Welcome! We are very excited to welcome our students to our institute. Thank you for entrusting us with this portion of your education, and for adding to our own with your presence. You may be asking yourself how your presence could enrich our knowledge. The answer is simple: with each individual that enters our institute also enters a world of cultural insight. Here at the ELI, and FIU, we embrace diversity and are eager to learn whatever you have to offer.

You may have some questions about our culture and what behaviors to expect that are considered appropriate in the United States under different circumstances. The way we welcome people here may come off as a shock to many of you (even to some people in other parts of our country). You will also notice that we are loud and boisterous, creating a show out of nearly every encounter. We are a city that loves to have fun, and it shows in our interactions. Over time, the people you see on a daily basis will greet you with the affection of family, and chances are that in time you’ll consider “family” to be an apt description for these relationships.

Another characteristic of Miamians is overfeeding guests, so if you were planning on losing weight during your time here you may want to reconsider. Food is a huge part of Miami’s social life, and integral to our welcome parties. Our event coordinator Elaine Cordova will most likely plan some delicious catering events throughout the semester so you can have a taste of what Miami has to offer. As a melting pot of culture, South Florida has an expansive variety of foods to choose from. I’m sure you’ll come to love all the flavors this city provides, and we can’t wait to sample whatever dishes you can bring to the table.

Overall, we here at the ELI are extremely excited to begin this semester with each of our students. Don’t be alarmed by our booming welcomes, and enjoy our culinary spoils. We can only hope that you don’t shy away so that we can all gain something from every culture represented here this semester.
When you come to a new country for the first time and you meet a lot of people, you wish that you could show your classmates and new friends some of your culture. Everybody is surely proud of his/her own culture and traditions. Thanks to the ELI’s activity coordinator, Elaine Cordova, we had this opportunity during the Arabic luncheon. This event was basically to demonstrate some of our traditional clothing and special dishes.

As an Arabic student from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, I had to present something from my country. I made kabsa, which is considered the main meal in my country. It is basically rice and chicken in addition to special Arabic seasoning. My other Arabic classmates brought other dishes such as hummus and falafel. Also, Arabic coffee/tea and dates were served. The ladies had their own display of Arabic culture by showing the other female students and teachers how to properly put on a hijab. They also provided Henna, which is a special brown dye used to draw special characters that look beautifully displayed on arms, hands and feet of women. Some of the male student body had the opportunity to try the shimag and thob, which are a part of men’s traditional clothing style in most of the gulf countries. I really enjoyed that day because I had the opportunity to show and display a part of my culture to other people from different countries.

For drinking, there was scrumptious Arabic coffee and tea. Finally you couldn’t leave without trying dates, the most important food in Arab culture.

Another corner was for apparel and artifacts. At this corner, the ladies were able to wear conventional clothing such as the abaya, hijab, and jallabiah. Meanwhile, the men were also able to display their traditional clothes such as the thob and shemagh. Students were delighted and excited when they tried on these clothes. In addition, they took a lot of wonderful pictures with Arabic students who were dressed up. People who were interested in historical artifacts found fascinating facts and antiques.

Moreover, the event provided henna drawing, which is considered the most important part of Arabic art. It signifies luck, health and happiness. Arabic people use henna to decorate their bodies, especially their hands and feet. Many of the women were able to get incredible henna drawing patterns on their hands.

In conclusion, the event was wonderful. There was plenty of laughter and dancing. Every Arabic student participated and was proud to show his/her culture in numerous ways. I would like to thank the ELI for arranging this event and making me feel at home.
There is no doubt that a lot of people don’t understand the Arabic culture and its values. A lot of people may find it strange and unusual, but such is not the case. Arabic people are very proud of their customs, traditions and values, but mostly their values. We believe that our values define us and separate us the rest. Whither it’s from Quran or it’s something that we learned from our ancestors we make sure to appreciate it.

First, the most important value we have is our families. By family I mean the whole extended family, not only the immediate family members.

There are many cultures around the world that are exciting. Last week at the ELI, we had the pleasure of having an Arabic day. In the Arabic culture, there are different cultures and customs depending on the region we are speaking of. The Arabic students at the ELI brought various traditional clothing; our focus was to cover all of the cultures. Furthermore, we served the most typical foods found in the Arabic culture. Some people really enjoyed the taste of Arabic coffee; however, others didn’t like it at all. It is all a question of taste and preference. The taste of Arabic coffee may be shockingly different at first, but there is a great appreciation for it with each cup and sip.

It’s very important to stay connected with the whole family and visit each other every once in a while. It is a necessity. “A person is nothing without his/her family” is a famous saying that we have, and it shows the importance of the family in our society.

Secondly, we Arabic people are very attached to our society, and we always try our best to make sure it is a safe place for our children to grow up in. We do that by helping each other, by helping the poor, and by eliminating everything that can do us harm.

Finally, we care a lot about honor and respect. When we talk to others, these are the most important things that we never cross. If you are respectful, you are going to be treated in the same fashion.

One simply must be open-minded and try it even if it may not be satisfying at first. It is different from all the types of coffees. I think the taste is somewhat similar to American coffee without sugar. It was really a great day! I was so happy to see students from different cultures attend this event and how impressed and excited they were to get a glimpse of the Arabic culture.
The ELI newsletter is a bi-weekly publication of the English Language Institute that updates students on upcoming events and important dates. It invites students to participate in its publication process. It also includes news, trivia, quotes and reading suggestions. You may email any suggestions to Laura Lamour at: lauralamour@gmail.com

Wishing Mr. Sanchez, Margaret Lowry, and Courtney Burnett a very happy birthday. They celebrated their birthdays in the month of October.