

Comments on the Unit 2 Word Usage Homework

Common mistakes

Study each of these comments carefully, whether or not you made the mistake.

LACK OF CLARITY and CARELESS LOGIC

These are just a few of many examples of careless thinking and/or careless expression.

3. “Dr. al-Awadhi considered herself a pioneer because she paid a price to be successful in her career like all the other pioneers.”

Do all pioneers pay a price to be successful in their careers?

“... So, like all pioneers in Kuwait, she made a choice to give up her marriage for her dream.”

How many pioneers were there in Kuwait? Do pioneers give up marriage for a dream?

5. “Younger Kuwaiti women will not have to make the same sacrifice that Dr. al-Awadhi made. Fifty-one percent of Kuwait University students are females and they attend classes wearing the latest fashions of Paris and Rome. As almost all young women are becoming educated, the problem she faced may not confront her female students.”

How does becoming educated mean that her students won't confront the same problems?

6. Kuwait University isn't still a male-dominated institution. Females make up 51 percent of Kuwait University's students and they attend classes wearing the latest fashions of Paris and Rome. This means that the position of Kuwaiti women is improving and Kuwait University isn't a male-dominated institution anymore.

The reader won't agree with your claim that the fact that the women attend classes wearing the latest fashions of Paris and Rome means that Kuwaiti women's position is improving, unless you tell the reader what the situation was before (i.e., that they used to have to wear veils).

The 3-step method

This is probably the most difficult part of expressing an idea in a few sentences. It is, however, very useful in expressing your ideas clearly, in the manner that a Western reader/listener subconsciously expects.

The question: Will younger Kuwaiti women have to make the same sacrifice that Dr. al-Awadhi made?

“Younger Kuwaiti women may not have to make the same sacrifices that Dr. al-Awadhi made. Social customs in Kuwait are changing. Because most of today's Kuwaiti women are highly educated, men can't choose who they want to marry anymore. In other words, the problems she faced may not confront younger Kuwaiti women.”

→ Younger Kuwaiti women may not have to make the same sacrifices that Dr. al-Awadhi made. Social customs in Kuwait are changing, and so the problems she faced may not confront younger Kuwaiti women. Because most of today's Kuwaiti women are highly educated, men can't choose who they want to marry anymore.

My students seem to have been trained to present the details before they present the conclusion (at the end of their logic structure); each idea seems to point to (support) the conclusion. The ideal for native speakers, however, is to present the conclusion (the main idea, the general idea) at the beginning, and then to present in an order of less and less general, with each successive statement pointing back (supporting) at the preceding statement. (Of course, in a formal paragraph, the last sentence is a restatement of the main idea.)

LANGUAGE

“men in her age”

→ men her age. This was a target lexical, but still many students got this wrong.

“The position of women in Kuwait has been improved.”

→ has improved.

Read “Change-of-state Verbs” at E>G, Grammar.

“Kuwaiti women won't have to make the same sacrifices that Dr. al-Awadhi made because a much higher number of them are educated compared to al-Awadhi's generation.”

→ ...because, compared to al-Awadhi's generation, a much higher number...

Read “Misplaced Modifiers” at E>G. This is a very common mistake because it's a frequently encountered situation.

“She didn’t get married as a price of having high education and professional career.”

→ As a price of having a high degree and professional career, she didn’t get married.
Another misplaced modifier.

“She didn’t decide to be a lawyer by herself.”

→ She didn’t decide by herself to be a lawyer.

This is another misplaced modifier problem. Yes, the question in the workbook should be revised. You’ll see this problem in the speech of native speakers when they’re not careful about this.

“Dr. al-Awadhi didn’t get married because she preferred to be a career woman.”

This seems to answer the question “Did Dr. al-Awadhi get married because she preferred to be a career woman?” That’s different from the original question, “Why didn’t Dr. al-Awadhi get married?”

Another answer, “Dr. al-Awadhi didn’t get married because she didn’t want to give up her career,” answers the question “Did she get married because she didn’t want to give up her career?” And another answer, “Dr. al-Awadhi didn’t get married, because she preferred to be a professional,” answers the question “Did Dr. al-Awadhi get married?”

When you want to use “because,” always be conscious of whether the reader will understand exactly what question your “because” clause answers. If the reader of your answer knows what the question was, this usually isn’t a big problem; but when the reader doesn’t know, there can be confusion over your answer.

If you’re not sure, in this case it would be safest to rephrase with “the reason that...is (not) that.” So, “The reason Dr. al-Awadhi didn’t get married is that she preferred to be a career woman.” In this case, you could also answer, “Dr. al-Awadhi’s career prevented her from getting married.”

“Dr. al-Awadhi had to give up the family to get a profession.”

She didn’t give up any family, because she didn’t have one to give up. She gave up having a family.

“Because of her brother who has advanced views, Dr. al-Awadhi could be a lawyer...”

→ Because of her brother, who had advanced views, Dr. al-Awadhi was able to become a lawyer...”

1. Note the comma. Invest lots of time in studying the article “Relative Clauses” at E>G, Grammar. You will find this knowledge ubiquitously useful.

2. Note “could be” → “was able to become”. Study about *could* in “Problems in Communication,” at E>G, Other Aids. And note the difference between “be” and “become.”

“Women don’t have to give up making her own family for her degree.”

→ “A woman doesn’t have to...”

When possible, keep the subject and its pronoun in the same number. Sometimes, of course, it’s not possible (“They all remembered to bring their lunch/lunches”); invest some time in reading “Concord: Noun Number” at E>G, Grammar.)

“...females make up 51% of Kuwait University’s students. It shows the females have assume...”

Study “This/that or it?” at E>G, Grammar.

“But now almost all young women are educated, therefore, the problems Dr. al-Awadhi faced may not confront her female students.

→ ...are educated; therefore, the problems... Learn how to use commas and semi-colons. You’ll find the rules in “Appendix 1: Punctuation,” towards the end of *You’re in Charge*.

“In the present, the number of female students almost equals that of male students.”

→ At present, the number...

Yes, we say “in the past” and “in the future,” but we don’t say “in the present.” Memorize these lexicals when you encounter them. You could learn English almost entirely just by learning the lexicals.