

Biography of Maurice Gallant

Maurice Gallant is an English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor in the English Language Center (ELC) at Vancouver Island University. His entry into this educational field came via a circuitous career path. After working for 12 years in broadcast journalism, Maurice returned to university with the thought of finishing a degree in Asian Studies and then pursue work as a foreign correspondent. However, as he became more deeply immersed in his undergraduate and then graduate studies at the University of Victoria, he became more attracted to teaching ESL. In fact, while in Beijing, China in the early 90s, when he was doing research into his graduate thesis on Chinese cinema, he split his time between researching his thesis topic and teaching ESL at Beijing Language and Culture University. Therefore, satisfying his M.A. requirements in Pacific and Asian Studies, he entered and completed a post-degree ESL certification program at Vancouver Community College.

Now, more than 25 years after becoming an ESL instructor, Maurice has had the good fortune to have taught for extended periods in China, Korea, Japan, Cambodia and Vietnam. Now, as a long-serving member of the VIU ELC teaching team, Maurice is part of a group that strives to make the international students' first contact with Canadian academics and society a positive one. Attracting international students has become intensely competitive, and so the ELC has been constantly evolving to meet the changing learning needs of students from around the world. It has created a positive, lively working environment that continues to energize Maurice more than two decades after he had entered it.

The most attractive feature of being in the ESL classroom, especially at VIU, is the relationship between educators and learners. The instructor works with the second language learners to improve their English skills and, in turn, the instructor is given an opportunity to connect with the learners to find out about their lives in their home cultures. Thanks to this relationship, Maurice has been exposed to cultures from around the world which has motivated him to gain some working knowledge of his students' first languages. Today, whether he has represented VIU abroad, worked on his own contracts, been a proud member of the VIU ELC, or gone off on adventures with his wife and kids, Maurice could not have imagined that ESL would have taken him to this place in his life. No, it's not like being a foreign correspondent. It's better.