

A new revolution

Level: Intermediate upwards

Timing: 90 minutes plus

Material needed: One copy of the student worksheets and Vocabulary record per student

Group size: Any (including one-to-one)

Overview

This lesson plan is based around an article first published in *Business Spotlight* Issue 4/2011. It is written by a Saudi Arabian woman who talks about the restrictions that women in her country encounter in their everyday life and (especially) in work-related situations. She explains how social media is changing the way women think and deal with their situation and talks about her hopes for the future.

The tasks in the student worksheets encourage the students to learn and use new business vocabulary and functional language and also to develop and practise skills that could be useful in business situations, especially those that deal with the difficulties encountered by working women and women's rights in general.

The teacher's notes provide suggestions for teaching and learning strategies as well as ideas on how to present the tasks in the classroom, any necessary answer keys and extension tasks (for in class or as homework).

Warmer questions

The warmer questions introduce the topic of women at work and the struggle they may have to reach top positions in a company or organization. The first two questions specifically ask about the students' own companies. If the students are pre-work, they should answer with reference to their university or college course and how they believe the situation to be in the type of industry they would like to work in. The third question asks about conditions for working women in the students' country or countries.

Key words

Looking at these key words prior to reading will help the students understand the article.

Key:

1. guardian; 2. dependence; 3. interactions; 4. bureaucracy; 5. abuse; 6. implications; 7. inheritances; 8. restrictions; 9. hurdles; 10. gender segregation; 11. frustrations; 12. toddler

Find the information

Students should quickly scan the article to find the information needed to answer the questions. This will provide an overview of what the article is about.

Key:

1. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; 2. She is a postgraduate student of linguistics and a teacher.; 3. her husband; 4. She and her women friends started to use social media to discuss everything to do with Saudi Arabia.; 5. Saudiwomen's Weblog. She writes about changes in her country.

True or false?

Students should read the statements and then decide whether they are true or false. They should correct or re-write those that are false.

Key:

1. T; 2. F – Women are not allowed to drive.; 3. F – She has three children.; 4. F – She has to ask her husband.; 5. F – The unemployment rate is 28.4%.; 6. F – Saudi women have \$100 billion in bank accounts.; 7. F – Running businesses is culturally foreign to Saudi women.; 8. T; 9. T; 10. T; 11. T; 12. F – see last paragraph of article

Language: Metaphors

The students should find two metaphors in the article. Encourage them to explain why they think the author has chosen to use these two images in her article.

Key:

- Government restrictions are the biggest hurdles.
- The Saudi women's revolution is a healthy toddler. (I can't wait to watch it grow).

Teaching and learning strategy: Metaphors

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which two usually unrelated things are mentioned together to show that they have something in common. The word *metaphor* comes from Greek and means 'to transfer' or 'carry across'. Metaphors 'carry' meaning from one word, image, or idea to another. Metaphors bring visual imagery, colour and richness to the language.

Encourage students to notice and keep a record of metaphors and similes that they come across while reading or listening to English. Music, especially the lyrics of pop songs, provides many examples, as does poetry.

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Discussion

The students should read the facts in the *Did you know?* box at the end of the article. Make sure they understand the three points before you ask them to talk about how these facts compare with the situation for women in their own country or countries.

Web task

The students should find the Saudiwoman's Weblog (<http://saudiwoman.wordpress.com>) on the internet and talk about what they read there.

Vocabulary record

Here, students should be encouraged to record all the new and useful vocabulary they have learned during the lesson, not only in the form presented in the article but also in related forms.

More on related topics

For follow-up lessons on the same or related topics, go to the following lesson plans in the Business Spotlight series on onestopenglish:

Business Spotlight: Do women need quotas to get to the top?:
<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/do-women-need-quotas-to-get-to-the-top/550704.article>

You may also find topical and relevant *Guardian* news lessons here on onestopenglish:
<http://www.onestopenglish.com/skills/news-lessons/>

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1 Warmer questions

Discuss the following questions with a partner.

Are there more men or women in your company?

How many women are there in top positions in your company?

How easy is it for women to reach and keep top managerial positions in your country?

2 Key words

Write the key words from the article next to their meanings. Then find the words in the article to see how they are used in context.

bureaucracy frustrations hurdles interactions inheritances guardian
toddler restrictions implications dependence abuse gender segregation

1. someone who is legally responsible for another person _____
2. a situation in which you need someone or something in order to live or succeed _____
3. the activities of being with and talking to other people _____
4. a complicated and annoying system of rules and processes _____
5. use something in a bad, dishonest, or harmful way _____
6. possible effects or results _____
7. property or money that you receive from someone when they die _____
8. a rule or action that limits or controls someone or something _____
9. problems that you must solve before you can do something successfully _____
10. the separation of men and women _____
11. annoyed or impatient feelings that you get when you are prevented from doing what you want _____
12. a very young child who is learning how to walk _____

3 Find the information

Scan the text to find the following information.

1. where the author lives
2. what qualifications she has
3. who her guardian is
4. how social media has changed her life
5. the name of her blog and what it is about

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by Eman Al Nafjan

Every Saudi woman needs her male guardian. Eman Al Nafjan reports on the impact this dependence has on daily life, but also points to the first signs of change.

1 I am a 32-year-old mother of three, a teacher and a postgraduate student at a university in Riyadh. Yet I need my husband's written permission to work, travel abroad, open bank accounts, study or even to have a major operation. Saudi Arabia is the only country in the world where every woman is given a male guardian whose permission is required for all her interactions with the government or public services. We're also not allowed to drive, so without a man, we basically cannot function in society.

2 As I'm married, my guardian is my husband. I'm lucky. He's an educated and reasonable man, and my restrictions are a matter of bureaucracy. But I know women with extremist guardians who believe that women should not work or be educated. And many men abuse their power by making their women pay for the permission they need. In some parts of society, fathers see their working daughters' salaries as their personal incomes and refuse to allow them to marry.

3 These restrictions have economic implications: according to recent official figures, the unemployment rate among Saudi women is 28.4 per cent. Yet statistics show we have resources. An estimated 78 per cent of unemployed women have a university degree. And Saudi women have a total of about \$100 billion in bank accounts, mostly from inheritances. An obvious place to invest that money would be in businesses. But the idea of running a business is culturally foreign to Saudi women, who prefer to go into health care or education – if their men allow them to.

4 Government restrictions are the biggest hurdles. Firms in banking and commerce must practise gender segregation. This means providing separate offices

for women – something that discourages firms from employing them. We're also not allowed to run a business, such as a coffee shop, that is open to the public. And we need male representatives to do all our official business.

5 The guardianship system is so much part of our culture that most women don't question it – especially where I live, in central Saudi, which is very conservative. A Saudi woman's education includes religious subjects, which train us to believe we are different from men and that our place is in the home.

6 But things are changing. My women friends and I have often talked about our frustrations, but we had no idea how many others felt like us until we started using the social media. On blogs, Facebook and Twitter, women now openly discuss everything to do with Saudi Arabia. And the younger generation is even more open.

7 The Arab spring revolution has also made Saudis aware of their human rights. Indeed, Saudi women have become the most active protesters both on the streets and online. Recently, a group of women posted a YouTube video demanding equal rights for women. So, I can end on a happy note. The Saudi women's revolution is a healthy toddler. I can't wait to watch it grow.

EMAN AL NAFJAN is a postgraduate student of linguistics in Riyadh. She started the blog Saudiwoman's Weblog to talk about changes in her country (<http://saudiwoman.wordpress.com>). For cultural reasons, she is unable to supply a picture of herself.

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Country file: Saudi Arabia



POLITICS

Type of government: monarchy

Head of state and government: King and Prime Minister Abdullah Ibn Abdul Aziz Al Saud (since 1 August 2005)

ECONOMY (in US\$)

GDP (at purchasing power parity, PPP): \$622.5 billion (2010 estimate)

GDP (at PPP) per head: \$24,200 (2010 est.)

GDP real annual growth: 3.8% (2010 est.)

Unemployment: 10.8% (2010 est. – figure excludes women)

Workforce: 7.337 million (2010 est.), of whom 80% are non-Saudi

Export partners: Japan 15.33%, South Korea 12.71%, US 12.2%, China 10.38%, India 7.12%, Taiwan 4.54%, Singapore 4.25% (2009)

Import partners: US 12.32%, China 12.06%, Germany 7.67%, Japan 6.15%, South Korea 5.32%, India 4.99%, UK 4.72%, France 4.05% (2009)

GENERAL

Official name: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Nationality: Saudi or Saudi Arabian

Capital city: Riyadh 4.725 million (2009)

Main cities: Jiddah 3.234 million; Mecca 1.484 million; Medina 1.104 million; Ad Damman 902,000 (2009)

Official language: Arabic

Spoken languages: Arabic, English

Country telephone code: +966

Internet domain: .sa

Time zone: AST (Arabia Standard Time) = CET (Central European Time) + 1 hour

Currency: the riyal (SAR). 1SAR = €0.18

PEOPLE

Population: 26.132 million (2011 est.)

Population growth per year: 1.54% (2011 est.)

Age structure: 0–14 years: 29.4%; 15–64 years: 67.6%; 65 years and over: 3% (2011 est.)

Population groups: Arab 90%, Afro-Asian 10%

Religion: Muslim 100%

DID YOU KNOW?

■ Women make up only 15 per cent of the Saudi Arabian workforce. This is far less than in most other Gulf states, including Kuwait (42.5 per cent), Qatar (36.4 per cent) and Bahrain (34.3 per cent).

■ Saudi laws guarantee a woman's right to work, but this is made difficult by various factors, among them: Islamic customs; Saudi Arabia's strict gender segregation, which forbids men and women from sharing the same workspace or travelling together; the fact that women are not allowed to drive.

■ The guardian system in Saudi Arabia is hierarchical, with husbands having the most power. A single woman's guardian is her father. If she doesn't have a father, then her guardian is a brother and then her uncle or another male member of the family.

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4 True or false?

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. Eman Al Nafjan is a teacher.
2. She drives to her job at the university.
3. She does not have any children.
4. She has to ask her father's permission if she wants to open a bank account.
5. Half of all Saudi women are unemployed.
6. Women in Saudia Arabia do not have any money of their own.
7. 78% of Saudi women have their own business.
8. Many Saudi women work in health care or education.
9. In Saudi Arabia, men and women do not share an office.
10. Women there are taught that they should stay at home and care for their family.
11. Many younger women in Saudi Arabia are using social media.
12. The author does not believe that the situation will improve for women in Saudi Arabia.

5 Metaphors

Find two metaphors in the article – one in the middle of the article, and one near the end. Write them on the lines and explain why you think the author has used these two images.

1. _____
2. _____

6 Discussion

Compare the facts in the *Did you know?* box about women in Saudi Arabia to what you know about women, women in the workforce and women's rights in your country.

7 Web task

Find and read the *Saudiwoman's Weblog* on the internet: <http://saudiwoman.wordpress.com>.

