

# MCC Campus Connections Podcast - Episode 7: Ryan Mudder

## *Podcast Transcript*

**Geovanny Mayorga** 0:04

All right, welcome once again to MCC Campus Connections. We are recording from our downtown location at LaSalle, 203 North LaSalle. You can find us on YouTube, Spotify, Amazon Music, Apple Podcasts. You can contact us at [podcast@mcccollege.edu](mailto:podcast@mcccollege.edu). We look forward to hearing from you. Today we're going to do things a little bit different. We have with us Shaudy Martinez, who's going to be our co-host for today. Welcome Shaudy, how are you?

**Shaudy Martinez** 0:43

Good, super excited again.

**Geovanny Mayorga** 0:45

Yeah, you were a previous guest on one of our episodes. You obviously liked it and wanted to come back and do it again.

**Shaudy Martinez**

Yes, definitely.

**Geovanny Mayorga**

Wonderful. And we have Ryan Mudder, who is our international admissions manager. You're fairly new to MCC, correct?

**Ryan Mudder** 1:07

As of last November.

**Geovanny Mayorga** 1:08

So last November. Has it been that long already?

**Ryan Mudder 1:12**

Yeah, the new year just goes by really fast.

**Geovanny Mayorga 1:15**

Since last year. Wonderful. So first of all, I'm excited to have both of you. We're gonna do things a little bit different because we have three people instead of just two - the international team. We'll get started getting to know Ryan a little bit more since you're our latest addition. And you're not from the Midwest, which I always find fascinating when I speak to people that are not from the Midwest. So where are you from?

**Ryan Mudder 1:52**

South Dakota. Actually, I'm not from Chicago, so for us it's like the "other Midwest," right? Originally from South Dakota from a small town called Avon. I always call it the village because it's probably about 500 people or so. Most people live in the countryside. There's the actual town center itself, but yeah, I was there for at least a good 19-20 years of my life. It's a small community, rural farm community. Your school is basically kindergarten, preschool all the way to senior year. That's basically my educational background for my early youth.

**Geovanny Mayorga 2:37**

Wow. Do you still have connections with the people you went to school with?

**Ryan Mudder 2:41**

Yeah, I mean, a few people I still talk to or know of them through word of mouth, social media, Facebook, of course. Even when you go back - I haven't been home for a while - but I know if I go back there, people probably know me even if I don't remember them just because it's such a small community, very close knit. Most people know you by your last name. They probably know your parents or people in your family background. It's one of those situations where everyone knows each other. So yeah, it's a very familiar place.

**Geovanny Mayorga 3:19**

Do you find that people who live in small towns stay in small towns?

**Ryan Mudder 3:24**

For the most part, yes. In the past, like my parents' age, it was more common to stay in a small town or stay in the state. In my experience, most people - for example, my class majority - have stayed in the state because that's just a trend. If people don't stay in the small town, they go to the larger city like Sioux Falls, maybe Rapid City for school, work, employment opportunities. That is a trend. But looking back at home in Avon, there's still people there. But I think most people nowadays once they finish high school, they do tend to move. Or if they stay, they might stay for family farms, agricultural work, maybe they have a connection.

**Shaudy Martinez 4:14**

I was about to ask the same thing, because my reference is the movies. And we always see that people from small towns always dream to get out of that.

**Ryan Mudder 4:28**

That was the dream at one point. But again, it's not the common dream of most people. Even in my senior year, it's very common for people to go to either one of the two state colleges - either they go to USD, University of South Dakota, or they go to SDSU, South Dakota State University where I went. If they don't go to those two state colleges, they'll go to maybe a specialty college, or they might go out of state. But it's at least a good 90% probably stay in state.

**Geovanny Mayorga**

How do you get out of state?

**Ryan Mudder**

It depends. People I know that went out of state probably had a scholarship. Some neighboring states like Minnesota usually have a deal with us, so we're considered in-state tuition. I almost went to university in Minneapolis or Minnesota. They had an offer. There was a place in Marshall, Minnesota - Southwest Minnesota State University - they also do in-state tuition. So that would be one opportunity. And if someone didn't do that, it's a different situation. Maybe they did something else or they had something else they could use to go out of state. But generally, it's in-state only.

**Geovanny Mayorga 5:43**

So your transition from Avon, which is a smaller town, to when you went to university - what was that transition like?

**Ryan Mudder 5:54**

I always make the reference: I kept going up and up and up. SDSU is in Brookings, South Dakota. It's more of a farm town to me, but since it has that university, it's more of a college town. The population goes from 500 like I had in Avon to about maybe 16,000 because of the university. So it is a small adjustment. And I always think at first when you go to a bigger place or biggest city or new city, it feels like it's bigger. But after a while, it seems like it's still a small town to me. The last time I was in Brookings, I can still remember the streets. It doesn't feel like it's that big. Of course, if you go during college off-season or whatever, it's less people because most people leave. So it goes from 16,000 to maybe 8,000 when school is not in session or during summer break.

**Geovanny Mayorga 6:23**

Oh yeah, I mean, it's a big thing.

**Ryan Mudder 6:25**

I remember always in summer or in August when school starts up - this group of people just coming in, and you can't really go shopping anywhere because it's so busy. There's so many people coming in and people are moving. A very common Midwestern thing is when your child is going to university, you take them to university, you help them move. It's like a family thing. Always someone's crying because it's the first time. For those three days it's always busy. Even when I worked for international students, maybe my second or third year, I'd help international students at my university. Hey, welcome to your new school, welcome to a new cultural setting - like an orientation. So yeah, we would do pre-orientation, helping them adjust because it's not going to be very similar or maybe what they knew from movies is a little bit different, because I can't really think of an accurate movie or series that depicts my home, other than Western romance movies, which aren't even accurate because I mean, that's like Wild Bill.

**Shaudy Martinez 8:06**

But for international students it's different because probably they don't have their parents here. They are alone. So things that help them - it's good to have that orientation at that time. Totally new country, new college, new everything.

**Ryan Mudder 8:22**

And that's like always having to have these small communities of international friends. I've been in some groups here and there, helping people find a group so they can connect with someone, especially during the holidays. Most people leave, but they can't. There are holidays and maybe things you celebrated back home or in your culture. That's something I always tried to help get people involved or find that connection. And that's where a lot of my friends came from in that background too. So it gave me more of that cultural insight. Because back home when I was growing up in the village, it's not very diverse. Yeah, we have TV, we have the internet, but you don't actually experience multicultural things until you actually get involved and meet people.

**Shaudy Martinez 9:11**

I don't know if you have the same experience, but when I was in Venezuela, I didn't have any contact with international people at all. So I was in my town, in my city. All my friends were from my neighborhood. So yeah, once I left the country, I really started to understand, learn, connect and appreciate the differences and similarities. But I didn't have any contact with international people.

**Ryan Mudder 9:41**

Even in my home school in Avon, we'd get occasionally one international student. I always kind of felt it was strange for them because, okay, you came from Norway, you came from Spain, you came from Korea to this small farm town. They probably had no idea what they were getting into, because they probably went through some sort of agency or a company, then they just send them. But yeah, some had fun. I don't think - I don't know of any that had a bad experience. But I think it's a very different experience than you would maybe have thought of when you started.

**Geovanny Mayorga 10:20**

Was college - or the university - was that a little bit more diverse? Or was it still mainly people from South Dakota or North Dakota?

**Ryan Mudder 10:28**

SDSU is more diverse, because of course you have your typical Midwestern South Dakotans here, but then you also have an international community, because the university specializes in agricultural studies, nursing studies. So some of my international friends were probably more in agricultural, or they're doing maybe a

STEM kind of college situation. I had a friend from Colombia, and she studied bees, which is really interesting, because I didn't know we had an actual department for that. Think of the Smithsonian - they have all those specimen samples of bees. That was at my university. So I got to see that. That's cool. I had a friend from both Mexico and Bolivia - they did a lot of agricultural stuff. They're doing testing different kinds of seeds and planting, which again, agricultural state is what we use for that. So yeah, it was a nice opportunity to learn more the international side. It's more diverse than just what I had at home.

**Geovanny Mayorga 11:25**

So what was it that you originally wanted to study once you got to university?

**Ryan Mudder 11:29**

So I'm one of those classic - you know, I changed my major a few times. Students are like, "What?" Anyways, when I initially entered SDSU, I was a biology major, because in high school I did well in biology. I liked it, I understood the material and thought, "Okay, this could be an opportunity." So my first year I did biology, which was okay. But my second semester of my freshman year - hey, it's a little bit different than what I had in my school education, because the chemistry and the physics are more advanced. I wasn't doing as well. So at some point, I kind of had to make a decision that was like, "Okay, maybe this isn't for me, maybe I'm not doing too well."

In my university, they have your first year - like a buddy system of some sort. I don't remember the name of it. But they help you when it comes to, "Okay, you're not maybe academically performing well in certain classes. Here's some study groups, here's what you can do." I took advantage, but at some point it's like, "Okay, this is not going to work for me, because I'm not doing as well as I did," which is culture shock in a sense. Education from home was very focused on test taking, because that was the trend at the time to go to university. But what you study and learn here is not test taking - it changes your whole perspective.

So basically, my following semester, I took a semester off, because it gives you the option to take a break and come back next semester, which I did. After that came back, I believe I chose park management, because my state's known for natural parks, state parks. I worked at a state park briefly as well during the break. I switched my major to park management, and then that following spring semester

- despite its winter - there were some budget cuts. So that program was then canceled.

**Geovanny Mayorga** 12:29

No option.

**Ryan Mudder** 12:54

Next option is I'm already going to start the semester, so I switched to undecided, which is basically you do general requirements, you take a class to kind of discover yourself. Which at first, it sounds kind of silly to take a class like that and pay college credit for that. But it was that class that helped me realize, "Okay, you do well at teaching, you do languages, you have opportunities." That's something to explore, which I did. And that's where I changed to more international studies. Then eventually, when I started that for the following semester, I decided to do more languages, since I had more background in that way.

We have an opportunity to take a placement test, which is very familiar around most schools. When you take a language course you take a placement test to see where you're at. I had taken German prior. I didn't really feel like I'd continue with German, because again at that time - I mean, it's not horrible, but also Spanish is more common and more practical. I had taken two years in high school. So when I decided, "Let's try Spanish," took a placement test, I got basically intermediate, which is about B1, B2. And the other nice convenience of that was that my university has a deal where you can basically buy the credits for all the lower levels to fast track your degree, which is convenient because at that time, I don't want to stay longer because it can be more expensive.

And then - okay, continue with it, did Spanish, and that was my further choice. And then by the following couple years, graduated basically with a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish with a minor of English, because at that time there wasn't really an ESL program. There was one for more teaching in K through 12 settings. But I knew I didn't want to teach in K through 12, just because of personal preference. I preferred more the international side. So I kind of tried to take courses that were relevant, did some volunteering that helped me determine, "Is this the career for me?"

Which was great too, because one class I had for Global Studies, the requirement was to volunteer in your community. And I volunteered for - long name - Lutheran

Social Services Refugee Immigration Center, where you basically teach English to incoming refugees, immigrants, or anyone that might be new to the country. And that opportunity really helped me, you know, "Yeah, this is what I want to do for a career."

**Shaudy Martinez** 16:02

And also you helped the students, as you mentioned before, in pre-orientation.

**Ryan Mudder** 16:08

Yeah, so I was always involved in international students and studies. I even did a radio show like this, kind of similar, for a language group. There was the International Coffee Night, which I helped get involved. At some point, I just became more like a co-host by choice. I didn't have to, but I wanted to, because it was a great place to meet people, make connections, learn more about other people - where they come from, why they're here. I've always been involved in international situations and communities, and I liked that. So that also made me think, "Yep, I want to do this for my career and continue with it."

**Geovanny Mayorga** 16:45

And that's how you made the transition to—

**Ryan Mudder** 16:50

Natural sight, yeah.

**Geovanny Mayorga** 16:52

Well, you made a move and made a move to Midwest after that.

**Ryan Mudder** 16:56

After that, yep. So I guess I keep going up and up. Basically, after I graduated, I moved to Sioux Falls, which is the largest city in South Dakota - officially almost 200,000 population now, according to the recent census. So I was working for my first year after graduation. I was still volunteering, and at some point during that time, I knew that I wanted to get my certification for teaching English abroad. There was a class in Minneapolis. So I did that for a brief month. And then when I came back, I got a job at the place I was volunteering as a full-fledged beginning English teacher. Did that for a couple years. And eventually, again, it's one of those decisions you have to make for yourself - am I going to stay here or is there



a better opportunity somewhere else? Which I did. I found one in Minneapolis, and I ended up moving to Minneapolis. So the next big city.

**Shaudy Martinez 17:55**

That job I think is one of the hardest ones to be a beginner teacher, because you take students from zero, and it is hard for them to understand you. So you have to have a lot of skills to make them understand.

**Ryan Mudder 18:11**

Exactly, because different schools I worked at - they're like nonprofit schools, or some that are more for-profit universities, private language centers. I think we talked about that difference too. And it is true - when you work in some cities or some schools that are more nonprofit, some students you get are legitimate false beginners. They have no experience in the language, never had exposure possibly. Or there might be an initial beginner where yeah, they might listen to English somewhere, but never formal study. Or I'd have people - I specifically work with adults back in Sioux Falls - these are people who never even learned how to write in their own language. So I'd have people from Nepal who, of course, their background, never learned literacy in their own language. So you have to take that into consideration when you're trying to teach this person new language, a new cultural setting, a new environment, adjusting to the USA, you know, all that fun stuff. So it can be difficult. Yes.

**Shaudy Martinez 19:15**

It is hard for an adult to feel like they really don't control anything and don't know anything. Yeah. It is a hard job to be the first one. I think I would think about it if they offered me to just teach beginners because it is really hard.

**Ryan Mudder 19:34**

Well, then I moved to Minneapolis. I was working for another nonprofit school. My new school setting was basically more grassroots. I was teaching classes, I think four days a week at this retirement home of former students that were from abroad. So I had a class of Russian-speaking grandmas, and some Ethiopians, because in that area of technically St. Paul - because Twin Cities. When I first entered the class, I was kind of surprised - "Oh, these are all mature students who come from different backgrounds." Each has different levels of English, because even when people tell me like, "Oh, I'm B1, B2, whatever," no one truly is that level

as a teacher. When you teach a class of this level, people are at that level, above, in between. It's not one level across. So the first day just getting to know people - "Oh, we're from Belarus, we're from Russia, Ukraine, from Ethiopia." So then getting used to the new students, what they need to learn, what do I need to teach them, because when you work for nonprofit, typically there are certain rules, policies you have to do and teach, especially if grants are involved.

So even though I'm teaching a group of mature students who are retired, I still have to incorporate job skills, which is a requirement from Minnesota for adult ESL learners, or do occasional testing - like the testing I did in high school - for them, which they loved. Joke.

**Geovanny Mayorga 21:10**

But what are the different - because I'm not sure that I know - what are the different levels of learning language?

**Ryan Mudder 21:18**

So I mean, level-wise, it really determines or depends on some factors like what scale we're using. Think of the components when you learn a language: you have listening, reading, writing, speaking. Grammar is considered a fifth - multiple, four, but this is five. Those are some aspects you look into for a level. So depending on what kind of test procedure we're doing, or what system we're using, that can correlate to a certain level, depending on how they do on a placement test. So in Minnesota, I believe it's called CASAS testing.

**Geovanny Mayorga 21:55**

But the levels go from 1, 2, 3, 4, 5?

**Ryan Mudder 21:59**

Yeah, so you go from your beginner to advanced or professional. The beginner would be - I mean, I know CEFR is A0, A1, B is elementary. It really gets complex. And that's where it's harder, because there's different standards. Again, if I remember in Minnesota, it's like, well technically it's like an A1, are they considered just as beginner? So, beginners...

**Shaudy Martinez 22:26**

A0 is you learn numbers.

**Ryan Mudder 22:30**

Yeah, they usually base it on A1.

**Shaudy Martinez 22:33**

You can construct a sentence, you know more things. Just start from that. Yeah, I will use this. I mean, right now, I explain to our students that, because sometimes they feel like they know more than the level they are. But they have to be in a level, in a specific level, so that all their skills have to be at the same level. And sometimes they speak very well, but they really don't know the grammar. Or they are lacking some listening skills. But they speak very well and they believe that they are ready, they know English. And that's the idea - to have them all in the same level, but with all their skills.

**Ryan Mudder 23:26**

Yeah, that's true. And then that's like you mentioned too - you'll have some people that have maybe higher speaking skills, lower literacy, or the inverse - they have more literacy, less speaking.

**Shaudy Martinez 23:35**

Oh usually writing, they're better in writing and reading. Yeah, but when they are going to express themselves...

**Ryan Mudder 23:42**

So as a teacher, you learn how to address all those - know your learners. What are their strengths? What are some things I need to improve upon or need help with? Even though you teach one level, you have multiple levels within that level, and you have to address and try to be able to teach everyone. Can they work together on these activities, these projects? So that's definitely a teacher skill.

**Shaudy Martinez 24:07**

It's a challenge for them. Yeah.

**Geovanny Mayorga 24:10**

My original language, my native language is Spanish. I was born here in Chicago, but I grew up in Guatemala, Guatemala City. I learned - we moved when I was one year old. So I learned Spanish as my first language. I was only in Guatemala City up to third grade. So in terms of the Spanish language in terms of grammar, obviously I only learned up to third grade. And while I'm sure like you, Shaudy, we had English classes - I went to Catholic school, and I had English classes - I mean,

it was very basic stuff. "What's your name," that type of stuff, but it's just not conversational. I was not at a conversational level. So when I moved back when I was 9, 10 years old - I mean, even though I, you know, "What's your name," that type of stuff, but it's just not conversational. I couldn't be in a classroom because I didn't understand.

So then I was sent to a bilingual class where they were going over math and science and all this stuff. But you know, all that stuff, I was well advanced in with the exception of English. And it's like, how do I catch up? Obviously, eventually, once you get into - I don't know if it was high school - I took a Spanish class, but more so for the grammar and writing, as opposed to learning. Because as a child who's going to learn and pick up quicker - as an adult, I'm sure it's a little bit - and you can tell me your experience - how difficult it is to pick it up or not to pick it up, to learn the language.

**Shaudy Martinez 26:05**

But yeah, definitely. I recall I was studying English back home before I came, and I was in intermediate level. Yeah. No, no. When I arrived here, I knew how to write sentences.

**Geovanny Mayorga 26:22**

Difference. Yeah.

**Shaudy Martinez 26:27**

It was super challenging, because I thought I was intermediate level. I mean, no. No, I was totally lost. I started lower intermediate, like B1. But no.

**Ryan Mudder 26:42**

I've been volunteering back in my university town, because that was those side projects. You study like some schools I went to - very similar to you. It's like, "Okay, I'm assigned to this school, this middle school, I'm helping a student from Mexico kind of adjust." They're similar. They place them into the special - not special classes - but like, this is a language class to improve. In this one child I was working with from Mexico - he understands the material. He just can't do it in English. And the teacher's like, "Hey, we try to talk to the parents, but they don't speak English." So you have to be that middle person and translate at parent teacher conferences, "What do the grades mean?" Usually the parents' most important question is, "How's my child doing?" Of course, parents. "Hey, you

know, he's doing well, he understands material, we just need to practice writing in English." And that's it. So it gives me more insight because I don't have that similar background. You asked me about learning grammar - the only time I recall learning English grammar was maybe eighth grade. And we used these old textbooks from the '80s and did a lot of underlining sentences, parsing, which is not the most up-to-date method. And that's the only time I recall actually studying grammar in English. Despite that I grew up in the USA.

**Shaudy Martinez 28:05**

And I the same, I feel that because, well, I grew up in Venezuela, so I know - and also I studied journalism - so I know grammar. But here I heard Spanish. I listen to Spanish speakers that were born here, and they are lacking grammar skills. But they speak Spanish, or some pronunciation and things. So you that studied Spanish also.

**Ryan Mudder 28:39**

For a good majority of my life, maybe.

**Shaudy Martinez 28:42**

We are here. We are three Spanish speakers, I guess.

**Ryan Mudder 28:47**

I'd say like how long - so I did two years of Spanish in high school, which at that time it was very basic Spanish. I don't think it's even level specific. I wanted to take it just because I wanted to learn the language. For once, because I had the opportunity afterwards - like fast forward when I was at university and then took Spanish again - well, I can remember these concepts, that very basic stuff. Grammar wasn't the best because prior we didn't really learn grammar, we just read books that were for children.

**Shaudy Martinez 29:17**

In elementary school or high school, do you think it's still basic Spanish? Like we learn basic English in our countries. But do you learn here basic Spanish?

**Ryan Mudder 29:28**

It's very basic. I remember in high school when we start learning about verb conjugations - which at first I never heard that before. It's like, "What's a conjugation?" And then of course we do it. But in high school, I specifically

remember, "Okay, we're going to do your basics but we're not going to do vosotros because we don't use it here." Which looking back didn't really help because later when I did a study abroad in Spain, where they use vosotros a lot - luckily when I went to university, my wonderful teachers, shout out to them at the Modern Language Department, retaught me things that I didn't know or helped me. "This is the actual Spanish you need to know, not just your specific grammatical Spanish."

**Shaudy Martinez 30:08**

But it's in the university level where you think Spanish becomes more formal.

**Ryan Mudder 30:14**

Yeah. So I remember in university, we learned more like, "Okay, you have your general Spanish." But then again, I remember the advice I was given - once you learn enough to feel confident, you kind of need to pick a region. Are you gonna study more Spanish in Spain? Are you gonna study more like Mexican, Argentinian? And my one professor gave me that advice: "Pick a region and stick to it." Because if you decided to learn all the regions, it's gonna be very difficult. What's true. So that's why eventually, when I did my study abroad in Spain, the bulk of what I had - the real practice with - is Spain Spanish, which is hard to determine what that is. So yeah, I would say looking back from high school, people who study Spanish today, especially my friends who do Spanish Immersion School back in Sioux Falls, I think they learn more general Spanish that can be used for all Spanish speakers. Because once you start to advance, again, you have to choose where do you want to focus on.

**Geovanny Mayorga 31:17**

Right.

**Ryan Mudder 31:18**

Which, in my mind, we don't think of that in English. For do you know American English or do you know British English when there's a whole global English concept, or there's more people who speak English as a second or third language than native speakers? So...

**Geovanny Mayorga 31:34**

Yeah. So then how did you make your transition from Minnesota to Chicago?

**Ryan Mudder 31:40**

Moving up and up. At that point, I think after about a year or so in Minneapolis, there was an opportunity to teach English at Kaplan here in Chicago. So it was like, "Well, you know, this is really like - Kaplan was a big school." So I did that, applied, got the job, and 2018 when I first moved to Chicago. And then yeah, I went from teaching more from the nonprofit to more a private language center, which gave me more of the international perspective, because by then teaching English at Kaplan, these are students that are of course more knowledgeable. They're recent graduates from bachelor's and master's, or they're just tourists. So it gives you more of a different perspective on the international side. It's like when I was in university, the students I'm talking to now are just like the people I had back in my university, the only difference is I'm out as the teacher or administration, basically.

**Geovanny Mayorga 32:37**

Then you found your way to MCC.

**Ryan Mudder 32:41**

Moving on up and up. There was a unique position available, and I decided I'm gonna take it because I got the experience and skills. And you know, even though I started as a teacher at Kaplan 2018, at some point, I kind of transitioned to more administration, which I liked a little bit more, because on the admin side of things, you're more involved with the students, not just the students in your classroom. And even though I was doing admin at Kaplan, I was still able to teach here and there or get to know people and make those connections, even after people finished. So when I saw this position at MCC, I was like, "You know what, it's a great opportunity. It gives me more of a side to help people who are applying from abroad, people who are transferring to change the status." And I have experience in that since I did admissions prior at Kaplan as well. So that's kind of why I came here. And also I've known of Midwestern for a while. So moving on up.

**Geovanny Mayorga 33:39**

We talked about - well, obviously, I learned English at a different age. You know, I was younger. Shaudy, a little bit older. We've talked a little bit about that. There's really no age to learn it. And I'm sure aside from the diversity that we have here, we have age diversity as well. Talk a little bit about that.

**Ryan Mudder 34:03**

So I've had - I mean, people always ask me, "Okay, you teach adults, but what ages do you teach? What's the youngest? What's the oldest?" The youngest, I'd probably say - I know at one point we had 15-year-olds, or 14-year-olds. Or again, I was doing volunteer work in elementary schools, middle schools - these are people who are eight. My favorite is one student I had back in Minneapolis, St. Paul. She was Russian. She was 104, learning English. And you know, I still tell the story, because when people say, "You know, I'm too old to learn a language." Well, I had a student who was 104. I checked. At first it's kind of like, "Maybe it's a different ID or verification." I checked - 104. And yeah, she was very unique. Despite that she had a hearing aid, she can still participate, she learned. So having that mindset changed my perspective - you're not that old or you can learn at any age. It's no excuse. It's your own excuse. And yeah, she started probably learning at 90. She was from Russia. So at 90, she became a published author. She wrote some articles for a Russian magazine, I think. And then she was just learning English because that was the opportunity. So yeah, she participated, despite age being a factor, health. She could hear with the hearing aid, and she would still come to class. So that made me more inspired - "You know what, I can do this, you can do this." Or anytime a student tells me, "I can't, I'm too old." No, you're not. Try it, put the effort into it. Think of reasons why you want to do it. Or how to teach yourself better.

**Shaudy Martinez 35:52**

I'm inspired. I mean, as soon as we finish, I'm gonna start writing my book. Definitely. I mean, students, I mean, this - you have to come to classes. I mean, no excuses. Learn English, learn any language. Do you think learning a new language is definitely a blast, but how does it make you as a person? I don't know. Like, that open mind - I don't know, learning a language opens your mind in different ways. Yeah.

**Ryan Mudder 36:24**

I talked to a friend about this. And we were talking about our experiences, because we both did something similar with languages. You know, her background was more in French. It's more like, "Okay, learning a new language was like opening a new door to yourself." And think of your personality - how are you when you speak Spanish? How are you when you speak English? How do you



act when you speak French? So it definitely does open doors, and does open your perspective and can change you in a way. Because I remember even when I came back from studying in Spain, my mom's like, "You sound different." Like, "Well, okay, I just came back from a different country where the language is not technically English as a native language. So of course, I'm adjusting." But yeah, it does change you. Even friends I talked to, people who maybe know me before, are like, "Oh, you talk different," but not in a bad way. More like, "Okay, you talk in a way that's more easy to understand." Like, "You've been teaching for the last quite a few years." So yeah, definitely. And as well, how do you incorporate that? A lot of students have asked, "How can I learn listening? How can I learn this? What are some things you do every day? When you go home, what's the first thing you do?" "I watch Netflix." "Okay. How about you watch something on Netflix in English or whatever language you're learning? Subtitles?" Yeah. I mean, my favorite is the Friends method, where I think this Korean band on the Ellen Show said, "We learned English through Friends." My sister did that. I've got friends who've done this. Through the series. I have a friend who learned all his English from basically TV shows. And the way you could do it is very similar. Watch the whole series in English - or maybe in your language - with subtitles. Watch again, put English subtitles. Watch a third time in English, no subtitles. And you could - I've tried it myself. But it's hard because sometimes I watch shows where I know the actor's voice. Then you hear a different voice. It's hard. Yeah.

**Geovanny Mayorga 38:24**

Both of you obviously - Shaudy, you participated in part of your ESL program here at MCC. Now you're the manager for admissions. What are some of the highlights about our programs? What differentiates our program versus others?

**Ryan Mudder 38:40**

Well, I will say coming from other schools I've worked at, there's more flexibility. That's a plus. The classes you take here are definitely useful, depending on what your goal is. Because like we mentioned, some classes are level based. But a typical thing at most schools is, "What happens after you finish levels? Where do I go next?" So at MCC, you have options for that. They complete the levels, they can do professional English, and academic English is great for university prep, or if they really want to, they can transition towards associate programs, which is great because that's usually what most of my students in the past would do - they

would apply to university, a master's program. But depending how that goes - like in admissions itself - but MCC, you have the options for the business programs, you've got accounting, and there's health programs. So to me, and to all the schools I've worked in the past, there's more opportunities for international students than just, "Okay, English is done, move on." You actually can stay at MCC and continue something great.

**Geovanny Mayorga** 39:46

Right. Shaudy?

**Shaudy Martinez** 39:47

Our students already had a career in their countries - their bachelor's from their country, or they already had a master. But our associates complement all of that, and it's a way to not stop and or get stuck, like, "Okay, I learned English." But now, as you're saying, so it is - yeah, MCC has that good option. Yeah.

**Ryan Mudder** 40:11

I've had students who, you know, in Chicago go from one English school to the other and the other. And you know, that's great. But at some point, you kind of have to do something more productive and worth your time and value. Because I mean, you're learning English for the sixth time at this school - is great, but maybe if you want to do something like marketing, that's a great option to get that associate's, an entry level requirement. You could potentially either look for a job or possibly do an internship. At MCC, there's also the options for CPT, OPT, which is great as well, because you can get work experience as a student. So it builds towards a future path, which is great.

**Shaudy Martinez** 40:54

Also, when you feel like you learned English - I mean, we never stop learning a language. This is definitely - I can speak by myself, because I got at some point, like, "I don't want to write an essay anymore, or the same things we do in ESL programs." So when MCC opened the business program, I immediately switched to that program. So I still continue learning English, but I was - I feel that I was advancing. It wasn't a different level. But we never stopped learning the language. I'm still making mistakes. I make mistakes.

**Ryan Mudder** 41:40

Everyone does. My favorite - when you learn a language, my favorite thing is always, "Okay, even though you make mistakes, you learn that way." Because even in my background, I've made many mistakes in Spanish, but those are funny mistakes to me, because again, it's a language difference. And that helps you learn or at least you remember that better than trying to memorize 2,000 words. To each their own, but to me, it's just easier to learn by actually doing it versus just studying over and over these vocab that you might not use. Or if you work for a business situation or a degree of some sort, you're using the English skills or language because you have an actual real life situation, which the more practical use...

**Shaudy Martinez 42:26**

It's okay. Yeah, sometimes I correct myself, sometimes no. But this is life, this is my English. And it's okay.

**Geovanny Mayorga 42:33**

I think the most important thing is to be able to do it - go out, enroll, wherever it is. Just start. Once you get started, you know, you find yourself and you get the confidence to be able to do something. We're wrapping up. Anything else you have in mind?

**Ryan Mudder 42:56**

It's the Q&A portion.

**Ryan Mudder 43:00**

We have quick questions here. No, no, we don't have. Awesome. It is awesome to have you here.

**Geovanny Mayorga 43:08**

Yeah, welcome. Where do you see the program going? The ESL program going?

**Ryan Mudder 43:14**

Well, I know that we're looking at more applicants from abroad and we are getting more people from abroad to apply, which is great, because I mean, again, these are opportunities that people have and maybe they didn't know of. Or again, people looking to have the opportunity to study abroad, maybe advance a career, or at least get more insight of what they can do when they're here. That's a great option. So that's great for me, because again, some of these countries - for

example, Colombia, of course, which most of my friends are Colombian. There's opportunities, and that's a great way to start.

**Shaudy Martinez** 43:50

What are the countries that represent our students?

**Ryan Mudder** 43:54

I'd say now definitely Colombia, Brazil, Mongolia, which to me is unique because every school I worked at, there's always this unique group of students which you didn't expect, but then you see some Mongolians. Getting to know more and more. I've seen more from Turkmenistan - took me a while - exactly. I haven't really had very, I would say countries that are not common until now. I'm like, "Wow, getting more applicants from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan." Of course, my Colombians, Venezuelans as well.

**Shaudy Martinez** 44:33

Some Venezuelans here. Yeah.

**Ryan Mudder** 44:34

It's my favorite. You can try listening to Venezuelan Spanish.

**Shaudy Martinez** 44:40

We thought that we didn't have any accent.

**Ryan Mudder** 44:43

Everyone has one. So like everyone has their own accent of some sort. And yeah, if you ever watched the fun videos for English, I just watched one maybe a couple of days ago. It was a person who is from Wisconsin versus Minnesota. It's your typical Midwestern states. There are some features that are different, or vowels are differently pronounced, or might be some variants here and there. Even me when someone asked me or told me, "You have an accent back at university," I'm like, "What do you mean?" "Say your state, South Dakota." Like, "Oh, all right." Then you can hear it. You get the "Oh." So I don't know, I can get that. Yeah, it's - I mean, you can kind of pick it up here and there. But if I were to go to maybe West Coast states or New York, they might pick up Midwestern. But in my defense, I think Midwestern English accents are kind of easier to understand. They're neutral. We don't have any kind of difficult to understand features. But maybe, yeah, probably.

**Geovanny Mayorga 45:44**

US accents are easier than say, you know, Irish. Yeah.

**Ryan Mudder 45:51**

It's more like I remember one - Scottish accents are difficult. I had students try to - pretend, "Okay, you want to pretend you are a real New Yorker, I want to hear your best impression of someone from New York." And they went, you know, I would play a video that kind of helps. Kind of, I mean, "coffee," like those things. We'd watch the video first, and they kind of practice.

**Geovanny Mayorga 46:16**

In college, there was a classmate that was from England. I can't remember which part of England. But there were times that I did not - I could not understand what he was saying. It was just like, "Say that again."

**Ryan Mudder 46:30**

Yeah, I've had coworkers too that, you know, the UK side of things. And one guy came over to visit for a work event. There were a few times it was kind of like, "What, what did you ask me for?" Because again, the expressions are different. Yeah, and fun fact, it's usually vowels are different among English. So whether they speak some sort of British variety, North American variety, it's the vowels are probably gonna be different. If it's not vowels, it's probably gonna be maybe some phrases, verbs. Just like in Spanish, too.

**Shaudy Martinez 47:04**

I ran the conversation club here at MCC just to also challenge myself. But we discussed this week that one of our students, she said that she couldn't understand the teacher. And I told her, "Don't worry, you will get used to it because of her accent." And so don't worry, we have an advantage that nobody has. We know how to understand English from international people. We recognize the words coming from an Asian, from a Persian, from, I don't know, Turkmenistan. This is unique. I always put the example of my sister because she learned English, she is also an English teacher. But she is also always around Americans. When an international student or someone is close to me and talks to me, she always asks me, "I didn't get anything." "Yeah, just a few words." But I understood everything. Because I think this is an advantage.

**Ryan Mudder 47:43**

Similar to me. After teaching a while, you kind of learn how to understand if that person doesn't feel confident. My favorite are the people - "Sorry for my English." Like, "You spoke fine. I understood everything, you do not need to apologize." Or people who are just too nervous, and instead will show you the phone screen with Google Translate. And I'm like, "Hey, it's okay. I mean, I've taught for 20 years, I can kind of understand what you're saying or I'm used to it."

**Geovanny Mayorga 48:10**

I think a lot of it is just fear. Fear of not sounding correctly, or fear of making - whatever it is - you've got to get over that fear.

**Ryan Mudder 48:20**

Yeah.

**Geovanny Mayorga 48:21**

So I think it's been a while. I really enjoyed the conversation. It's been a wonderful conversation, talking a little bit about everything, mainly Spanish and ESL. Until the next one, we should do another one - panel discussion. Why not? Yes. Yes. So I want to thank both - the co-host Shaudy for being here and Ryan, our ESL admissions manager. I think it's been a great conversation. Hopefully gave some good insights into what it is to come to Chicago and Midwestern Career College to learn the language and many other things. So I want to remind our listeners to follow us on Spotify, Amazon Music, Apple Podcasts, YouTube, and write to us at [mccpodcast@mcc.edu](mailto:mccpodcast@mcc.edu). And we look forward to talking to you next time. Thank you guys.

**Shaudy Martinez & Ryan Mudder**

Thank you.

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