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TAPESTRY recently caught up with Dr. James May, winner of 2011-2012 Carnegie Foundation Florida Professor of the Year award, at a recent state conference. Dr. May is currently a Professor of English as a Second Language at Valencia Community College in Orlando, Florida. His research focuses on helping teachers to incorporate Web 2.0 technologies into instruction. Dr. May graciously agreed to share some of his insights into issues surrounding technology in the modern classroom with TAPESTRY.

TAPESTRY: Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. My first question revolves around technology's importance. It is well established that technology is integral to learning in today's classroom. What types and kinds of technology do you find are appropriate for facilitating English language development in the K-12 environment?

Dr. James May: That is an interesting question, one with a variety of answers. When it comes to language development and technology, there are many different ways to take this. One is from a gaming theory perspective. We need to change learning from memorization and behavioral kinds of activities and start applying what we know about gaming theory and making learning fun and interactive. Consider Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's ideas on flow. Imagine if we could achieve flow in the classroom. In other words, when students play games, they don't realize time is passing, yet they're learning. This new conceptualization of learning changes things as we know them. Imagine a class like a video game, so that students forget they are there and forget that they are learning yet somehow walk away having learned. They wouldn't want to leave. With technology, we also have the ability to add audio input, we have the ability to create on-demand learning. Are you aware that 48 hours of video footage are uploaded into YouTube every minute of everyday? Simply put, there's a lot of content out there that is interesting to students, and they can develop language skills through content instruction using technologies such as phone devices, tablets, and Web 2.0 applications to name a few. I have found that using these tools sparks their creativity and their own internal desire to learn language. It's the technology that is the catalyst for that.

TAPESTRY: You mentioned technology as a catalyst for learning, beyond inspiring independent learning, what are some of the advantages of integrating technologies into the classroom?

JM: Well, the main benefit of technology for learning is that it is not just in the classroom. It's everywhere; it's on-demand. You have teachers out there developing content that is open-source, available for free and open for everybody to use. We have social media markets like Facebook and others where people are just freely giving of themselves and their knowledge, ideas, and opinions. If you go back in time to the late 1990's, there is no way that anyone would have thought that a free, open-source, shared space would have put Microsoft's Encarta encyclopedia out of business, but that is exactly what Wikipedia did. People now are freely creating things to share with others. Teachers should be doing the same thing. There just doesn't seem to be a pre-

or in-service share space where teachers are creating things…like a Wikipedia version of language learning. And there should be. Why isn't there? It's frustrating to me that we can't make that happen. And so it goes beyond the classroom. Students don't just have to have language for a small period of time during the day in a pull-out or sheltered class. They can have access to it from anywhere, and if we could add gaming, students would crave it.

TAPESTRY: So that would go along with content-area teachers attempting to develop language through the subject-area content. These teachers could use technologies like audio, translation service, etc. to break through the language barrier and allow English learners (ELs) to access content.

JM: Absolutely. The neat thing is that there is so much content out there that you can infuse with the technology through on-demand learning. You can go to the Khan Academy to bring in the sciences, because there is video for on-demand learning there. You can go to the Discovery Channel, the History Channel, and YouTube…anything you want to learn has the ability to be on-demand so teachers can utilize that. But there appears to be a fear…that we can't have the technology because we're not allowed to have technology or worse yet because teachers have not been trained on how to use the technology. K-12 markets of course are blocking it because of security risks. What's funny is that students will come to class and sit at school all day only to hope to get to the parking lot where they can legally take out their phones and reconnect with their world. Why can't we meet them and teach them in their world? It's like we're actually blocking them from doing what they do innately and thus it makes for a very boring experience for them. It is time for a paradigm shift in education.

TAPESTRY: Then, do you feel there is a disconnect between what is happening with our student population and what is happening in our teacher population in terms of technology use?

JM: Absolutely. We tend to follow an industrial revolution model for education and we're stamping out students and putting them into classrooms. We've gotten to a point now where we don't have to do that. We can give students more autonomy in their learning. Make learning on-demand for them and make them problem-solvers. Another benefit of that is the fact that when they get out into the job market, they'll be better prepared. As it is, we're trying to create students for jobs that will no longer exist. We're not using technology and creativity in a way that it should be used and that's frustrating. The system is almost blocking it from happening. I find that I use a lot of technology, and I share a lot of technology with teachers and they're always told the same things which often turn out to be urban legends, lies or misdirected beliefs about how certain technologies are against the rules. That's something that we really need to reevaluate.

TAPESTRY: What are some ways, at the pre-service or in-service levels, in which we can overcome this fear, this disconnect?

JM: Now we are back to that paradigm shift I was talking about. We are in a time of not only digital shift but millennial shift. We've got to shift in almost everything we're doing across the board. We have these so-called disruptive innovations; these cellphones and tablets are

"disruptive". They basically make what was good enough in teaching no longer good enough. But teachers want to live under the model that we are still good enough and we're not. If we're not shifting and changing with the digital age, we're in line to be outmoded much like the rotary phone has been. 25% of the American population now has cellphones rather than house phones; how long before none of us use phone lines? Eventually the s-curve will hit and we will have mass exodus from the current model. Is education as we know it the next Blockbuster? How do we innovate to become the Netflix of the education world? It is kind of scary if you think about it.

TAPESTRY: Interesting analogy! I know that in a move to integrate more technology into the classroom, the Florida Department of Education has mandated that all textbooks must be in e-book form by the 2015/2016 school year. Do you think that we are prepared to make this transition in three years?

JM: I think that students are prepared for us to do that. I don't think that the system is going to truly allow for that. But I hope it does. In 1913, Thomas Edison said that by the end of the decade books would be obsolete in schools. That everything a student can learn, he or she can learn through the eye, through motion pictures. That was a hundred years ago. But the institution of education has kind of stopped that from happening. We do have video on-demand; we do have the ability to learn through our eyes. If you think about history from the History Channel, science from the Discovery Channel, there is so much content out there that is readily available for students and if you look at other things and surveys and research into student interests, and why they're dropping out of school or not doing well in school, it has to do with interests. They don't see how anything that is happening in school relates to what they want to do or how they live their lives. They see that disconnect. That conversation is not happening enough from my perspective. I hope the books do go to e-book format, millennial students might be more willing to read the chapter if reading means digitally scanning or clicking on the text to speech button and having it read to them as they are mountain biking.

TAPESTRY: Given that we seem to recognize the importance of technology to reach students and that students are active and willing consumers of technology, what tools have you seen that teachers can easily use in the classroom to bridge this gap?

JM: County by county, depending on the rules and regulations of each, it is not easy for me to recommend technologies for K-12 teachers because the counties will ban them, and that is sad. That is what I have experienced in my research and in talking with many in the field. But, PowerPoint is long gone. There are other presentation models like Prezi, Animoto, Issuu, Voicethread, SoftChalk and many others that have taken over, not to mention the Mac products and tools being developed for the iPad. But from my perspective, we need to move beyond to shared creation models. I mentioned VoiceThread, which allows teachers to create content, and then students respond in audio and video discussions and change the content while they are talking about the content. Thus, students are able to create with the teacher and so it isn't an old stale PowerPoint that gets presented. Students get to interact with the content and share in its creation, adding their own thoughts in threaded video discussions. These technologies exist and they're out there and teachers can use them for free. Are teachers getting training on these technologies? There are so many out there that allow teachers to facilitate and that force students

to create and discover rather than be passive receivers of information. In 20th century teaching professors had the information and they would give it to the students. In 21st century teaching, the information is on demand, stored in transactive memory devices like your laptop, tablet, or cellphone. It may have been good enough to know and relate information in the 20th century, but in this century, students have to create information. The jobs that were based on the 20th century model are gone or they've been outsourced or replaced by technology. So the essential question is how do we develop kids' creativity? We need them creating; we need them developing; we need them designing. We need to foster their intrinsic drives rather than their extrinsic drives. So we need to flip the model, shift the paradigm, and spark their imaginations.

TAPESTRY: How do you learn of new technological tools for the classroom?

JM: In addition to conferences, and faculty development opportunities, I spend a lot of time reading or listening to books, articles, and blog posts. There are apps out there that can thread blog posts and articles together and then read them to you while you are walking or driving. I like to use RSS feed aggregators like Google Reader and apps like Audible and SpeakIt. SpeakIt actually takes articles I want to read and converts the text into audio files. I never realized I was such an auditory learner, but it has really increased the amount of content I can get through. I have gone through 6 books on Audible since TESOL in March. If I could only go back to grad school and know about Audible and the ability to export all of those articles and books into MP3 files that I could annotate and store for future access in free cloud spaces…what a world! Are grad students doing this? If not perhaps I should put something together for Central Florida TESOL's Fall Conference.

TAPESTRY: That is great for ELs to get the oral connection to text.

JM: Yes. You also have a new generation out there that is made up of non-readers. Not non-readers in the traditional sense that they cannot read; they can. They actually probably have read more than other generations because of how much they text and email. My 7 year olds have probably already sent more emails through their iPods than I sent (letters) in my entire childhood. And if you account for the number of average texts they're sending and receiving each day, they're reading more pages per day in word count than previous generations. But it's not the same. We have yet to see how this will impact their reading, writing, and thinking in the long-term. Check out Nicholas Carr's 2008 article in *The Atlantic* if you like this topic. But the genie is out of the bottle, I don't really see any going back. Therefore, for any teacher out there to keep up with her students, she is going to have to stay current. There are certain websites out there that I can recommend or certain key articles that pre-service and in-service teachers should read that might just spark an interest. And what I find is that technology becomes addictive. The more you play with technologies, the more you realize how much students love the learning. Teaching and learning becomes a game and you start to feel the Flow. That is what really got me into it. It was not technology for technology's sake, it is what my students were doing with technology and how engaged they were that keeps me hungry. Their desire makes me have desire to go find more to bring to them.

TAPESTRY: That really involves them in learning. What kinds of technology are beneficial specifically to language teaching and learning?

JM: Well, the neat thing about technology for language learning and analysis is that it is becoming more and more open-source in terms of being given away for free. From a lexical perspective take Tom Cobb's work out of the University of Montreal where you can go to a website now and cut and paste any text and turn it into a hypertext markup where any word is clickable and then you can hear what the word sounds like, you can read the definition of it, see its collocations and more, and that doesn't cost anything. Those are amazing tools. There are also companies out there that develop content development tools like Soft Chalk where you can make text rollover and not only rollover in terms of word meaning and sound, but you can actually make words rollover to images and video so as young ELs are reading, and they're unsure of what a word means, they rollover it and an image pops up as opposed to a dictionary definition. Those things are changing our reliance on others because all of us can create these things. In a socially mediated world, we don't all have to wait for a company to develop a product and sell it to us. We can all develop these things together, share them and learn from each other.

TAPESTRY: With these new technologies out there that can help achieve the type of autonomous learning and self-inquiry you mentioned previously, many teachers may be daunted by how rapidly technology is changing. What advice do you have for teachers for staying in-the-know, or how to keep up with the ever-evolving field of technology?

JM: Ask your students! I think the biggest obstacle to using technology in the classroom is a fear that it makes the teacher look inadequate if something goes wrong. Which is kind of funny to me because why don't teachers take that as an opportunity to mentor life long learning practices with their students? Unfortunately teachers tend to take the wrong attitude towards it. For example, I am sure you have heard English teachers saying things like. I am not a "Math Person" or "Tech Person." What does this model to their students? Would they be ok with their students saying, "I am not an English person"? In truth, we are all able to learn new things. We may not want to, we may be embarrassed of what others might think of us if we have to, but saying you are incapable of doing so models the wrong behavior to students. It also downgrades the importance of other disciplines and verifies that it is OK to quit. As far as I am concerned, (like reading and math) there should be technology across the curriculum, and we should be modeling life long learning of all skills to our students.

TAPESTRY: Thank you so much, Dr. May, for speaking with me today and sharing some of your insights with TAPESTRY. I also would like to congratulate you on your award as the Carnegie Foundation Florida Teacher of the Year. You also run a blog for teachers to learn more about new technological tools for the classroom, correct?

JM: Thank you and yes; my blog is teachertricks.org. When I learn about new technologies, I share them there. I also welcome guest bloggers, so let me know if any of your classmates are looking to test out blogging. I'm also always looking for new technologies, so if you come across any, please let me know!

TAPESTRY: Will do. Thanks again!

JM: You're welcome.

http://tapestry.usf.edu/journal

For some of Dr. May's suggested resources with how-to videos and articles, visit his blog, Teacher Tricks at http://teachertricks.org/

To learn more about some of the technologies mentioned in this interview, visit the developers' websites below.

Audible   http://www.audible.com/
Audible provides users access to a large audiobook database through Internet browsers or via its mobile phone application.

VoiceThread   http://voicethread.com/
VoiceThread allows teachers to upload and share documents, presentations, images, audio files, and videos to a cloud application. Students discuss the content using a microphone, webcam, text, mobile phone, or audio file.

Compleat Lexical Tutor   http://www.lextutor.ca/
Lextutor is an online concordancer where researchers, teachers, and students can explore how particular words are used in authentic discourse.

Prezi   http://prezi.com/
Prezi is a cloud-based presentation software tool that allows users to creating zooming presentations as an alternative to Microsoft PowerPoint.

Animoto   http://animoto.com/
Animoto is a photo- and video-sharing tool where users can create and narrate digital stories and musical slideshows.

Issuu   http://issuu.com/
Issuu is a digital publishing outlet where users can publish their own literary works and read others for free.

SoftChalk   http://softchalk.com/
Softchalk allows teachers to create their own interactive online courses and lessons.

The editors of TAPESTRY would like to thank Dr. James May for taking the time to contribute this interview to our journal.