

UDL in 15 Minutes
With Beth Stark and Jérémie Rostan
The Transcript

LOUI:

Hello and welcome to UDL in 15 minutes where educators discuss their experiences with UDL. I'm Loui Lord Nelson UDL, author and leader. Today, I'm talking with Jérémie Rostan and Beth Stark, co-creators of LUDIA, an AI tool to help educators around the world apply UDL to their lessons and learning environments. Welcome to you both. I'm so glad you're here.

JÉRÉMIE:

Bonjour! Thank you for having us.

BETH:

Thank you, Loui. It's an honor to be here with you.

LOUI:

Oh, thank you so much. I am beyond excited to have you guys talk about LUDIA this brilliant AI tool. It's focused on UDL that you guys have co-developed. So before we talk about the tool, though, I'd like for you to introduce yourself so please share your background in education [and] how you came to know about UDL.

JÉRÉMIE:

I come from a fairly traditional educational system, which is the French system. So I was only introduced to UDL once I moved to the US, to San Francisco. That was about 15 years ago. And so at the same time, I was introduced to UDL and to technology. And the two may seem very different, UDL and technology, but actually what we're doing is going back to the very origins of CAST which is the Center for Applied Specialized Technology.

LOUI:

Excellent. And you Beth?

BETH:

I'm Beth. I also went to schools that were very traditional, and after many years in the States, I now call Germany home. And my career as an educator began as an itinerant teacher of students who were blind and visually impaired. And I began learning about UDL in graduate school, when a lot of my coursework was focused on the power of assistive technology for learners who had disabilities. So, after a few years of being an

itinerant TBI, I moved overseas and served as a Learning Support Coordinator at an IB International School for 16 years. And now I'm a full-time educational consultant specializing in UDL implementation and inclusionary practices in international schools around the world.

LOUI:

Wonderful. Thank you both. But so, before we get into the specifics about LUDIA, I'd like to provide the listeners with some clarifications about AI, but we'll be narrowing the conversation about how AI is used in LUDIA. So, some LUDIA myth busting if you will. So, the first myth is AI is hard to use, because you have to find the right questions. So, who wants to tackle that one first?

JÉRÉMIE:

In a sense, it's true, right? So, when I give PD on AI, I always try to explain if you were to think of a graph one axis is being how complex your prompt is, and the other axis is how good output is. I always explained, the more complex your prompt, the better the output is going to be. That being said, the beauty of LUDIA is that the way we have designed it and pre-programmed it, it does not require the user to do any kind of prompt engineering. We've done that work on the back end for the user. Instead, what we've created is a process we call it 4T process where the user tells LUDIA what they want to talk about, then think with LUDIA so they tinker, they will then tweak the output and they use LUDIA as a thought partner as a chat partner because we've been doing the sort of programming and prompting.

LOUI:

Okay. I am so excited about the tell, tinker, tweak, transfer. I think that's fabulous. And it helps clarify, I think for everybody what's going on, essentially behind the scenes what's going on in the back end. And I think for some people that might make AI feel a little safer. So, thank you. The second myth is I can't depend on the information that will show up on my screen.

BETH:

That is both true and false. We want people to look at the guidance that LUDIA provides as reliable, but the goal is to enhance not replace our own intelligence as educators and instructional designers. So, we created the 4T's process, as Jérémie mentioned, which is tell, tinker, tweak and transfer because again, our goal was to amplify the wisdom of educators and offer LUDIA as a thought partner to guide them when they're navigating, what we all know are very complex factors that need to be considered when identifying and reducing learning barriers.

LOUI:

Excellent. So, a third myth: LUDIA is only going to be appropriate for uses in the US across Europe, or other locations with digital resources in the classroom.

JÉRÉMIE:

Right so actually LUDIA will very rarely, if ever suggest solutions that are AI or even tech heavy, right? LUDIA tends to by default assume that you don't have that much technology available in your classroom. Now if you do, you can indicate that the bot will take them into account, but it does not make that assumption. The way it works, LUDIA also does very well with multiple languages. It will proactively ask about the cultural background of the student and the user. But you can interact with LUDIA in many languages. You can ask your questions in many languages and you can respond in many languages as well.

LOUI:

Excellent. Now I know that both of you have taken this out into the field and you've experienced other educators utilizing LUDIA. And from that, you've actually learned some things and I think it's important for people to understand that this is an iterative process for you two as creators. I think there's a misnomer in the world that oh, it's AI it's completely independent of human touch. And once it's created, there it is. So maybe describe some of the things that you've learned since the release of LUDIA and some of the updates you've already done.

BETH:

Well, it's important to really focus on the fact that Jérémie and I stand next to LUDIA and we are the faces of LUDIA, and we want everyone to know and understand that this was a project that we collaborated on as fellow educators and we are always open and asking for feedback from fellow educators so that we can improve the experience of people all over the world who have already engaged with LUDIA and also try to encourage more people to engage with LUDIA. And some of the small changes that we've made since launching LUDIA about a month ago, is that we now have definitely a much more conversational pitch, and people will not feel as overloaded by the amount of answers that are generated by LUDIA. What has stayed the same and one thing that we're really excited about and we get a lot of positive feedback about is that LUDIA will always allow educators to follow multiple pathways. So we used UDL in the design of LUDIA. And we want to make sure to honor all learners and allow people to have options at every turn.

LOUI:

Excellent. Excellent. Jérémie, do you have other thoughts?

JÉRÉMIE:

Right, as Beth said it's very important for people to know that we stand behind LUDIA and make changes when and as necessary. So, one example would be making what we call negative demands, meaning giving instructions to LUDIA so that it does not mention certain things or use certain expressions. So based on feedback, for instance, we made sure that we should not touch on topics such as learning styles, but we don't want to... for people to confuse which if you're not very familiar with UDL, might be a common misconception that UDL is the same thing as learning styles. So we went back to the prompt that it should not use this expression or this frame of mind.

LOUI:

Excellent. Yeah. Great examples. Okay, so I'm going to give you an example of how I have introduced LUDIA to people you guys can tell me if I'm going in the wrong direction. And then maybe if you want to share an idea that you have. So, what I'd love to do is we co-create the words we are going to use, the prompt. So together, we co-create a prompt, and then I have some people put that prompt into Chat GPT and I have other people put that same prompt, identical into LUDIA. And then we compare what shows up. And the beauty of it of course, is that LUDIA is helping people think about how are we lowering these barriers? And number two, the strategies that are suggested, come from the mindset of how are we going to, again, lower barriers, but how are we making this accessible to all learners versus that same prompt in Chat GPT while there's a plethora of suggestions and strategies, and really, I found that most of them are pretty good. They're pretty well upheld. It's just a list of strategies, and you don't know why you're doing it. So anyway, that's the strategy that I've been using, and it's been really well received. So, I'm just curious if you want to, I don't know, share any of the strategies you have used?

JÉRÉMIE:

So you give a very good example because what you're doing, which is exactly what we are hoping to see, is what really, one of the ways Beth was instrumental in making this a success. I do not have the same level of expertise that she has. So, to be honest, I tended to see UDL as a very technical, yes, set of guidelines. checkpoints and strategies. And she was instrumental in making sure that LUDIA would be designed in a way where it would help the user develop appropriate mindsets and engage with UDL as a way of thinking and not just implementing specific strategies.

LOUI:

Excellent.

BETH:

Adding to that we want to see LUDIA as both a thought partner for identifying and reducing barriers for learners, but we also want people to feel comfortable engaging with LUDIA as learners themselves. So, if for example, a person is listening to this podcast and has very little understanding of the systems, skills, and beliefs of Universal Design for Learning, we would encourage them to share that with LUDIA. And what they will receive in return is entry points for them to explore and learn more about a Universal Design of Learning, but at a level that's appropriate for someone who doesn't have a lot of previous knowledge. So, LUDIA also grows with you. And when you engage in a conversation with LUDIA you can also come back and LUDIA will prompt you to come back and share how things went and whether or not you want to work more on the question that you initially engaged with LUDIA about.

LOUI:

Excellent. Okay, my last question is first it's a comment then a question. So I know that you have created this tool so that it can respond in multiple languages. There are individuals from across 104 countries that listen to this podcast on a fairly regular basis. And so I'd love to hear you guys talk about that a little bit to help our listeners who are maybe not in English speaking countries, think more about how they might approach LUDIA which I think is going to be the same, but I'm just tossing it out there.

BETH:

I think we should start this conversation by sharing that our goal in creating LUDIA was to make Universal Design for Learning as universally accessible as possible. So, we want to demystify this idea that you have to have a really strong skill set or you have to be highly fluent in English to really take advantage of what LUDIA has to offer. And also, it's free. If you download the Poe app on your smartphone, for example. You can also have LUDIA there with you at all times. And Jérémie, would you like to add? Because there is so many different answers we can share.

JÉRÉMIE:

Right and the way we have developed LUDIA, the language model that is based on is one of the best in terms of being able to process input, and generate output in many different languages. So, it will perform very well in the languages that have the most data out there. So English, Spanish, German, Russian, all the languages to have that are sort of data rich, it will be very, very seamless. But we found from, from users that actually performs fairly well in languages that are not as data rich, such as Dari that is used in, in Afghanistan, for instance.

LOUI:

Excellent. Thank you very much. This is going to be so informative for people. I know they're going to be so excited to go out and look at this. So we've reached the end of this recording, but before we go I'd love for one of you to speak the address. We'll of course have it in text on the website and in the materials. But if one of you would speak the address that would be great.

BETH:

Sure, the address is bit dot ly forward slash capital L, capital U, capital D capital I capital A.

LOUI:

Fabulous. So, it is a bitly. bit.ly/LUDIA Wonderful. Oh, I can't wait for everybody to try this out. And I'll let everybody know that when you're on that platform over on the left-hand side, I haven't played with it on my phone, but anyway, there is a way for you to leave feedback and that feedback goes to Beth and Jérémie so please, please, please do that. They love hearing from you. They take it to heart. Of course, they're excited to hear what people are doing with it and how enthused they are but they love questions. They just love all the feedback. So please send that to them. They would love it. So, Beth and Jérémie, thank you so much for your time. I'm so excited for everybody to hear this podcast.

BETH:

Thank you so much, Loui.

JÉRÉMIE:

Thank you so much for having us.

LOUI:

You're welcome. So for those listening to this podcast, you can find supplemental materials like an image montage with closed captioning, that montage with audio descriptions, a transcript and an associated blog at my website, which is www.theudlapproach.com/podcasts And finally, if you have a story to share about UDL implementation for UDL in 15 minutes, you can contact me through www.theudlapproach.com And thanks to everyone for your work in revolutionizing education through UDL and make it our goal to develop expert learners.