Facing the Globalisation Challenge in the Realm of English Language Teaching[1]

Nicos C. Sifakis
Hellenic Open University, Greece

Areti-Maria Sougari
Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, School of English,
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

The paper addresses the commonly acknowledged challenge of globalisation with respect to the area of English language teaching and, more particularly, teaching English to speakers of foreign languages. It is argued that some of the primary issues involved concern the increasing role of technology and communication in modern societies and the looming conflict between local communities and the decision-making bodies. It is further suggested that the global English language teaching (ELT) community has already gone a long way towards researching and, in certain cases, resolving such conflicts and has much insightful material to offer. The paper incorporates a discussion of the notion of English as an international language and the question of 'ownership' of such a language. The roles and defining characteristics of the native and non-native speaker of English are then considered and the various occasions when communication and learning take place are briefly reviewed, with frequent reference to the authors' own teaching situation, i.e. English language teaching in Greece. The paper culminates with an appreciation of the pedagogical, ethical and methodological considerations that are suggested as a means of sensitising TESOL teacher education *vis à vis* the global status of English (also with the Greek context in mind).

Introduction

Globalisation is, without doubt, one of the major defining characteristics of modern society. It constitutes both a threat and a challenge, depending on the point of view and the predisposition of the observer. This paper looks at the effects of globalisation in the area of English language teaching (ELT), concentrating on the teaching of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). It reviews the present situation of ELT with respect to globalisation, drawing parallels between, among other issues, English as an international language (EIL), the question of ownership of such a language, the status of the native speaker as opposed to that of the non-native speaker of English, as well as some methodological considerations regarding the need for the raising of our learners' intercultural awareness as a means of safeguarding against the more dangerous effects of English as a 'global' language.

The paper begins with a conceptualisation of the globalisation phenomenon with respect to its origins and its implementation in the wider scientific and non-scientific communities. We then move on to considering language-oriented concerns that verge on that phenomenon and concentrate on the way the English language is conceived in this regard (English as an international language), as well as its role in foreign language pedagogy as a whole. Where necessary, there

is reference to the authors' immediate linguistic, cultural and teaching environment, i.e. that of English language teaching in Greece, and the possible impact of the English language on the Greek culture. The article ends with a number of methodological suggestions for the foreign-language classroom.

Approaching the Globalisation Phenomenon: Some Preliminary Observations

Defining globalisation can be quite a difficult task. For our purposes, the following definition should suffice:

> Globalisation is a fashionable word to describe trends perceived to be dramatically and relentlessly increasing connections and communications among people regardless of nationality and geography. (Tobin, 1999)

Globalisation, as a notion and a term, is predominantly a loan from the science of economics, but it is more widely implemented to denote the interrelationship of

- economic (e.g. in the various financial and economic crises, such as the East Asia markets crisis in 1997);
- political (e.g. the threat against 'traditional' national sovereignty); and, most importantly,
- cultural (e.g. homogenising and civilising ramifications eroding the cultural make-up of smaller nations) issues.

In this way, any consideration of the phenomenon of globalisation is bound to bring up a discussion of such key words as 'freedom' (of individuals, countries or whole nations), 'democracy' and the 'rule of law', the role of 'new technologies', 'the media' and the various 'new means of communication'.

Although the term itself is a relatively recent one, it can be traced, in one form or another, in different stages of world history. For example, the power relations among the city states in ancient Greece, the conquests of Alexander the Great and the effects of the industrial revolution bring to mind the interplay between national policies and international relations; such an interplay is among the central features of the globalisation phenomenon. Similarly, globalisation is claimed by some to be pre-empted in the social philosophical work of Marx (Madison, 1998).

Important as it is, globalisation is not conceived by all in the same way. It is important to draw attention to the fact that there seem to be different interpretations, or versions, or realisations of it, depending on the observer. Thus, for example, the search for a social identity by the various indigenous minorities around the globe (sometimes referred to as the 'Fourth World' – Friedman, 1999) has been directly related to the various forms of powerful control exerted by the 'host' countries (which also, inevitably, raise the issue of the compulsory use of a language other than the mother tongue, the 'English-only movement', reviewed in Crawford, 2000 – see below).

On an altogether different domain, in the socioeconomic circles of Great Britain, the threat of globalisation is conceived in terms of the 'europeanisation' of the national economy (Vandenbroucke, 1998). This 'threat' is understood to take many forms, the commonest being the dangerous effects the common Euro-

pean currency (the euro) could have against the national tender (the pound). A third example of the many different conceptions of the phenomenon of globalisation can be found in the various social and psychological repercussions the 'brave new world' has on marriage, gender and the family (the 'fundamentalist-cosmopolitan divide' of Giddens, 2000).

What these examples (and many more similar ones) show is that the phenomenon of globalisation is yet to be adequately and appropriately pinned down in its entirety in a manner which would be amenable to 'scientific' interpretation. This is primarily due to the enormous number of interrelated parameters that have to be considered, both individually and holistically. However, such an appreciation seems all the more imperative in view of the looming danger of all these parameters falling out of hand (a phenomenon termed 'entropy' and studied by socio-cybernetics – Madison, 1998).

In light of these issues, let us now consider, in some detail, the globalisation reality *vis à vis* the English-teaching community. We will begin by looking at language in general, and then move on to consider the status of English in the global community and, more particularly, the role of English language teaching to speakers of other languages (TESOL). The paper will conclude with a number of methodological concerns that have to be seriously considered by all TESOL practitioners.

Globalisation and Language: Some Awareness-raising Considerations

It is generally contended that, today, the globalisation reality has enormous repercussions on the numerous natural languages. These effects are studied by the linguistic sciences, but progressively extend beyond the strictly language-centred (and language-using) communities to the related disciplines of anthropology, sociology, psychology, and, not least of all, education and pedagogy. A common starting point in all these endeavours is related to a need for approaching, drafting and appreciating the status of natural languages in the global community.

Such an approach reveals two interesting points that attest to the close connection between language and the people who use it, and can also shed light on the various effects of globalisation (as described above). On the one hand, it is accepted that all languages (including dialectal variations) have a cultural, literary, social and communicative value. On the other hand, it is beyond doubt that certain of these languages and/or dialects are rapidly disappearing (the 'endangered languages' phenomenon, see Nettle & Romaine, 2000). Inevitably, anyone intending to understand the globalisation phenomenon regarding language identity, language survival and language loss would have to become involved with, and make some sense of, both of these points and consider their connotations (for recent reviews see Crystal, 2000; Fishman, 2001; Maffi, 2001; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Thomason, 2001: Chapters 9 and 10).

A first approximation of this phenomenon can be mapped in terms of the fact that, today, different languages appear to have different 'weights'. For example, one can identify international languages (English is readily identified by most as the only truly international, or global, language – Crystal, 1997), lingua franca

languages (e.g. English, French, German, Spanish), national languages (e.g. Greek) or endangered languages (e.g. Saami *et al.*[2]). These 'weights' are directly related to the cultural, literary, social and communicative characteristics (or 'values') of languages and dialects mentioned earlier.

A further approximation of the globalisation phenomenon in the domain of language can be understood in terms of 'language ownership'. Although this can be argued to be in need of a concrete characterisation, it is generally conceptualised in terms of the direct and close association between, on the one hand, languages and dialects and, on the other, certain groups of people. If this holds true (and, at least at the sociological domain, this is indeed the case), who, then, might be considered as being the 'rightful owners' of these languages or dialects (Kachru & Ayers, 1992)? Whole nations, people who are able to speak it fluently, or individual native speakers?

Of course, the whole question around the orientation of language ownership itself can be extended even further. Among the most crucial issues under scrutiny are, for example, that of fluency (on what basis and with what criteria is it to be gauged – Chambers, 1997), or that of the term 'nation' (what would its defining characteristics be), etc. On these grounds, however, the term 'native speaker' is perhaps not generally disputed (by the layman at least), but, as we will presently see, it is a notion that may anticipate certain connotations that may not be desirable in the area of foreign-language teaching (for various viewpoints on this matter see Cook, 1999; Davies, 1991; Jenkins, 2000: Chapter 1; Medgyes, 1992).

Globalisation and Language Teaching

In order to better appreciate this looming 'danger' which is implicit in the term 'native speaker', it would be necessary to distinguish language teaching into two distinct groups, that of the first language (L1) and that of the 'other' language (L2) (the term is borrowed from Prodromou, 2000). By 'other', the following different teaching/learning situations can be implied:

(1)   As a second language (taught and used in target language environments, i.e. environments where the so-called 'native speakers' abound).
(2)   As a foreign language (taught largely in the foreign-language classroom, in which case the FL teacher is responsible not only for carrying out, or teaching, the syllabus, but also for being an active role model for the learners).
(3)   As an additional language (implemented as a third or fourth language in situations where foreign speakers, e.g. immigrants, also need to learn the language of the country where they live – in the Greek ELT setting, cf. the example of Albanian learners learning English in Greek primary and secondary schools).
(4)   As an international language (describing FLT situations which concentrate on the teaching of a language, most commonly English, for primarily communicative purposes, between a vast number of people around the globe who are already used to using it for the same purposes).
(5)   As a lingua franca (used primarily in world-wide business, professional or political communication).
(6)   As intercultural communication (a variation of (4) and (5), which describes

the use of a foreign language as a means of approaching the cultural charac-teristics of people from different speech communities).

Needless to say, the globalisation phenomenon on language teaching has tremendous effects not only on L2, but on L1 teaching as well. Since English has acquired an international status, an increasing number of native speakers of English see no need to learn any other language and become, as a result, cultur-ally isolated from the rest of the world (this phenomenon can be seen to reflect the use of English as a 'hegemonic' language – for a relevant discussion in the Euro-pean Union context cf. Christides, 1999). With respect to L2 teaching, it can be seen that the six different facets of foreign-language teaching outlined above can be grouped as follows:

(a) Situations (1) to (3) seem to espouse the supposition of the native speaker as the 'rightful owner' of the foreign language. As a result, foreign language teaching in these situations is commonly characterised by a tendency to uphold a series of regulations, or 'rules', that map and underlie the entire range of native speakers' linguistic competence and performance and against which non-native speakers' competence and performance is measured. Things become more complicated, however, when one considers so-called 'language attrition' phenomena, which describe situations in which increased exposure to imperfect samples of English can have long-lasting detrimental effects on native English teachers' language as well (Porte, 1999). This approach, which denotes the effect of those forms of language teaching that are based on the 'native speaker' model, can be defined as the *norm*-biased approach.

(b) Situations (4) (and, arguably, (3)) to (6) evidently take a different perspec-tive, which breaks away from perceiving 'nativity' as a primary prerequisite for language ownership, but rather upholds an approach that is *culturally informed* (or biased). According to this approach, what is important is the purpose for which the language is put to use, rather than a strict rule-based and norm-biased 'fluency' (which is commensurate to a native speaker's performance). In this way, language is seen less as a less-than-perfect instru-ment of communication that is forever 'doomed' to be weighted up against the 'perfect' linguistic (as well as sociocultural) model of the native speaker. Instead, language is perceived all the more as a loose means of communicat-ing messages that carry along with them the entire cultural attire of the interlocutors (in this respect, see Holliday, 1994; Medgyes, 1994).

Each of these two groups has certain advantages and disadvantages. For example, norm-biased approaches to foreign-language teaching are relatively straightforward as far as gauging non-native speakers' competence and perfor-mance are concerned, since they resort to observable use- and usage-oriented features of native speakers' competence and performance. For this reason, they lend themselves more readily to the appropriations of the various learning curricula and assessment techniques. Having said that, however, norm-biased approaches also associate the use/usage characteristics of native speakers with certain cultural features that are germane to those native speakers' cultural make-up. In effect, such approaches view the native speaker as a cultural model

that foreign-language learners aspire to – which can have detrimental effects on those learners' own cultural make-up that may even show in the use of their mother tongue (Phillipson, 1992).

Of late, such 'strong' versions of these norm-biased approaches to the teaching of English as a foreign language have been severely criticised for indirectly shaping the cultural mentality of non-native speakers and, therefore, personifying the negative effects of globalisation on language (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999). The so-called culturally informed approaches are progressively perceived as a means of upholding the English language as an instrument for communication among people in the entire world, while at the same time shielding non-native speakers from the negative effects of the norm-biased rationale (also see Sifakis, 2001).

This new perspective to foreign-language teaching has put forward a case for the culturally informed teaching of English as an international language (EIL – Crystal, 1997). Such a paradigm stresses the need for reinforcing all speakers' (native and non-native alike) sense as communicators at a global level by adding an extra dimension (i.e. cultural awareness) to our 'communicative competence'. It also emphasises the educational value of culturally informed English language teaching as a foreign language (the example of 'Language Education for Intercultural Communication', or LEDIC, put forward in Fay, 1999).

Globalisation and English (TESOL)

In light of the above, it is possible to identify three major trends that permeate the way the teaching of English as a foreign/international language is perceived within the wider area of TESOL (the case study of Foley *et al.*, 1999 and chapter 4 of Wright, 2000). Although these trends are not necessarily complementary, since they focus on different aspects of the global status of English and the impact on teaching *per se*, they can be quite enlightening of the way English language teaching is perceived by its own practitioners.

One such trend, which concentrates on perceiving language as a means of understanding aspects of contemporary society, views the area of EIL as a site which embodies the constant and dynamic struggles of people in world society (Fairclough, 1997). This perspective calls for a foreign-language pedagogy which promotes 'critical language awareness' and therefore concentrates on analysing the ways whereby language shapes and is shaped by society. It goes on to research how language in specific contexts can be designed and redesigned by contemporary discourse technologists to market people and products. It even goes as far as to suggest ways of creating certain language teaching curricula along these lines, towards using language learning as a means of changing society towards emancipation and democracy.

A much 'stronger' version of this sociocultural perspective adopts a strictly ideological viewpoint of EIL and concentrates on the 'politics' underlying the 'neo-colonialist policies' and curricular decisions of English-speaking countries (Phillipson, 1992). Phillipson posits five tenets or fallacies that are allegedly implemented in this regard, two of which concern the monolingual use of English in the foreign-language classroom (resulting in the exclusion of the mother tongue from it) and the promotion of the native speaker model (see

above). What is suggested is the effective reform of foreign-language policy in non-English-speaking countries, with the aim of improving the implementation of course design principles. In this way, all efforts are targeted at persuading the policy makers in the countries where these 'neo-colonialist' relationships exist to adopt such an approach.

A third trend adopts a more teacher-oriented stance and considers the foreign-language teacher's share in the EIL arena (concentrating especially on its more negative aspects). In this respect, EFL teachers have to be aware of the cultural and linguistic 'threats' of English with regard to the mother tongue of the country they work in. Such reflective awareness would enable them to deal critically with the globalisation challenges of EIL (the 'critical pedagogy' of Pennycook, 1996).

It goes without saying that each of these approaches raises important issues that verge on all aspects of the teaching of English as an international language. Even so, as far as the teaching methodology of EIL as such is concerned, one of the most crucial questions that has to be addressed is the following: which of the cultural, literary, social and communicative values laid out above are ESOL practitioners supposed to concentrate on in their teaching?

This is a serious question that cannot be answered plainly by prompting ESOL practitioners into either 'avoiding' or 'integrating' these facets in their teaching. In the final analysis, each ESOL teacher would have to take into serious consideration the defining characteristics that designate or constrain each specific teaching situation. To that effect, responsible decision making should be related to the following factors:

- *Learners' age*: not all learners are to be treated in the same manner – young learners, adolescents and adults do not share the way they perceive the world and exhibit variable degrees of awareness of the role of English in their (concurrent or future) lives. For this reason, they should be approached carefully and with consideration.
- *Language level*: a key factor is the level of proficiency or fluency different learners have reached, or (and this is particularly important in the culturally biased classroom) believe they have reached. All learners, whether they are at the beginning, intermediate or more advanced level, can and should be able to appropriately implement the language they have mastered in different cultural situations.
- *Purpose factors*: it is important to understand that the EIL teaching classroom would have to concentrate on investigating non-native speakers' communicative needs (i.e. communication with other non-native speakers, cf. Jenkins, 2000) and, in this way, depart from the features of the TENOR ('teaching English for no obvious reason', Abbot, 1981) or, strictly speaking, testing situations that usually characterise it. Learners need to be motivated to use English internationally, either as a means of general communication, or in the more academic and occupational domain; as a result, learners should also be made aware of the constraints of a primarily culture-biased learning context.
- *Affective factors*: of particular concern when it comes to enhancing learners' motivation is an appreciation of their favourite strategies for language

learning that they use either individually or as a group (e.g. it has been shown that Chinese and Japanese learners have been acculturated to a more teacher-centred methodology – Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998; Sakui & Gaies, 1999).

Clearly, the ESOL practitioner should carefully gauge these considerations. One way of achieving this is by performing frequent needs analyses as a means of both becoming aware of the learners' characteristics and cultural profile as well as reformulating the curricular characteristics of each class in link with these characteristics. Of particular concern, of course, should be the interplay between the learning and cultural constraints, on the one hand, and the ever-changing identity of each evolving class (the distinction between 'classroom culture' and 'ethnic culture' in Prodromou, 2000; Widdowson, 1996). A common example, these days, is the case of adult learners beginning to need English for professional purposes; this implies that such learners would also have to travel to non-English-speaking countries whose cultural make up is frequently very different from that of their own. ESOL practitioners should be increasingly aware of these possibilities and needs and must be ready to integrate such cultural elements in their language teaching (see also Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Limaye & Victor, 1991).

Some Methodological Considerations

In this light, what follows is a brief exposé of certain teaching methodology-oriented specifications for the consideration of all ESOL practitioners. A more extensive list of suggestions and practical ideas can be found elsewhere (e.g. Fantini, 1997; Fennes & Hapgood, 1997; Finkelstein & Eder, 1999; Fowler & Mumford, 1999; Kohls & Knight, 1994; Shade *et al.*, 1997; Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993).

In the first place, of particular importance, especially with regard to the individual needs, preferences and learning styles alluded to in the previous section, is the dedication to the teaching of authentic texts and tasks. As far as texts are concerned, teachers have to be selective, with respect to both the choice of textbook (whenever they have this opportunity) and the feeding-in of photocopied material from outside sources (newspapers, magazines, the web etc.). What is important to remember, in this regard, is that it is best to stick to issues that are known to learners (and relevant to their age, needs and abilities) and therefore enhance their motivation. Whenever the opportunity arises, the teacher can intersperse material that is culturally informed – this, of course, is best achieved if such material is distributed in sensible doses.

As regards the teaching of authentic tasks, the teacher has to be quite careful. It has to be acknowledged that this area has always been of particular concern for ESOL practitioners and is currently heavily researched upon (cf. Crookes & Gass, 1993; Long, 1997; Seedhouse, 1999; Singelis, 1998; Skehan, 1996, Skehan & Foster, 1995). In particular, there is need for more research on the defining characteristics, the pedagogical prerequisites, as well as the very designing of classroom activities that are culturally sensitive or informed and can also be characterised as 'authentic' (see the extensive bibliography cited above for a discussion of these issues).

Apart from the culturally informed status of authentic texts and tasks, the ESOL practitioner should make use of all opportunities to sensitise his or her learners with respect to the role of English as an international language. This can be achieved in a variety of direct and indirect, or particular and more general, ways. A useful strategy is using learners' metacognitive knowledge and raising their awareness on EIL-related matters. For example, learners can be urged to reflect on such issues as the 'need' for an international language today, on the reasons why English has acquired such a status, on the relationship between English and their mother tongue (discussion of cognate words in the two languages can be very useful in this respect), on the possible detrimental effects of English on their mother tongue or local dialect, on the policies followed by private or public institutions with respect to the teaching and testing/assessing specifications in the area of EFL, and so on.

A more direct way of culturally sensitising EFL learners is related to a hands-on discussion of different aspects of the English language. Learners' attention can be drawn to strictly speaking linguistic issues (grammar and vocabulary). In this regard, it would be useful to review different types of English language dictionaries (depending on their comprehensibility and cultural appropriacy of definitions as well as their function) and reflect on whether similar dictionaries can be found in the learners' mother tongue (on this issue cf. Amritavalli, 1999). The sociolinguistic effects of the use of English in former English-speaking colonies can also be discussed (as well as the phenomena of pidginisation and creolisation and the reasons behind their existence). For example, Greek EFL learners can explore all facets of the 'Greeklish' sociolect (an under-researched dialect used by Greek adolescents which exhibits the heavy influence of English on the grammar and vocabulary of Greek – for a recent discussion cf. McEntee-Atalianis & Pouloukas, 2001; for a discussion of the cultural connotations of a similar situation in Japan, see Downes, 2001).

Learners can also be sensitised with respect to the different intonational and pronunciation-based patterns of speech segments, words, phrases or whole utterances, as they are used by different native and non-native speakers around the globe. These instantiations usually carry heavy cultural connotations and, for this reason, lend themselves to excellent discussions of cultural issues. In this respect, learners can explore the use of slang in different English-speaking countries and the extent to which certain English colloquialisms have found their way into their own mother tongue. What is more, learners can practise spotting the nationality of other people (native and non-native) from their English accent. This is a sure-fire way of making them aware of the extent to which different English accents are intelligible (and why). It will also make them realise both the enormous number and the great beauty of different English accents.

Making learners aware of the global character of EIL also necessitates, to a sensible extent, the use of their mother tongue in the classroom (see bibliography cited above, as well as Kramsch, 1993). The ultimate aim of ESOL practitioners, in this regard, should be not only to make their learners competent users of English, but also to 'culturally authenticate' the foreign language, i.e. to make these learners the essential and shameless 'owners' of English as an international language.

Some further ways of enhancing learners' awareness of the function of EIL and improving their competence in using English to communicate with other

non-native speakers of English are the following (the teacher should of course monitor the entire process, but based on the culture-biased rather than the norm-biased approach):

- establishing school links with countries other than native English-speaking ones; participating in student-exchange programmes with such countries;
- encouraging learners to engage in correspondence with students from different countries (this could also be done through the Internet – for a discussion of similar programmes and their advantages regarding learner motivation, see Skinner & Austin, 1999);
- encouraging learners to become members of international non-profit organisations (such as Action Aid) that offer financial help to third world countries; the whole enterprise can be constructively used in the EFL/EIL classroom as a means of sensitising learners with regard to cultural and political issues related to the 'real' world (and all this can be achieved using the English language);
- encouraging learners to search the Internet critically, by setting certain research projects; in this way, they can be sensitised to EIL-oriented issues they may have been previously unaware of (for example, the fact that most search and meta-search engines on the worldwide web have an American-oriented 'angle' in their approach to the news).

It should be stressed that, in such activities, the role of the teacher as monitor of the entire process is crucial – he or she should be careful to promote a culture-biased (rather than a strictly norm-biased) approach to the teaching of English that would also guard against pidginisation. It is suggested that, properly administered, such practices do not only promote cultural awareness and inform learners regarding the status of EIL, they also enhance learner autonomy, both pedagogically and methodologically (Cotterall, 2000) and should, for this reason, be considered in the EFL/EIL curriculum and syllabus design.

Conclusion

This paper has reviewed the role of English language teaching *vis à vis* the phenomenon of globalisation. Different forms of ELT have been presented and it has been contended that there is an impending need for informing and culturally sensitising EFL learners with respect to both the cultural status of English as an international language as well as their own role as communicators in the global English-speaking village. It is therefore essential, in ESOL classrooms, that particular attention is drawn not only to practising interactional communication, but to promoting *intercultural communicative competence* (Fay, 1999).

What is more, it has been implied, throughout this paper, that one of the most crucial roles of the ESOL practitioner in this globalisation age is that of the cultural role model. To that end, it is imperative that EFL/EIL teachers become aware of this role and of the responsibilities that come with it: but this is the subject of another paper!

List of acronyms

ELT: English Language Teaching

TESOL: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
ESOL: English to Speakers of Other Languages
EIL: English as an International Language

Correspondence

Any correspondence should be directed to either Dr N. Sifakis, 33 Dervenakion, 17237 Athens, Greece (nicossif@hol.gr) or Dr A. Sougari, 4 28th October St., 546 42 Thessaloniki, Greece (asougari@enl.auth.gr).

Notes

1. Adapted from a paper presented at the First International Conference of the Association of Fulbright Scholars in Greece, European Cultural Centre, Delphi, 2 December, 2000.
2. Komi is spoken in the Urals and was 'banned' by Stalin during the 'russification' period. It is currently widely used in the press and TV. In the same way, Saami, which is spoken by the Inwit community in the area of Finland, Sweden and Norway, undergoes a revival and is quite strong both linguistically and culturally. This is more than we could say about Kerek, which is spoken by three or four people in Dagestan (northern Russia) (L'Homme, 1998).

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