

Dr. Mark McAndrews

Assistant Professor, WKU Department of English

*By Brianna Hamilton*

Dr. Mark McAndrews has used his “marketable” English and linguistic skills to teach around the world. Now he’s passing on his knowledge to Western Kentucky University’s English students.

Dr. McAndrews, a native Canadian, grew up in an academic household and was taught French throughout school. However, it was teaching in Northern Canada that ignited his interest in language.

“The students were Inuit students and the language of the town where I was living was Inuktitut. And I learned a little bit about that language and became fascinated and that sort of kicked off my career in linguistics,” Dr. McAndrews stated.

Dr. McAndrews then went on to earn his MA in Applied Linguistics from Brock University in St. Catharines, Canada, and his PhD in Applied Linguistics from Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona, while also publishing multiple works on the implications of language.

“In my research I definitely go towards the practical side versus the theoretical side. For me there really needs to be some sort of clear implication for real life, especially teaching...for me to get excited about a research project,” Dr. McAndrews said.

Dr. McAndrews’ work can be found in several academic journals, such as *Language Teaching Research, System*, and the *International Journal of Learner Corpus Research*. He also has several publications scheduled to debut late 2021 or early 2022.

Besides his publications, Dr. McAndrews’ love of linguistics has also taken him across the globe, teaching not only in Canada and the United States, but South Korea and China as well. But Dr. McAndrews is glad to have moved with his family to teach at WKU, where his teaching philosophy revolves around a process he describes as active learning.

“Before the beginning of a course the instructor identifies the actual skills that they want the students to be able to do by the end of the course,” this, Dr. McAndrews stated, is then used to form “the basis of planning the course. And then the actual instruction or the actual pedagogy or the actual class time in the course would mostly

be devoted to performing those skills so that the students themselves are actively engaged in doing those skills.”

It is partially due to this active style that Dr. McAndrews says his students would probably describe him as energetic or enthusiastic, as well as a fast talker. For Dr. McAndrews, teaching has always come naturally to him, but it is more than a love of teaching and linguistics that makes him so passionate in the classroom. Dr. McAndrews wants his students to succeed, and that for him means they gain a broader outlook and larger skillset.

“I would want English majors or English students to come away with what some people describe as a liberal arts education,” Dr. McAndrews stated, adding that for him this includes, “a taste or an appreciation for history, language, culture, [and] society. To be able to maybe analyze and appreciate those things, not necessarily to judge different people’s positions on those things, but to at least appreciate those and be conscious and be aware.”

Dr. McAndrews also noted that, “Another thing in terms of being a successful English major would be to come away with...marketable skills or at least skills that they can use in a career.”

With these skills in hand, the best advice Dr. McAndrews would give to an English student would be to balance planning for a career while taking advantage of the opportunities they have now. “Always sort of have your career somewhere in the back of your mind,” Dr. McAndrews said, adding that college is the perfect time for students to “dive into things that are just interesting from an intellectual perspective, that might not have too much...real-world implications.”

But when students do think about the real-world implications, Dr. McAndrews advises, “In terms of career advice I would say just every once in a while, think about, what are some things that I can be doing to set me up for the career world after I graduate.”

One of the opportunities that WKU students can take advantage of now is through Dr. McAndrews himself. Besides questions about his classes, Dr. McAndrews would love to have conversations with students based on any of the experiences he’s had. Not only is he open to talking about topics such as teaching abroad, but if any student knows or is learning French, he’d love to have a conversation with them too. But if a student doesn’t want to talk about any of those, he’s open to sporting events as well. Dr. McAndrews stated, “I am a pretty big sports fan so if anyone wants to invite me out to like a football game that would be awesome.”