

Transcript
VL2 Knowledge Festival
May 9, 2016

TL2: Dr. Melissa Herzig

Good evening. You've heard about the three other hubs, BL2, EL2, ML2. Now I'll talk you through the fourth hub, TL2. Our booth is right over there in the corner. There's a lot of information. I will go through my presentation quickly because we're almost out of time, but there's more information at our booth.

The goal of TL2 is to take the incredible findings from all of the VL2 hubs and share that with the public. There are resources, there are assessment tools, there are apps, all of these things that are being created here but cannot stay within our labs or on the campus of Gallaudet. That's where I come in to disseminate all of this wonderful research and incredible products to the community.

I also listen to the community, their concerns and interests, so that we can create research questions that will benefit the community. It's a two-way street. That community includes families, schools, medical professionals and many others such as policy makers. We try to reach out to as many people as possible. We disseminate that information in several different ways. We also have mechanisms in place to ensure that what we're disseminating is appropriate and of high quality, that we're not sending things out without integrity or proper evaluation. We're very careful in that regard. We're also looking at the next generation of future scholars, ensuring that we are creating a pipeline to develop that next generation to go out into the world and create more scientific findings.

Back to the first point: dissemination. That is done in multiple ways. We make resources, tangible products that you can see, touch, share, forward, or receive. We also make use of social media and I travel and present and do outreach, which I'll explain more about. As you've already heard from my colleagues, the findings from the labs here are translated into products that get shared with the nation. You heard about the apps, the Storybook Creator program that I worked closely with Melissa Malzkuhn in sharing how people should use it.

It's not enough to send these resources out into the world. It's my responsibility to guide people and offer resources in how to develop their own stories. I also work with families on how to use these resources and how to incorporate fingerspelling when they're reading aloud with their children, as an example. For the assessment tools, you already heard from Dr. Allen about that and we've also created research briefs. We have 11. Actually the 11th is our newest and it will be released this week, but we have 10 research briefs that are already out there. There are examples at our booth in the corner that you can check out for yourself. They are available in both English and ASL as well as other spoken languages. So if you need them, you can contact me or you can download them yourselves online in a PDF format.

We also have created a parent information package. This was developed three years ago and it came out of asking the community what information they liked, what information they needed more of, and we have tweaked it as a result of that feedback, and it is an iterative process. We turn to the community to ask for their feedback and we take that feedback

seriously. The parent information package has a website as well as tangible paper resources. Again there is an example on our booth if you want to check that out later.

There is scientific information that's absolutely key and, again, we don't just deliver that information without delivering information on how parents can make the best decisions for their children. Meeting successful deaf adults, hearing those stories on the website, meeting parents who have gone through a similar experience, who have raised a deaf child and understanding how they've navigated that journey. Those videos are also available on the website. We also include information about the apps in that parent information package.

Now as concerns social media and community engagement, as I said, I do a lot of that around the country. There are many new exciting developments coming and if you're interested in keeping abreast of what we're developing please follow our Twitter feed and like our page on Facebook. You can sign up at our booth with your email address, and you can subscribe to our newsletter and sign up to be on our listserv.

As I said, I also travel around the country doing outreach, giving presentations at schools, conferences having to do with early intervention, or medical professional gatherings to explain what we're developing here and how it can enhance people's work. You can see on the slide where I've been. So I don't just explain the science and then leave a community. I also talk to the community about what they're doing with the resources they've received. We want to understand that theory to practice translation. That's really my passion and my heart. I want to know how they're using the information in the classroom. What are the best practices? I do consulting work as a result of that as well. There are schools out there that are hoping to become more bilingual, and I'm there as a consultant or as a support for that process, supporting best practices in pedagogy.

Now you heard that in our first five years, we focused on basic science and then TL2 was founded in about year six because some common themes were emerging. At that time NSF, the National Science Foundation, felt strongly that this information had to be disseminated. That led directly to the founding of TL2 and my position to disseminate that information, but the NSF wanted to make sure that there was monitoring in place, that the information that was being shared was accurate and of high quality.

So we set in place two mechanisms, SignWise and the Review Evaluation Committee. We bring in resources like the assessment tools or the apps that have been created and we run them through a quality assurance and evaluation process prior to dissemination. Not only that, after dissemination we ask the community how they have used these products and that helps us improve in an iterative process.

We established SignWise partly because nowadays people can publish themselves, ebooks or other kinds of media. People can create resources themselves and post them to websites. There's just a plethora of information online. That's wonderful because we have fantastic access to technology today like the Storybook Creator program we've heard about. That is something that can be used as a template and people can just create their own stories using the code that is already present in the template. That's enormously beneficial for the community, but who has oversight in making sure that the product is high quality? Are there signing errors or is it a non-fluent signer? Children will ultimately suffer if the models are not

of high quality. We want to make sure that what we're sending out is of the highest quality, especially when we're using these tools as language acquisition tools for children.

We take that responsibility very seriously to ensure that we have high-quality products. We have a committee who came together to establish the criteria for assessing these products. Some of those committee members are here. There are representatives from the Clerc Center. We have representatives from the American Society for Deaf Children. That is a parents organization. We have representatives from the NAD, from the ASL and Deaf Studies Department and the Department of Education at Gallaudet. We came together and discussed what researched-based criteria makes a product good quality, including accuracy in ASL and clarity in fluency. We also established criteria for reliability and credibility of the products. We look into who the developers are, what their authority is for teaching sign language, and if there is a deaf person on the team. For example, if they're teaching baby signs and they say learning baby sign will help improve IQ, that's false advertising. If they don't state that the signs are from sign language or from the language of the deaf community, they will not meet the criteria for credibility. Those are part of the criteria that we're looking at.

Now review and evaluation is also very important. If a product like VCSL, an ASL assessment tool, comes in, we look at people who have expertise in linguistics and psychology and education and bring that expertise to bear on the products. So they can say that this is a good product as is or could use some improvement in specific areas. This is how we make sure that the information that is getting disseminated is of high quality and is accurate.

We also want to make sure that our students are continuing in science, that we are seeding the pipeline for future scholars. We have research assistantships both at the undergraduate and graduate level working in our labs, learning and developing their skills. Like in the Motion Light Lab, learning how to develop those apps which will serve them well in future endeavors to have that technology under their belts. We have assistants working in BL2, helping to analyze the data, and for EL2 as well. In fact all of the hubs have opportunities for assistantships, and we have a postdoc fellow from Italy, Barbara Manini, who is helping our students as well. We also have the PEN Program, the PhD in Educational Neuroscience program, encouraging students to study brain and cognitive neuroscience. Our students ask questions related to cognitive neuroscience and how it relates to learning. These students have the responsibility to look at the findings and think about how to translate them and communicate them to society.

That is the goal of TL2, to impact society based on those research findings. We need to share our research.

Video available at <https://youtu.be/q63DBzkOlvI>

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