected on to a larger screen and viewed more easily by the class.

With so many differences, the merged class had the potential to be a difficult group to manage, but it turned out that the webcam software, along with the skill of the lecturer, provided the “glue” that helped to bond the two groups of students.

All students, regardless of ability, enjoyed the “feel good factor” that the video effects offered and for the time that the two groups were merged, the webcam project was a great success.

### **The Outcomes**

The merging of the two classes meant that the planned drama project wasn't able to proceed this year.

However, numerous positive outcome emerged during the merged class, including:

- All students improved their IT skills – and the range of technology they were able to use. The addition of the Smartboard to the mix meant that the students' IT skills were enhanced even further.
- Students with severe physical disabilities were helped to use the software by those who were more able, e.g. a student with cerebral palsy gave instructions about which facial accessories he would like to wear on screen and the computer mouse or Smartboard was operated at his request by other students.
- Students showed an understanding of each other's capabilities with the regard to using the Logitech equipment and supported each other to use it to the full.
- Soft skills improved, such as communication, story-telling, turn-taking, confidence, empathy and peer-tutoring, etc.

## **Tips for use for other organisations**

When using the webcam, ensure that you have screen behind the person who is using it or the video effects tracking may jump from one face to another.

Ensure that you have PCs with a reasonably high specification or else the software will run slowly and there will be a time-lag between speech and movement.

If you are hoping to carry out a specific project with an end product, it is best to have a group with similar levels of ability. On the other hand, a mixed ability group will learn a great deal from helping each other use the software.

## **Useful Links**

### **Logitech Video Effects Website:**

<http://www.logitech.com/en-us/webcam-communications/video-software-services/video-effects>

### **Staff involved:**

Colleen Hurren, Learning & Teaching Technologist

Linda Aitcheson, Lecturer, Supported Programmes

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