

UDL in 15 Minutes

With Kavita Rao

Transcript

LOUI: Hello and welcome to UDL in 15 minutes where educators discuss their implementation of UDL. I'm Loui Lord Nelson, UDL author and leader. Today is a first. I am using this podcast and my other podcast, UDL Research in 15 minutes, together. I interviewed Kavita Rao, who is a professor at the University of Hawaii, about an article that she and colleagues wrote to report about a UDL reporting tool. Now, that tool specifically helps people who are writing about UDL in journals to report on UDL in a way that it can be replicated and better understood and that others can then really get to know what that study was about. But this tool, as you'll hear in my conversation with Kavita, is really versatile and educators can think about using it. So, what I'm doing is I'm tucking that podcast into this space, and then I'm also going to author the associated blog where I'll give you more thorough information about how you could think about using that UDL reporting tool in your own environment. I hope you enjoy the podcast, and if you haven't yet, I suggest that you go over and listen to UDL Research in 15 minutes, I promise you it is not wonky. My guests and I we work really hard to make sure that it's engaging, but also to report what's going on in the research. Any of us that are implementing UDL really should know that it's going to empower our work and also help us talk to others about UDL. So, I hope you enjoy the episode, I hope you enjoy the associated blog, and I'll see you at the next UDL in 15 minutes. Thanks.

LOUI: Hello and welcome to UDL Research in 15 minutes where researchers share their findings about UDL implementation, the impact, and their introspective investigations of the UDL framework. I'm Loui Lord Nelson UDL author and leader and today, my guest is Kavita Rao and she is a professor at the University of Hawaii on the island of Oahu. Today, Kavita and I are going to talk about the research she reported, along with colleagues, in the article titled, "Validation of the UDL reporting criteria with extant UDL research." Hi Kavita, how are you?

KAVITA: Hi Loui, I'm doing well. Thank you for having me.

LOUI: Oh, you're welcome, you're welcome. I'm really excited about this. So, can you share a little bit about your background?

KAVITA: Sure. I came into where I am today from a friend of an educational technology. My very first position out of graduate school was, I was a technology coordinator at a school in Massachusetts, actually, and not so far from where CAST is, was developing UDL at the time, it was in the 1990s. And over the years I, my, my focus was really using multimedia technologies to work with diverse learners. From that position as a tech coordinator I became a teacher trainer I moved over to Hawaii and I started working across the Pacific Islands. And then, over the course of time, got my doctorate and I'm now a professor at the University of Hawaii.

LOUI: All right, well you went to east from East Coast snow to Hawaii and [laughter]

KAVITA: It was strategic.

LOUI:... it's pretty good leap there. That's nice. That's nice. So, we're gonna be talking about a tool that's available to everyone, and it is found at the www.udl-irn.org website, and it's under the research tab. And the tool is called the UDL reporting criteria. You're going to see that on your screen. If you haven't seen it before, it is really worth stopping the podcast, and bringing it up but just be sure that you come back because we're going to talk about it plus other things, so don't leave! But I really am excited to talk about this tool and this article because the topic will support anyone who is conducting research related to UDL and then beyond that. So that was the foundation, right? The intent was to guide and support researchers, but not dictate requirements, and can you talk a little bit about that foundation?

KAVITA: Sure, the UDL reporting criteria was a joint effort that came out of a lot of conversations that UDL researchers and administrators and practitioners were having around, I'd say 2014, 15, 16 at the UDL-IRN and symposium that happens every year. We were meeting and talking about the fact that there was a lot of, there are a lot of articles being written about UDL, it was becoming really popular to talk about doing UDL in your classroom or in your college courses or in your, in your school districts. But what was going on in the articles was that UDL was often talked about broadly without specific detail about what exactly was being done. So, people would talk about their

interventions that as we were looking at the literature, we were realizing the specific UDL connections were not there to the extent that would allow us to replicate those models, see what works. So, from all of that, a group of us decided to try to work together and come up with a frame to have those people who are writing about UDL, doing UDL PDs, teaching about UDL, if there are some essential elements that everybody could say what they did so that when we're looking at somebody else's work or intervention. We know what components were UDL about it. So this group of six of us came together. We worked over the course of the year and we, it was actually a very cool group. I just want to name the people just because they were all involved. There was Dr. Sean Smith, David Edyburn, Christine Grima-Farrell from Australia, George Van Horn, and Shira Yalom-Chamowitz from Israel so we had a really global group. We had people in the group who represented academics from universities, we had administrators from school districts, and a dean of a college. So the six of us work together. And what we wanted to do with the UDL recording criteria was create a broad frame that didn't force anybody into any model. So, we decided to pick what are the essential components of UDL that we might want to know about in anybody's work, intervention study, technology, whatever. And so, we came up with these three broad categories we, the essential elements of UDL that we felt we would like information on was learner variability and environment, who are you doing this for, where are you? The second thing was, how did you apply UDL which guidelines or checkpoints? Did you apply what did you do during implementation? And the third category was, what were the outcomes in relation to UDL. So, if your students did well or they liked some part of what we were asking people to do is talk a little bit about what UDL components, how did that link to the UDL of your intervention or your study? So, that's kind of how we came up with these three broad categories. We did not want it to be evaluative so we did not want to look for a certain amount of UDL. We wanted people to tell us what they were doing, so there's no quantity that you have to do it's just what I just tell us what you're doing so, we kept it broad, and Loui I think you I think you also asked about whether we wanted to keep it simple, because we wanted it to be. So we didn't want to have this set of criteria that was so complex or had so many categories that people are just going to be like, "Oh, we don't want to do all this." So we tried to keep it really

essential. We've got three categories and each category has either two or three thing criteria, each.

LOUI: Nice. Yeah, those were those, those three tenants the simple, essential, and whatnot evaluative right, so too and I just love the accessibility of that and just even how you were talking about it, to help people give structure to their research, gives structure to what they're doing, and how they're reporting it, obviously. But the, yeah, the nice flexibility that you have. So, it's living the UDL framework within the reporting criteria and so that's why I'm just so drawn to it and I think so many other people are. We just have to keep getting the word out there, right? So, into saying that it's really grown from where it started. You all were focusing in on researchers for, you know, for an obvious reason. You wanted to help that group, but now you've seen it grow beyond that so talk about that.

KAVITA: Yeah, absolutely. so even when we developed it for that, that year that we worked on developing it, we started off wanting it to not be just for researchers. It came out of the research base because we looked at the research and saw where some of the gaps were in reporting, but we developed it, again, to be broad enough that researchers can use it, practitioners, teachers, and administrators can use it, teacher educators can use it, and other stakeholders. Like if you're a technology company and you're developing a technology product that aligns with UDL, you can use this, too. So again, the frame was broad and simple so that anybody can fit what they're doing into it. And some of the, some of the neat things that have happened since it's been published in 2018, is that I think people have downloaded it from the UDL-IRN site. The checklist is really cool, because you can download it and then you can actually use the checklist document, and I've had teacher educators tell me that they have adopted it for their purposes. For, for example, an instructional coach told me that she had done, she was doing professional development workshops for her school on UDL, and she took the criteria and she kept them very similar, she kept the same structure, but she just added in some work boarding like, "Before implementation," and "After implementation," so that the teachers could report on what they did. They got the PD, they used UDL, they applied UDL in their classrooms and they use the reporting criteria to share back with her how they plan their lesson, what they did. So ,what the reporting criteria gives all of

us, whether we're researchers or practitioners or developers, is a way to just express what we did, including expressing what we did in the design phase. Because one of the key things about UDL is designing proactively, and that is the thing that is not captured when if you walk in and observe a classroom you might see elements that look like UDL, but you don't, you can't get into the teachers head about what did how did you design that for variability. So the reporting criteria are kind of a neat way for people to express how they design from the start, what they implemented and then, what were the outcomes.

LOUI: Yeah. And so, this makes me think, so you and Grace Meo a while ago, created a design cycle and published that in an article, and then you updated that in a Skinny Book for cast with, oh, your co-author. I can't think of her name...

KAVITA: Carrie Torres.

LOUI: Okay, thank you. So, you updated the design cycle there. And I'm thinking about these reporting criteria and how well these just fit so perfectly within that design cycle because of that, that last, the quote unquote "end of the cycle", but of course pushes us into the beginning, so just this tool in and of itself is a such a great tool for that formative assessment, because it's not a summative evaluative piece, it's really a beautiful formative assessment in that sense. And I can see how it would help push us just right back around to the top of that design cycle. It just came to mind.

KAVITA: Yeah, and you know, thank you for saying that because I want to connect it even further back to CAST's original work in the UDL Theory and Practice book that CAST has put out that's available for free, and they really talk about the importance of goals, materials, methods, and assessments, and that UDL design cycle that Grace and I published on is basically the how to, how to think about goals, methods, materials, and assessments in a process-based way. So that's really part of CAST's work. And so you're so right. This is kind of the extension of when you use that cycle, can you tell us how what did you do? So it's a way of articulating how you did the process of using UDL so yes, thank you for bringing that making that connection and bringing that home.

LOUI: Yeah, absolutely. Well, this has been a fabulous conversation. I really appreciate it. I'm hoping that people will bring up the article and they'll read it, but then also those who aren't so interested maybe in reading the down and dirty of the research will go to

the reporting criteria so again, that information you'll have seen the captioning of that or, sorry the screen capture of that at the beginning but I'll have that information down at the bottom, below the YouTube representation of this interview. So, I want to say thank you so much Kavita. This was delightful.

KAVITA: Thank you, Loui. Appreciated the chance to talk about this.

LOUI: You're welcome, you're welcome. So, for those of you listening to this podcast, you can find supplemental materials like a recorded video of the interview with closed captioning and a transcript of my website which is www.theUDLapproach.com/podcasts. The citation of the article we discussed as well as any other reference materials can be found below the video representation of this podcast on my UDL research in 15 minutes YouTube channel. And finally, if you are a UDL researcher or know of UDL research, you'd like to hear about contact me through my website, the UDL approach. COMM, I'd love to hear from you. And thanks to everyone for your work in revolutionising education through UDL, and making it our goal to develop expert learners.