

WARM UP

1 Which two English words have been combined to form the term 'glocalisation'? What do you think it means?

Glocalisation

The term 'glocalisation' – a portmanteau of the words 'globalisation' and 'local' – was probably first used by Japanese economists and then made popular by sociologist Roland Robertson in the 1990s. Within the business world, its basic interpretation is that a company needs to be concerned about and focused on both global and local issues in order to be successful. It is a term often used to show that a multinational company operating all over the world should customise its products and marketing for each locality and culture where it is present. On a simple level, this means that a fast-food restaurant will not sell burgers made of beef in India or put bacon on top of burgers in a Muslim country. The bank HSBC, for example, ran an advertising campaign in 2002 where it promoted its unique knowledge and understanding of local communities and their needs coupled with the strength, experience and service of a global bank.

The idea of glocalisation is not new. As long ago as the 1970s, there was the popular slogan 'Think globally, act locally', now often just 'Think global, act local'. This was used by environmental organisations to promote the importance of integrating local environmental campaigns and actions within a global perspective. In order for these campaigns to be successful, it was important for people to see and understand the global impact of their local actions. This concept soon became part of the corporate world, where expanding international and multinational businesses were trying to establish the best ways to structure their organisations.

Some chose one centralised system and strategy, while others opted for local, independent divisions but both had their disadvantages in terms of communication, too much restriction or a lack of control. It was here that the concept of thinking globally and acting locally was taken on board.

To some, glocalisation is a positive word, one which implies that some kind of cultural accommodation has taken place, that a multinational, for example, has made an effort to tailor products and services to fit consumer demand and that a happy balance between global and local is possible. Of course, there are others who feel that it is just for show, a way of covering-up the continued economic, cultural and social globalisation the world is facing.



ACTIVITIES

READING COMPREHENSION

2 Read the text and answer these questions.

- 1 When did the use of the word glocalisation become widespread?
- 2 In what ways could a multinational fast-food company customise its products for local markets?
- 3 Which two elements did the HSBC advertising campaign combine?
- 4 How did environmentalists use the slogan 'Think globally, act locally'?
- 5 What positive associations does the term glocalisation have for some people?
- 6 In what way is it considered negative by others?

SPEAKING

3 Discuss these questions in small groups.

- 1 What advantages are there for a company to think globally and act locally?
- 2 What kinds of organisations do you think operate in a more glocal rather than global manner?
- 3 Do you think glocalisation is positive and useful? Why/Why not?