Can someone help me understand the relationship between assistive technology and universal design for learning from this part? I’m having hard time in understanding this part please help!

“In contrast to Assistive technology (AT), universal design (UDL), although well established in architecture and other domains, is relatively new to education. One indication of this newness is the lack of clarity about what constitutes universal design in education, and a lack of differentiation from other approaches that address individual differences and disabilities. For example, there is frequent confusion about the relation between universal design in education and AT, in large part because both approaches depend significantly on modern technology. Universal design (and particularly the branch that focuses on education, UDL) has goals similar to those of AT, including the overarching goal of increasing the access, participation, and progress of students with disabilities in our schools. However, the approaches differ in important ways.

The universal design approach is to create products and/or environments that are designed, from the outset, to accommodate individuals with a wider range of abilities and disabilities than can be accommodated by traditional applications. Rather than retrofitting ramps to existing buildings, the universal design movement in architecture educated architects in how to design buildings that are inherently accessible. Such buildings tend to be more accommodating and flexible for all users.

In a related fashion, UDL seeks to educate curriculum developers, teachers, and administrators in how to design curricula and learning environments that from the outset make learning accessible to the widest range of students. The focus of UDL is the learning environment rather than any particular student. Its purpose is to identify potential barriers to learning in a curriculum or class- room and to reduce such barriers through better initial designs, designs with the inherent flexibility to enable the curriculum itself to adjust to individual learners.

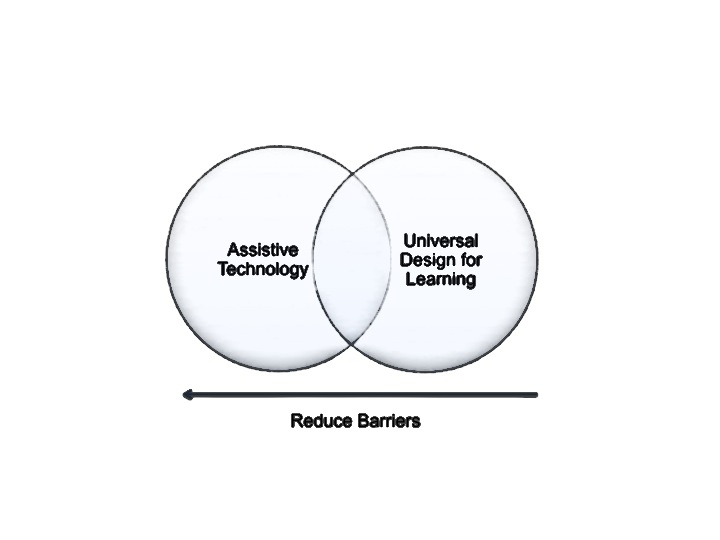
Thus, although both AT and UDL rely on modern technology to improve education for students with disabilities, the technology tools used have a different site and mechanism of action. In A T, modern technology is employed at the level of the individual student to help him or her overcome barriers in the curriculum and living environments. With UDL, modern technology targets the curriculum itself; that is, technology is used to create curriculum and environments that, by design, lack traditional barriers to learning.  UDL and AT can be thought of as two approaches existing on a continuum. At the ends of this continuum, the two approaches are easily distinguishable. Toward the middle of the continuum, such easy distinctions are muddied, and there are greater points of inter- action and commonality (Figure 1). Here we emphasize the interactions, because any comprehensive solution is likely to require attention to AT, UDL, and their effective integration. However, some crucial distinctions must also be understood.”

Figure 1