

# Introducing globalisation

Globalisation is a complex concept for learners. At KS4/5, one approach would be to provide the class with a full written definition at the very start of the first lesson. For example: *'Globalisation is the increasing connections between places and people across the planet, established through trade, politics and cultural exchanges, and helped by technology and transport.'*

For a younger KS3 audience, however, we may usefully adopt an alternate approach to teaching and learning. Instead, the definition of globalisation will be the final *outcome* of the first lesson: something students construct for themselves, albeit with teacher facilitation.

In this scheme of work, the students (either individually or in small groups) are asked to produce their own definition of globalisation. This definition will be based on their study and discussion of the eight 'global interactions' shown in Table 1. Each interaction has a specific geographical context and incorporates one or more of the key concepts that inform the 'textbook' definition of globalisation provided above.

*Table 1 Eight interactions that contribute to globalisation: what are the common themes?*

➤ A French person eating a banana from Ecuador while on holiday in Egypt
➤ The leaders of world nations meeting at a conference to discuss world trade
➤ Children with Indian, Polish or English roots all attending the same UK school
➤ An American citizen 'liking' the Facebook page of a South African citizen
➤ A British teenager watching South Korea's Psy sing 'Gangnam Style' on YouTube
➤ A German car manufacturer relocating one of its engine factories to Brazil
➤ A Chinese company building a new nuclear power station for people in the UK
➤ A Latvian electrician fixing a wiring problem in a house in Manchester



*Figure 1 The globalisation matrix*

The eight interactions in Table 1 broadly correspond with a model that is widely used in GCSE and A-level teaching and which compartmentalises globalisation into different component parts (Figure 1). This approach fosters understanding that globalisation is *a set of processes, not just one*: there are economic, cultural, social and political processes all operating alongside one another.

These linked processes are, however, equivalent in terms of (i) the geographic *concepts* that they illustrate, and (ii) the geographic *factors* that explain their occurrence. Whether we are talking about Ecuadorian bananas being eaten in Egypt, or Facebook conversations across continents, common 'global' themes can be uncovered. These shared themes (in reality, a mix of concepts and factors) underpin all of the eight interactions in Table 1.

To help students identify the shared themes for themselves, begin by asking them to *compare* the eight interactions, looking for similarities.

They may identify recurring geographical *concepts*, as follows:

- Different types of **connection** or **movement** are **linking** people and places together
- These connections and movements can be forged across a **global-scale** distance, or **space**
- These connections and movements can make different places **interdependent** on one another for trade or other forms of support
- Places are becoming **dynamic**, as societies and cultures begin to **mix** and **change** as a result of connections and movements.

They may also recognise some, or all, of the following geographical *factors* as recurring themes. These factors have all accelerated globalisation:

- Global connections/movements are becoming easier and faster, thanks to **technology**
- Global connections/movements are planned by **governments**, organisations (UN) and businesses
- Global connections/movements are driven by global **corporations** seeking a profit

### Why is globalisation happening?

Following their initial discussion and comparison of the eight statements, students should have begun to grasp the importance of technology, governments and corporations as factors driving globalisation. A wealth of supporting facts could easily be provided to amplify student understanding of these: the difficulty lies in knowing how much detail is appropriate for KS3 geography (as opposed to, say, the study of technology, citizenship, economics, politics or history).

One suggestion is that students should know, with reference to evidence, how globalisation has:

- accelerated *within their own lifetime*, compared with earlier decades (helping them build a time-line of changes is one possible approach to teaching and learning)
- been driven by companies based in countries *everywhere*, and not just those found in the high-income countries of the northern hemisphere
- been *managed* by national governments, and is not simply an assumed outcome of improved technology

The following table shows some key 'events' included in a globalisation timeline. These events are linked with the actions of companies and governments, as well as technological change over time. One suggestion is to provide students with a card-sorting exercise (each event is printed on a separate piece of card). But do not include the year of the events. They can then work in pairs, trying to group the events chronologically by decade, or, more ambitiously, attempting to arrange the events sequentially.

Since 2000	2000	<b>The Millennium Development Goals are launched</b> [This global initiative was launched by the United Nations with the aim of raising living standards in the world's poorest countries, where people have not always benefited from globalisation.]
	2004	<b>Facebook begins</b> [Although it was not the first social network to gain global popularity, the growth of Facebook is associated strongly with the growth of globalisation and the 'shrinking world' effect.]
	2011	<b>China overtakes Japan to become the world's second largest economy</b> [China is the leading 'BRIC' nation. BRIC is an abbreviation for 'Brazil, Russia, India and China'. These four important 'emerging economies' are home to nearly 3 billion people. They are places where growing numbers of people enjoy a wealthier 'middle class' lifestyle than their parents did. The BRIC nations have many global corporations of their own, such as India's Tata company.]
	2001	<b>The terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York</b> [This event showed that although the world is more connected than it used to be, the age of globalisation is also afflicted by conflict and disagreement between different groups of people and nations.]
1980s and 1990s	1996	<b>Broadband internet becomes available for homes</b> in the US and Europe [In the early years of the internet, only very small amounts of data, such as text documents, could be downloaded quickly by computers. Broadband allows photographs, music and videos to be shared easily.]
	1990	<b>The first proper Windows personal computers (PCs) are sold</b> [These computers, running Windows 3.0, could only carry out a fraction of the work that modern devices are capable of, but were seen as a miracle of technology at the time.]
	1998	<b>Tesco opens its first overseas store in Asia</b> [Tesco has sourced food from many other countries to sell in the UK for decades now. But its decision to <i>sell</i> food to people living in other countries is more recent.]
Before the 1980s	1975	<b>Britain joins Europe</b> [The European Union, or EU, was still known as the EEC when the UK joined. The EU is one of a number of multinational groups that countries all around the world have chosen to join. The growth of these groups is part of political globalisation.]
	1944	<b>The World Bank is set up, at the close of the Second World War</b> [The World Bank has helped shape the global economy by establishing economic rules that countries are expected to follow if they want to borrow money. The World Bank is based in Washington, USA.]
	1948	<b>Jamaicans migrate to the UK</b> [The first post WWII arrivals came on the <i>Empire Windrush</i> . Migrants from Britain's ex-colonies, including India, were invited to work in the UK because there was a shortage of British workers after the Second World War. British culture has become more globally diverse, as a result.]

## Is globalisation a good thing?

Is globalisation a good thing? Clearly, this is too simplistic a question to be easily answered, given the complex nature of globalisation. To help develop their analytical skills in advance of KS4, suggest to students that a simple question, such as the one posed here ('Is globalisation a good thing?'), can be tackled by 'unpacking' the statement, using question 'scaffolding', as follows:

- What do we mean by globalisation? [Which aspects are under discussion, for instance? Economic globalisation or cultural globalisation?]
- What is meant by 'good' in this context? [Globalisation may bring a relative improvement in some people's quality of life, yet still leave them in a poor economic position when compared with people living in richer countries.]
- Which different perspectives, or viewpoints, could we consider when answering the question? [Someone in Liverpool, whose job has been lost overseas, may take a different viewpoint from someone who owns shares in McDonald's or Facebook.]

The table below shows different outcomes of globalisation. Some are clearly negative for certain groups of people. A few are less obviously positive or negative, such as growing cultural diversity in large cities. Assessment of these 'greyer' outcomes places a greater cognitive demand on students because they will need to apply varying viewpoints. They might consider how different groups of people (characterised by age, identity, occupation or beliefs) are likely to feel about the changes.

Local societies and landscapes have sometimes gained enormously in cultural diversity. The arrival of migrants, global retail chains and new kinds of modern architecture means that British cities today look every different than in the past.	Technology and transport allow western businesses to move their factories to countries where labour is cheaper, like Indonesia. This takes traditional factory jobs away from cities like Sheffield and Detroit. Geographers call this 'deindustrialisation'.	In recent decades, the United Nations has worked to bring countries together to solve a range of issues, from climate change, to the Millennium Development Goals. U.N. peacekeeping troops help restore order in countries where there is conflict.
The internet allows some local cultures to survive and strengthen. Musicians from Mali upload films onto YouTube where many people view them, helping keep Mali's traditions alive. A South Korean song, Gangnam Style, spread globally through YouTube.	McDonald's sells burgers in India using a business model called a 'joint venture'. Half of the company's Indian stores are locally-owned, so half the profits stay in India. The other half of the profits are taken back to the USA, where McDonald's is headquartered.	Globalisation has sometimes led to conflict between different cultures. Terrorists in Kenya and Nigeria have claimed that they are trying to stop the spread of 'western values', which they say include consumerism and greater independence for women.
'Sweat shop' is a term that is sometimes used to describe some of the very worst conditions endured by men and women working for long hours in unsafe textile	Some local traditions struggle to survive in a globalised world. Young people may abandon customs followed by their parents. In some cases, languages have become	Technology companies in China and India sometimes pay workers as much as £500 a month producing Apple phones and other quality products. These countries

factories in Bangladesh. They may even earn wages of no more than just £2 a day.	extinct as more young people start speaking English or Spanish.	have their own technology companies too, whose owners are, in some cases, billionaires.
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### Plenary: globalisation and wealth

As the preceding material has shown, there is no easy and obvious conclusion that can be arrived at regarding the merits, or otherwise, of globalisation. However, five 'big picture' statements about the changing global distribution of wealth give students final food for thought.

During the last 30 years:

- over half a billion people in China have escaped poverty, following their leaders' decision to embrace economic globalisation
- many African nations such as Nigeria have finally begun to achieve strong economic growth
- the proportion of people in sub-Saharan Africa living in absolute poverty has not changed
- India has developed its own space mission, yet half a billion Indians still lack a flushing toilet
- corporations like Apple and Microsoft have seen their global profits soar.

### Globalisation 'in the news'

Students can take this study further by undertaking independent research. They can investigate some recent news stories that link well with the study of globalisation.

- ✓ *Economic globalisation update* Chinese and French companies are working together to develop a new nuclear power station at Hinkley in the UK:  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-24561325>
- ✓ *Social globalisation update* A good starting point for the latest news stories about international migration is: <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/migration>
- ✓ *Political globalisation update* The leading G8 group of nations met in December 2013 to discuss the challenge of dementia and how best to coordinate their efforts to tackle it:  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-25318194>