

the LINGUIST

FEBRUARY 2014
ISSUE 02

FEATURED AUTHORS

Melissa Banish; a Junior at Sachem North High School studying Spanish

Danielle Guercio; a Vice President of the Foreign Language Honor Society and a Junior at Sachem North High School studying American Sign Language

Ellora LaCarrubba; a Secretary of the Foreign Language Honor Society and a Junior at Sachem North High School studying Spanish

Dr. Mike Ledgerwood; the Chair of the World Languages and Culture Department at Samford University

Nicholas Zmudzinski; a President of the Foreign Language Honor Society and a Junior at Sachem North High School studying Italian

ISSUE CONTENTS

Page 1 • Discover Languages Month and Introduction.

Page 2 • 'The Valuable Benefits of Studying a Foreign Language' by Dr. Mike Ledgerwood.

Page 3 • The Life and Times of Nelson Mandela.

Page 4 • 'Duolingo' by Nicholas Zmudzinski and Ellora LaCarrubba.

Page 5 • 'The Gift of Communication' by Melissa Banish, 'Languages, Knowledge, and Culture' by Danielle Guercio, and a message from Dr. Maria Scricco of the Foreign Language Honor Society.

Welcome to *the* LINGUIST,

The official newsletter by the Foreign Language Honor Society.

As designated by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), February is Discover Languages month. Discover Languages month is a national campaign to promote public awareness, advocacy, and policy regarding international cultures and languages. Throughout the campaign, a strong focus is placed on advocating for language education with a strong public awareness component at all levels of instruction. As a contribution and acknowledgement of this language education campaign by ACTFL, this issue of the official Foreign Language Honor Society (FLHS) newsletter, *the LINGUIST*, will focus on the importance of foreign languages and cultures. Our authors in this issue will be discussing their own experiences with the languages that they have learned, the importance of knowing these languages, and how they have used them. Our special author this issue is Dr. Mike Ledgerwood, the chair of World Languages and Culture Department at Samford University.

The Foreign Language Honor Society will be focusing on educating about the importance of foreign languages and the significance of international cultures during February and into March. To do so, we are offering a tutoring service to those who are interested, inducting our new members to the Foreign Language Honor Society on March 26th, 2014, and working on a beautification project to promote cultural arts at Sachem North.



Check out our website at flhsnorth.org

The Valuable Benefits of Studying a Foreign Language

With so much talk about Common Core standards in the news today, it's worth considering the importance of learning a second (third, fourth, ...) language and studying the societies that speak those languages. Speaking a language opens the door to another world. Studying a culture without learning its language is like window shopping at a candy store, but never going inside and tasting the candy. The Department of World Languages and Cultures proudly emphasizes both parts of our title. We teach the words, the verbs, the expressions, but more than that, we aim for in-depth insight into specific areas of the world and their ways of life.

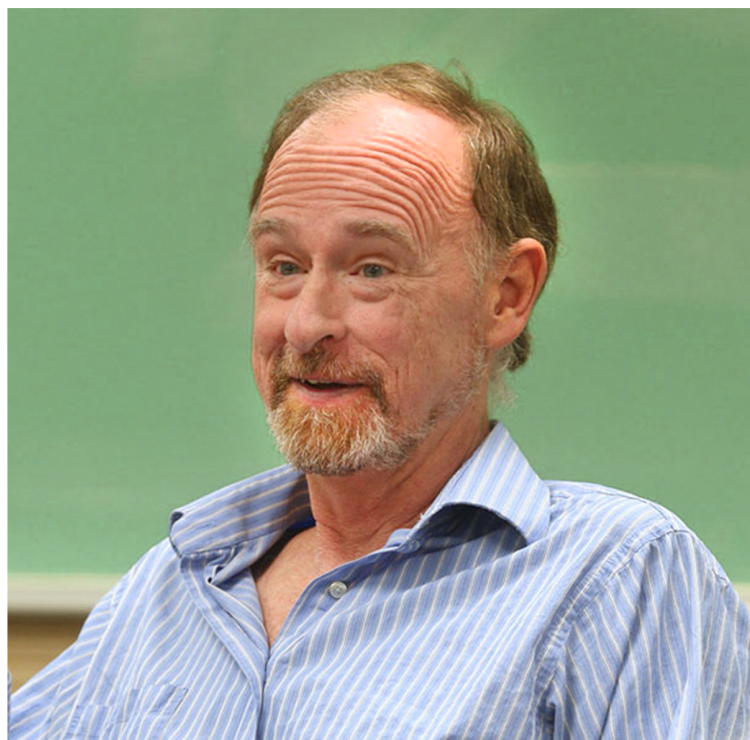
With so many foreign businesses in the United States these days, the need for inter-cultural and language knowledge is rising. For example, there are 3,500 German companies in the United States, with 2,000 of those in the Southeast alone. These companies create jobs in all areas, including consumer services, wholesale and retail trade, construction, manufacturing, finance, and insurance. Anecdotal evidence includes these two stories. Kyle Green (PSYC/German minor '07) wrote us that his German minor had helped him land a co-op position at Volkswagen Groups of America in Chattanooga, Tenn., because he could socialize with his German coworkers. Another of my favorite stories, told to me by the former chair of English at Samford, is how his son uses his French daily as a lawyer in Manhattan. As the world becomes smaller, the importance of communicating in multiple ways increases.

The psychological research about learning second or multiple languages abounds. Here are a few tidbits gleaned from articles in *Science World Report* and other sources:

- Learning a second (multiple) language(s) has a positive effect upon brain structure and encourages brain growth.
- Students who study languages do better on typical standardized tests than students who do not.
- Bilinguals think differently and reason differently.
- Bilinguals reason better and come to better conclusions than monolinguals.

- Language learning boosts your memory, increases your attention and allows you to perceive the world in different ways.
- Studying languages later in life helps avoid early Alzheimer's and dementia.

Could one argue, then, that those who study languages become smarter than those who don't? Of course, I say that playfully, but one wonders. In your walk of life, continue the discussion with your family and friends. As a foreign language student, you know the value you gained from your experiences in the language classroom and/or abroad. Among the many statements included in Samford's Core Values statement, you will find vocational success, civic engagement, lifelong learning, and appreciation for diverse cultures and convictions. We are proud to contribute to those values.



Dr. Mike Ledgerwood

FLHS Tutoring Service

The FLHS Tutoring Services is now in full swing! The objective of our free tutoring service is to extend the rich culture and inspiration provided by foreign language classes to students who are struggling academically in their French, Italian, Spanish, or American Sign Language classes. If you are interested in registering for tutoring, you can visit the website below.

bit.ly/FLHStutoring

FLHS Beautification Project

The intention of the School Beautification Project is to connect students to the cultures of the languages they are learning, and the cultures of those around them; only through understanding can we reach our highest potential. Flowers cannot grow without a connection to their roots, and the Foreign Language Honor Society is here to help Sachem North students bloom.

“ If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart. ”

Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela—the famous freedom fighter, social equality activist, and prisoner-turned-president of South Africa, peacefully passed away in December of 2013 at the age of 95 in Johannesburg, South Africa. Mandela, who was a leading figure in ending the South African discrimination and segregation policy of apartheid, quickly became South Africa’s conscience as it healed from the scars of apartheid in the latter half of 20th century. In his lifetime, he was a man of complexities. From a militant freedom fighter, to a prisoner, Mandela became a statesman and a unifying figure of blacks and whites alike in South Africa and the world.

Mandela, while he was a figure head in the fight against racial discrimination, was imprisoned for 27 years as a result of his persistent actions against the South African government. His then wife, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, continued her husband’s cause in his unfortunate absence. Not only did Winnie become an important figure in women’s rights, but carried out much of Nelson Mandela’s prospects in the fight against apartheid.

Mandela’s fight for social and racial equality in South Africa would spout real change after his release from prison in 1990. Then South African president, F. W. de Klerk, would begin negotiations on the subject of apartheid shortly after, for which he received positive feedback from the South African population. Negotiations would soon transform into the abolition of apartheid in 1994 and the subsequent election of Nelson Mandela as president in the first multiracial election in South Africa.

Nelson Mandela’s movement was the most progressive action against racial discrimination since the African American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Comparable to Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela’s life is symbolic of the work that still needs to be done to end racial discrimination and the lengths that passionate people will go to in the interest of moving their cause forward.

We remember Mandela today as a philanthropist and activist in our own skirmishes and battles to eradicate contemporary social inequality between race, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity,

Nicholas Zmudzinski



facebook

Like the Foreign Language Honor Society of Sachem North on Facebook!

[facebook.com/FLHSnorth](https://www.facebook.com/FLHSnorth)

Induction
CEREMONY

As a part of honoring academic excellence in the fields of Spanish, French, Italian, and American Sign Language, the Foreign Language Honor Society hosts its most significant event: The Foreign Language Honor Society Induction Ceremony. Our Induction Ceremony acknowledges the academic achievements of students who have qualified for this honor by celebrating their excellence and embracing cultures and languages.

The collaborative efforts of Foreign Language Honor Society students organize our Induction Ceremony every year. The devotion of our event team is exemplified in the grandiose nature of our Induction Ceremony, being one of the most theatrical and extravagant ceremonies of all other Honor Societies at Sachem North High School. With musical performances by FLHS student members, cultural cuisine and beverages, and excellent speeches by students and faculty alike, it is truly a magnificent ceremony.

We will be celebrating our next Induction Ceremony on **March 26th, 2014.**

duolingo

Find out about the best free way to learn a new language: Duolingo. Read about Duolingo on Page 3 in an informative and insightful article by Foreign Language Honor Society secretary, Ellora LaCarrubba.



The Fundamentals of Duolingo

Since the dawn of humanity, we've been passing information from one person to another through a common language. Unfortunately, you can't communicate with others without knowing or learning their language first. A similar issue has manifested on the Web, where text can be panned in dozens of languages, each of which demands a reader's fluency. Students at Carnegie Mellon University have developed an elegant solution to both problems: a way for people to learn a language for free, while at the same time helping to translate text from the Web, enabling a wealth of language-shackled information to be liberated for all of humanity.

It's called **Duolingo**. Here's how it works: Let's say you're a native English speaker who wants to learn Spanish. Duolingo starts by giving you a sentence from a Spanish website and asking you to translate it. Wait—back up. How can you translate a language you don't know? First, **Duolingo** only gives you sentences that fit your language level. Beginners get the really simple sentences from the Web and advanced users get the more complex ones. This way, everybody becomes a valuable translator. And second, if you're really lost, you can see possible translations for words you don't know right on the **Duolingo** app or website. Afterwards, **Duolingo** helps you understand and memorize the words you've needed assistance through educational examples. You can also vote on the quality of other students' translations, which helps you learn by seeing how others translated the same sentence. And because you create valuable translations while you learn, **Duolingo** returns the favor offering it's service completely free of charge. Ads, fees, and subscriptions do not exist in any form in the service. It's simply free.

To put the potential benefit of **Duolingo** into perspective, think about this: If one million people would use **Duolingo** to learn, the entirety of English Wikipedia could translated to Spanish in just eighty hours.

Duolingo is the best free way to learn a language, all the while translating the Web.

Nicholas Zmudzinski



Whether we like to believe it or not, there are apps and websites that exist to help further our language education. One of these services, **Duolingo**, is designed to teach the user another language step-by-step. The languages that are currently offered are English, Spanish, French, German, Portuguese and Italian.

Once a language is selected, **Duolingo's** user-friendly interface starts the user with basic lessons divided into different categories. Lessons incorporate reading, writing, listening and speaking in the desired language. Having a game-like structure, the user is given four hearts which act as a life system meant to gauge the number of mistakes made by the user at the start of earlier lessons. If all of the user's hearts are depleted before the lesson ends, the lesson must then be restarted. At the end of each level, the user is given a test before he/she is able to move on to the next level. If the user is struggling, he/she is able to go through some of the previous lessons again to strengthen the skills targeted in that lesson, or use the "Practice Weak Skills" option, which creates a lesson designed to target the user's weak areas based on what he/she struggled with during lessons. The lessons begin at the basics, and work through simple vocabulary before moving on to skills such as verb tenses or question words. If a user already has experience with a certain language, he/she is given the option to test out of the lesson.

As the user progresses through the various lessons, experience points and "Lingots" are awarded. Experience points accumulate, giving the user an overall level based on lessons and daily practice, the highest level being 25. Recently, a 'Coach' system has been added, allowing the user to set language practice goals and be given daily requirements by 'Coach' that will keep the user on track to reach the goal that he/she has set. Another way to keep you on track with your goals is the ability to enable daily alerts that will be sent to the user to remind him/her to practice. "Lingots" are the in-app currency that can be used to purchase things such as more hearts for the current lesson or new outfits for 'Coach'. Lingots can only be accumulated through practice and success, not with real-life money. This adds to the overall game-esque atmosphere that **Duolingo** creates.

Though Duolingo is an educational app designed to teach the user a new language, the app incorporates different game-esque elements into its structure and functionality in order to make it more user-friendly and fun, rather than the stereotypical monotony associated with learning something new. Whether you wish to learn a new language or strengthen your language you know or are currently learning, **Duolingo** is a great free resource to do so.

Ellora LaCarrubba

The Gift of Communication

Many students question why a foreign language is a mandatory course in high school. I asked myself the same question until I entered the working world. I have been studying Spanish in school for several years, and never thought it would be beneficial in the long run. Once I got a job, there was barely a week that went by that I wasn't handling transactions in Spanish. New York is very diverse and Latin American culture is seen everywhere. There have been many instances in which I have seen the language barrier cause issues for Latin American citizens. I consider my knowledge of the Spanish language a gift, as I can make an unforgiving place feel a bit more like home for some people. There is no greater satisfaction than looking into the face of someone that is constantly up against adversity, and watching them smile because you told them the price of their order in their native language. Many students continue to think that taking their language course is a burden without any valid reason, but it is truly a gift to be admired.

Melissa Banish

Languages, Knowledge, and Culture

Language classes do not only teach students grammar and the mechanics of a second language, but it also contributes to the knowledge of the culture of native speakers. Knowing a foreign language and its respective culture often leads to greater opportunities such as finding a job, meeting new people, and enjoying foreign entertainment such as books, movies, and websites. Several studies have shown that students who dedicate themselves to a foreign language are more likely to possess improved analytical skills. Only understanding one language limits the cultural knowledge of a person. Language and culture are not limited to spoken language. Sign language and culture are also important to understand. Everywhere we go there are always going to be people that speak a different language and have a different culture. Personally, I want to be able to speak to and help others that do not know English. To do so it's necessary to understand the basics of other languages. Exploring new cultures is a valuable adventure to take on.

Danielle Guercio

A Message from Dr. Maria Scricco

This is the second issue of the FLHS newsletter. The students worked tirelessly to have it published before the winter break. This was no small feat! A special thank you is owed to both Nicholas Zmudzinski and Tejas Prasad. These students embody the qualities for which the FLHS stands: honor commitment and service. Their efforts to design the FLHS newsletter, the website and tutoring service have not gone unnoticed. The standards for language learning are communication and culture. Nicholas and Tejas understand these standards and their desire to highlight their importance is evident in all they do. The Foreign Language Honor Society looks forward to a productive third quarter and wishes everyone a restful winter break. Enjoy!

Dr. Maria Lucia Fierro-Scricco

Special Thanks and Recognition

A very special thanks to the students of the Foreign Language Honor Society who have conveyed their interest in this publication:

Melissa Banish, Danielle Guercio, and Ellora LaCarrubba. And special recognition and appreciation to the Sachem North staff members in their support of the Foreign Language Honor Society and its activities:

Dr. Maria Scricco and Dr. Frank Scricco. Thank you for reading this issue of *the LINGUIST*. The next issue of the the Foreign Language Honor Society newsletter will be published in March, before our induction ceremony on March 26th, 2014. If you are interested in writing for the next issue, please see the contact information below.

Nicholas Zmudzinski

Sachem North High School
212 Smith Road
Lake Ronkonkoma, NY 1779
(631) 471-1400

Foreign Language Honor Society
Dr. Maria Scricco • B209

the **LINGUIST**

Newsletter Inquiries • nzmudz@icloud.com