



EARLY MARRIAGES

Time	45 – 90 minutes
Level	intermediate
Skills	reading, speaking, writing
Knowledge goal	raising awareness of early marriages caused by poverty
Materials	Ss' worksheet: p. S1 – one copy per student p. S2 – one copy per student p. S3 – name badges for Role-play

1 Lead-in

- Ask Ss to read the information about three girls and work out their relationships. Hand out Ex. 1 to each student. Ss go through the given pieces of information and use the schemata for their notes. You can help them with the first step – draw or display the schemata and develop it, e.g. add the figure of Rahim and information about his work. You can also make it easier by telling Ss the number of people involved (7) or listing all persons (3 girls, 2 parents, 2 bridegrooms).
- Ss answer the questions in Ex. 2 in pairs. Answers to Qs 1-3 are based on understanding the previous schemata. Qs 4-5 are more open. Discuss them in class.

2 Main Activity - Reading

- Tell Ss that they will read an article in which one of the Afghan girls appears. For the first reading, ask them to find the answer to the following question:

What do the parents feed their children during periods of drought?

Answer: boiled water and sugar

- Ask Ss to read the text closely and then answer the six questions (Ex. 3). Check the answers as a class.

3 Follow-up - WHILE

- Ask Ss to finish the two sentences from the text (Ex. 4 A). Then ask them to work out the function of WHILE in them (Ex. 4B).
- Ss create their own sentences (Ex. 4C).

4 Discussion

Ask Ss the following questions:

Do you think that there are any similarities between the young Afghan couples and Romeo and Juliet?

How would you feel if you were an Afghan girl sold to somebody? Or anyone sold to anyone?

What are the consequences of early arranged marriages?

Who or what do you think can change this situation?

What can villagers, the Afghan government and international organizations do?

5 Role play:

Divide Ss into groups of max. 6 students per group. Ss in each group further divide into three 1-2 member groups. Their roles will be: villagers (●), Afghan government officials (▲), representatives of international humanitarian organizations (■). Give out the name badges (p. S3), explain unknown vocabulary or preferably, give Ss some time to look up unknown vocabulary, and tell Ss to represent the different positions in the discussion. Ask them to suggest and discuss possible solutions to this situation.

Possible answers: international financial help, new job opportunities, farmer subsidies, moving to towns, educational programmes.

Variation: Divide students in three groups: villagers, Afghan government officials, representatives of international humanitarian organizations.

1. Ask the groups of like people to come up with their strategies to address the problem.
2. All get together for a full class debate. The teacher may act as chairman making sure that everyone gets a chance and that all points have been exchanged and debated.
3. Ss agree on an announcement to the waiting press.

6 Follow-up - Writing

Ask Ss to choose one of the following writing tasks.

- A. Write 150 words about the situation in western Afghanistan.
- B. Write an article about early arranged marriages for a student magazine.
- C. Write a letter asking people to donate money to help the village of Sya Kamarak.
- D. Write an interview with one of the local people in Houscha.

This can be done during the lesson or as homework.

KEY

Ex. 1:

Pic. 1

1. Azizgul is getting married to Rahim who is three years older than her. Additional figure, bridegroom Rahim.
2. Rahim and Mohammed are working together in Iran.
3. Sahatgul and Najibullah are neighbours. They are both farmers.
4. Sahatgul is a 30 year old woman and has two daughters. Additional figure – mother of the two sisters Sahatgul.
5. Zarigul and Somaya are not sisters. Zarigul's sister is 10 years old. Zarigul has a sister; this must be Azizgul, who is 10. Somaya does not have a sister; she is the girl on the right.
6. Najibullah is selling his only daughter to Mohammed. Additional figures Najibullah, father of the only daughter Somaya, and Mohammed, her future groom. Somaya is being sold.
7. At 22, Mohammed is 9 years older than Rahim. Rahim is 13 years old.
8. Somaya is being sold for £1560, Zarigul's sister will be sold for £2,000. Azizgul will be sold for £2,000.
9. Mohammed's future wife is 8 years old. Somaya is 8.

Ex. 2:

1. Zarigul's sister is Azizgul, their mother is Sahatgul.
2. Azizgul's future groom is 13. He is not studying but working in Iran.
3. Najibullah is Somaya's father and Sahatgul's neighbour, a farmer.
4. Possible guesses – They live in an Asian country, a country close to Iran, a poor country in Asia, an Islamic country in Asia, Afghanistan.
5. Their marriages are being arranged by parents and the girls are being sold to their bridegrooms.

The reasons behind this practice are partly traditional and partly financial. (Ss will get more information later).

Ex. 3:

1. The village Houscha is located in western Afghanistan.
2. This year the wheat crop failed again, because of a devastating drought.
3. 200,000 afghanis [£2,000]
4. Almost 2.5 million.
5. No. They are prohibited.
6. Winter snows and attacks on food conveyes.

Ex. 4A:

- **While** the world has focused on the war against the Taliban, the suffering of the drought-stricken villagers, almost 2.5 million of them, has largely gone unnoticed.

- **While** prohibited by both Afghan civil and Islamic law, arranged marriages have long been a part of Afghan life, particularly in rural areas.

Ex. 4B:

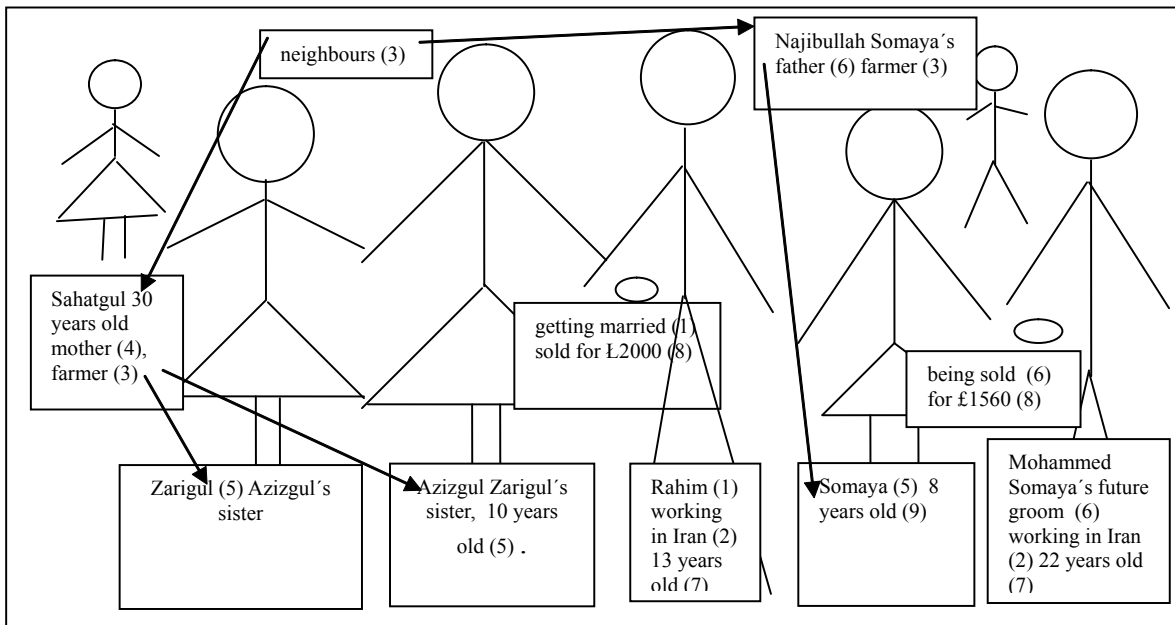
- We use **WHILE** to **contrast ideas**

While is not only used to introduce adverbial clauses of time. In more formal usage, it is used to link or balance ideas that **contrast** each other:

While boys usually attend primary school in poor countries, girls stay at home and do housework.

Note in this usage the while-clause is normally the **first** of the contrasting points.

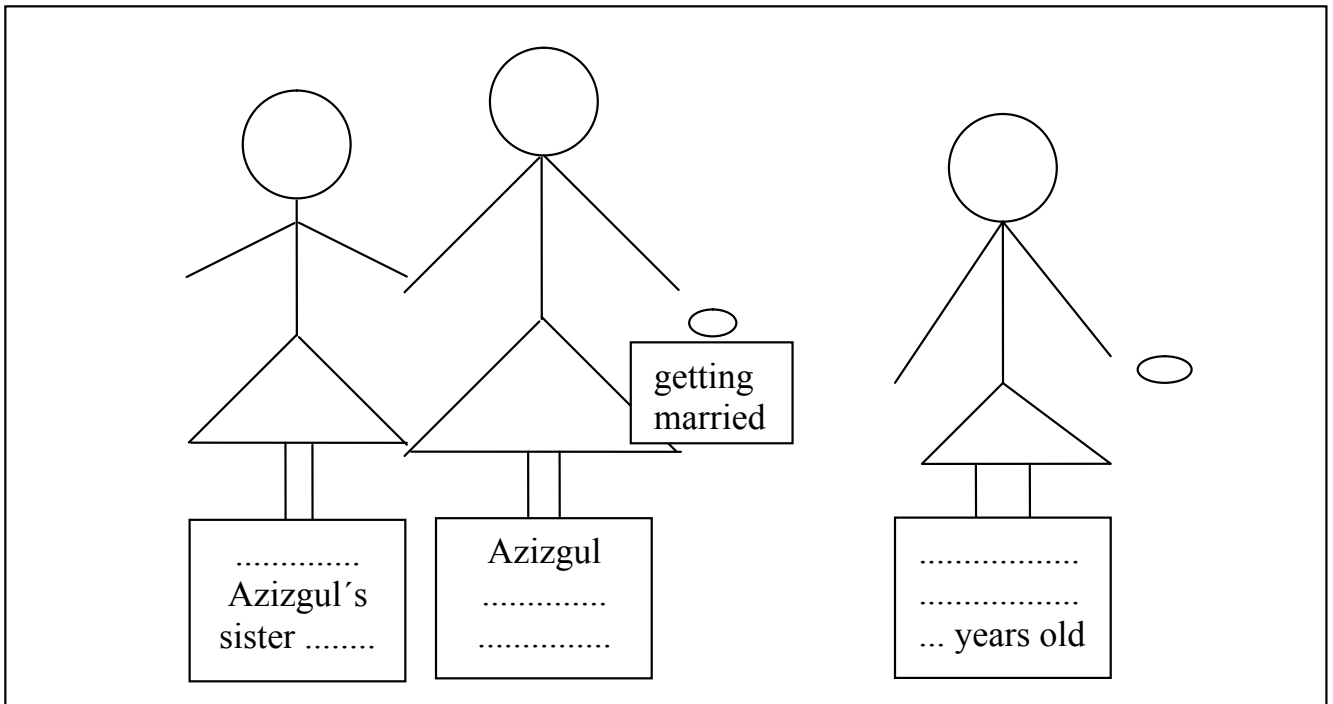
Pic. 1





Ex. 1 - Work out the relationships of the three girls Azizgul, Somaya and Zarigul and their relatives. How old are they? Are they already married?

Use this schemata for your notes:



Azizgul is getting married to Rahim who is three years older than her.

Rahim and Mohammed are working together in Iran.

Sahatgul and Najibullah are neighbours. They are both farmers.

Sahatgul is a 30 year old woman and has two daughters.

Zarigul and Somaya are not sisters. Zarigul's sister is 10 years old.

Najibullah is selling his only daughter to Mohammed.

At 22, Mohammed is 9 years older than Rahim.

Somaya is being sold for £1,560; Zarigul's sister was sold for £2,000.

Mohammed's future wife is 8 years old.

Ex. 2 - Answer the following questions in pairs:

1. Who are Zarigul's sister and mother?
2. How old is Azizgul's future groom? Is he studying?
3. Who is Najibullah? What does he do for living?
4. Where do you think that Azizgul, Somaya and Zarigul live?
5. In what way are their marriages organized? And why?

Ex. 3 – Read the following text and then answer the questions below:

Starving Afghans sell girls of eight as brides

Azizgul is 10 years old and comes from the village of Houscha in western Afghanistan. This year there has been a devastating drought and her family went hungry. So Azizgul’s mother sold her to be married to a 13-year-old boy. She says:

I need to sell my daughters because of the drought. We don’t have enough food and the bride price will enable us to buy food. Three months ago my 15-year-old daughter married. We were not so desperate before. Now I have to marry them younger. And all five of them will have to get married if the drought becomes worse. The bride price is 200,000 afghanis [£2,000]. His father came to our house to arrange it. The boy pays in instalments. First he paid us 5,000 afghanis, which I used to buy food.

While the world has focused on the war against the Taliban, we have not noticed almost 2.5 million of hungry Afghans.

While prohibited by both Afghan civil and Islamic law, arranged marriages have long been a part of Afghan life, particularly in rural areas. What is unusual is the age of some of the girls. And the reason: to buy food to survive.

The groom, Rahim, has gone to Iran with his brothers to earn the money. He is working on a building site. He will come back with the rest of the money that he has earned or borrowed. He calls us every month to make sure that Azizgul is still his, Sahatgul said.

More than 80 per cent of Afghans depend on the crops they grow. In some areas farmers lost between 80 and 100 per cent of their crops. The most affected are children. Zarigul from Houscha says: *Our children are very weak from lack of food and we are worried that they will die. We feed them boiled water and sugar. We have no vegetables for them, just potatoes. Last year we had vegetables. We need help - food for ourselves and our animals.*

There are many international organizations working in Afghanistan. However, winter snow and attacks on food convoys prevent help getting through.

Back in Houscha, Abdul Zahir, 58, head of the men’s council, summed up the desperate situation: *There is widespread poverty. We have to sell off our children to survive. We are not proud of it, but we have to do it.*

Adapted - source: Peter Beaumont,
The Observer (UK) Sunday January 7, 2007/
[Afghan News Centre]

1. Where is the village Houscha located?
2. What happened in Afghanistan in 2007?
3. How much does a bride usually cost?
4. How many people were affected by the drought?
5. Are arranged marriages legal in Afghanistan?
6. Why doesn’t the international food aid get through to the people who need it?

Ex. 4 - WHILE

A. Finish the sentences:

While the world has focused on the war against the Taliban,

While prohibited by both Afghan civil and Islamic law,.....

B. What do the clauses starting with WHILE provide?

C. Create your own examples:

While they once grew enough crops to feed the family,

While girls in my country.....

While marriages in Afghanistan.....



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head of men's council, Houscha

Mr. Erick de Mul

The United Nations Office of the
Coordinator for Afghanistan (UNOCA)

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Ministry of Work, Social Affairs,
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villager, Houscha

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Mr. Najibullah

farmer, Houscha

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