Original Research

Glocalisation in action: 'Less is More' English coursebook series

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Globalisation has been a powerful force taking over every field for a very long time, including the field of language education. Any discussion of globalisation cannot be held in isolation without extending it to include its counterpart, localisation. Teachers of English as a foreign language have long been aware of the fact that global coursebook providers enhance global culture in their coursebooks. However, getting students to identify with these global topics within their local contexts often proves challenging. Teachers experience the frustration of mediating between the global information and the local context. As has been observed, students experience the foreignness within the lessons and shy away from exchanging ideas and practising their language skills and, thus, they cannot engage with the language work. One solution to this could be merging the two concepts of globalisation and localisation, called glocalisation. This study aims at presenting good practices of glocalisation, starting from local culture and local background awareness and extending to global topics and information. In the search to ease the teacher's mediating role and student's motivation, and embedded in global 21st century skills, our study reveals strategies to use in English coursebooks for the successful application of glocalisation in language learning with reference to ELT in particular.

KEYWORDS: *globalisation, glocalisation, culture, coursebook, ELT, Turkey*

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalisation has a significant impact on all areas of modern life, and language learning and teaching is no exception. Language learning is the exchange of global culture, and the resources and materials used, particularly with English language teaching, reflect that process. As with any other area of globalisation, the role that globalisation has played in language learning has come under scrutiny (Robertson, 1995; Ritzer, 2003; Salimi & Safarzadeh, 2019). One of the chief complaints about globalisation is the undermining of one cul-

ture by another, resulting in an imbalance which can impact local values, traditions and cultures (Robertson, 1995; Ritzer, 2003). In education in general, major world institutions and organisations have had a significant impact on curriculum and syllabus in a range of countries, and some have argued that the materials that have been encouraged and used in curriculums, influenced by major organisations and institutions, undermine the local values in education (Jarvis, 2002; Hamilton, 2014; Preece, 2013; Salimi & Safarzadeh, 2019).

This paper presents the case for glocalisation in Turkey and highlights that conventional coursebooks that are in use in Turkey do not take into full consideration the local needs of the learners in the Turkish context. It also details the response to this lack of consideration which involved the design of a new coursebook series, written by a multinational team of authors based in Turkey, with experience of teaching Turkish learners.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

2.1. Globalisation and glocalisation

Globalisation is the compression of world cultures into a single culture, and within some discussions has been linked to imperialist motives and elements of cultural domination and subordination (Ritzer, 2003). With that concept of globalisation in mind, an increasingly popular concept was one that united the benefits of global sharing with local integration, and this was termed 'glocalisation' (Robertson, 1995; Salimi & Safarzadeh, 2019). Ritzer (2003, p. 190) defined glocalisation as *'the interpenetration of the global and the local resulting in unique outcomes in different geographic areas'*. Glocalisation can be thought of as a kind of micromarketing, that is to say *'the tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global or near-global basis to increasingly differentiated local and particular markets'* (Robertson, 1995, p. 28). Glocalisation can easily be seen when looking at international businesses. For example, a fast food company expands past the borders of the country in which it was founded. It has become a global corporation. The next thing it does is alter

its menu to cater to local tastes, and now it has glocalised. When applying this idea to language teaching, it can be thought of as including a local context alongside the culture of the native country. Mainstream teaching materials have, necessarily, globalised content and include cultural context from the country or countries where the target language is spoken as a native language. But as Tomlinson (2003, p. 163) says, *'one of the main reasons why global coursebooks are not normally humanistic is that in trying to cater for everybody they end up engaging nobody'*.

2.2. Importance of local cultural knowledge

Culture is an essential part of language learning. Ellis (2000) states that students can learn a language easier when they have an interest in the culture and the society of the native country. Widdowson's (1990) claims that first language acquisition happens in tandem with cultural knowledge are significant because that suggests that cultural knowledge should be taught in tandem with any additional language. The conflict happens, however, when the cultural topics provided are not of interest to the student. Salimi and Safarzadeh (2019) discussed the concepts of glocalisation within the wider context of moving from American or British English to a more representative global English – one that represents the glocal nature of English in the 21st century – and stated that understanding Iranian English teachers' perceptions of glocalisation would provide useful indications for the most appropriate way to design both teacher education programmes and help Iranian EFL teachers to find their genuine role in the teaching of English in Iran.

Glocalisation has implications not exclusively for learners, but also for teachers, particularly with the tools and materials that teachers use. This view has been supported by Rhedding-Jones (2002), who argued that understanding the nuances of English-based curricula needs to be understood within the framework of local contexts and that local differences be recognised, thus enabling and empowering both students and teachers as agents of globalisation, rather than being objects.

2.3. Global and local coursebooks

This struggle between the local context and dominance of global organisations and coursebooks in use has caused problems in a variety of countries. We have found that this is a particular problem in a country with a vastly different culture. Often, as teachers in Turkey, we end up either teaching not only the target language for the lesson, but also the cultural significance and background of the topic, or we find ourselves in a classroom where the students aren't interested in the topic and don't have the language to express why or what would be more engaging for them. When İlter & Güzeller (2000) asked Turkish students about their attitudes towards culture when learning English, they found that although 62% of the students they surveyed wanted to learn the culture of the target language they were learning, more than 58% of respondents said that they didn't like or understand the language involved, and nearly a quarter of the students surveyed said that English coursebooks didn't give importance to Turkish culture. This study was important for us, as all of the surveyed students over 25 said that unknown words related to the native culture bothered them, which, as the authors suggested, indicates that older students are less tolerant of other cultures. The study's conclusion was that a cross-cultural (glocal) approach would be best suited for Turkish students. After years of teaching in Turkey, this was our conclusion as well. This highlights the need for an open discussion regarding glocalisation in Turkey and will be discussed in detail.

3. GLOCALISATION IN TURKEY

3.1. Grammar and vocabulary vs skills development

Turkish education system has gone through significant changes in recent years (Solak & Bayar, 2015; Savaskan, 2016). Turkish government has been working closely with international bodies, such as the OECD, the EU and the British Council to identify the needs of Turkish learners in general with the aim of working towards targets set in 2020 and 2023 (West et al., 2015). Despite this, English language education continues to be prob-

lematic in Turkey, for a variety of reasons (Kizildag, 2009; Solak & Bayar, 2015; Dulger, 2016; Savaskan, 2016). In the Turkish context, a lot has been written on the challenges faced by Turkish learners of English, as well as those of teachers in Turkey, however an important point, which has received less attention, is the content used to teach English and the approach used in the presentation of the English language.

Turkish learners are exposed to English from the age of 10 in the state school education system and receive around 4-12 hours per week of English language education from grade 4 onwards (Kizildag, 2009; Uztosun, 2011). Despite this high exposure to English from a relatively young age, this education tends to be focused on grammar points and vocabulary sets, limiting the student's potential to develop skills (Uztosun, 2011; Solak & Bayar, 2015). A typical complaint by Turkish learners of English is that they understand, but can't speak English, which is the result of years of exposure to language but very limited practical use (Kizildag, 2009; Solak & Bayar, 2015). Another factor affecting this is the focus on passing exams, which are based on grammar and vocabulary, prioritising accuracy over skills development. Learners, teachers, materials and syllabi in turn make these aspects of English the focus, leading to complaints about syllabus content and coursebook content over reliance on grammar knowledge (Kizildag, 2009; Uztosun, 2011; Solak & Bayar, 2015). Previous studies of Turkish English language learners have recommended designing coursebooks which consider learners' social backgrounds and interests (Kizildag, 2009; Kiziltan & Atli, 2013).

3.2. International vs local coursebooks

In Turkey it is common for students at the school level to be exposed to coursebooks prepared by MEB qualified teachers, yet this content tends to have a main focus on grammar and lexical sets rather than dealing with helping students develop the skills needed to succeed (Kizildag, 2009; Uztosun, 2011). In contrast, at university level English language education rarely uses coursebooks created by qualified teachers, instead utili-

sing the coursebooks in the market produced by large, international publishing houses, predominantly British or American (West et al., 2015). Whilst it is not the intention of this paper to discredit the value of these resources, what is clear is that the content, in terms of culture and information away from the language points being presented, is often not engaging for students. Students do not connect with the content that is being presented and this in turn affects their engagement with the language being presented (İlter & Güzeller, 2000; Solak & Bayar, 2015; Dulger, 2016). Studies into factors affecting English language teaching in Turkey have identified that inappropriate textbooks play a significant role in the issues affecting effective language learning and teaching practices in Turkey (Kizildag, 2009; Solak & Bayar, 2015; Dulger, 2016).

3.3. Dependence on the coursebook

Coursebooks are an integral part any language-learning classroom and are a valuable tool for any teacher, as well as students. The British Council found that in Turkey there is an overdependence on the coursebook in the classroom environment, with very few teachers breaking away from the content presented in the units (West et al., 2015). This highlights the important role the coursebook plays in the Turkish EFL context and why finding the correct coursebook, which is appropriately designed, is imperative to help students in their learning. Another report by the British Council identified that unsuitable coursebooks were ranked higher than large classes and unsuitable teaching methods as an issue affecting language learning in Turkey (Özen et al., 2013).

3.4. Cultural appropriacy of coursebooks

A study at Akdeniz University into the views of students of English language coursebook content by İlter and Güzeller (2000) identified some interesting points. They found that students tended to feel as though coursebook cultural content prioritised the culture of English-speaking countries, particularly American and British culture, and that many students did not want to engage with con-

tent as much. They noted that students felt that books generally take no interest in Turkish culture but would prefer a cross-cultural approach where Turkish culture, as well as the target language culture, was integrated into the material. A cross-cultural approach would lead to better motivation to learn the language being presented and would take away from the feeling that books are presenting a superior culture. It is clear that coursebook content, which is influenced by American or British cultures, does not consider cultural or local issues. A coursebook unit which showcases or even celebrates regionally controversial political figures, such as Winston Churchill, for example, may not be appropriate for a particular classroom context, and may even present an obstacle and shows a lack of cultural understanding of appropriate content. Only language teachers, content producers with knowledge of the local context, can understand these kinds of issues and implications.

Dulger (2016) identified that in general English teachers in Turkey are satisfied with the coursebooks in use in the classrooms in Turkey, however there are issues in terms of coursebook content. Dulger (2016) states that a good coursebook needs to be appealing to both teacher and student and be of interest to both. He highlights that a well-designed coursebook can help aid motivation, and that coursebooks should be designed with the teachers' and students' needs in the local context in mind. All of the authors involved in the production of the *Less is More* series have multiple years' experience teaching in Turkey, at various levels, but predominantly at the university level. It is this experience that teachers drew on to work towards a glocalised coursebook series which aims to present students with English language content with familiar cultural concepts, or with identifying Turkish individuals as part of a global community, thus promoting a cross-cultural approach that will be beneficial to the majority of students in Turkey (İlter & Güzeller, 2000; Solak & Bayar, 2015; West et al., 2015).

More details will be given later in this paper as to what the exact process was, but this is the underlying ethos behind the *Less is More* English

coursebook series; a cross-cultural approach that presents 21st century skills, drawing on the knowledge of an international team of authors, with local experience, presenting language points with cultural references that can help students develop the skills they need to succeed. Previous studies into English language learning in Turkey have highlighted the need for textbooks and coursebooks in use in Turkey to factor in the realities of the local context (İlter & Güzeller, 2000; Kizildag, 2009).

When considering the socio-economic issues related to language learning in Turkey (İlter & Güzeller, 2000; Solak & Bayar, 2015) it is also hoped that the *Less is More* series presents a high quality, yet economically sustainable alternative to the very expensive international series which are otherwise available. Across Turkey, particularly in university preparatory programmes, there is an issue with students using original copies of books in class. Whilst this does not affect the students in terms of the content being received, it can have implications for institutions who struggle to meet the publishers' demands and should be an avoidable issue. Higher education institutes are not in a position to directly influence whether students are buying original copies of books, and given that in the state university system in particular many students do not come from comfortable economic backgrounds, it would be unfair to expect families or students to spend potentially limited funds on expensive English language coursebooks. With its local production and local availability, it is hoped that the *Less is More* series will also provide students and institutes in Turkey with a financially viable alternative.

4. METHOD

This study aims to design and develop a localised English language coursebook based on the needs analysis of students and teachers at Istanbul University's Language Centre. This study has benefited from comprehensive research into the field of materials development for language learning and various proposals for future progress. We began this process by doing an in-depth literature review

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in the area of materials development in general and more specifically the argument for adopting a more glocalised approach to coursebook writing. We continued this process by researching and analysing similar projects in other countries, such as Japan and Saudi Arabia, where teams had developed their own localised coursebook for their students' specific needs. In addition, we conducted a comprehensive review on the design and development process of coursebook production. We reviewed both the big international publishers and the smaller 'local' projects, and taking some influences from these decided upon a design and structure that would work well in our context. We used the CEFR as a guide on what we needed to include and then we decided on a unit structure but we did not restrict content based on what the levels defined. We wanted to create a book that flowed well in terms of both grammar and themes in harmony with our learners' needs and abilities as Turkish students. The constructivist learning theory framework has been followed to introduce the language and build grammar and language skills.

5. THE 'LESS IS MORE' ENGLISH COURSEBOOK SERIES
5.1. Global and local content

We decided upon the sufficient amount of local versus global content. We wanted to write a book that students could relate to with local references that they could recognise, intertwined with global topics. We also wanted to make sure that the students and teachers did not feel restricted by an uncompromising adherence to grammar and pronunciation principles. We wished to create a space for conversation in the classroom and facilitate a capacity for critical thinking. In addition, we wanted to make the language and material authentic and

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functional for the learner. It was in this frame of mind that *Less is More* was born. As is reflected in the title, we want to give more room for the student and teacher to create, instead of bogging them down with systematic rules and content that they can't relate to. The *Less is More* coursebook series is intended for adult learners with a focus on local, Turkish culture and reference. It is designed to give students, primarily Turkish students, experience of learning a language with references that they can relate to.

The book encourages the empowerment of both teachers and students in the process of classroom-based language acquisition. The teacher becomes empowered by having the freedom and the space to use, adapt and reflect on the material and lesson, while the students become empowered by having the freedom to use the language in their own terms without having to focus on being completely grammatically accurate or focus on precise pronunciation. The glocal angle allows the student to connect with the material in a meaningful way, engage with the subjects and feel relaxed in communicating through their own context of the English language. Embracing a local framework that does not require absolute perfection, learners can express themselves in English *'more flexibly and in any way they feel at ease using it to achieve their communicative objective'* (Salimi & Safarzadeh, 2019, p. 1640). The series also emphasises 21st century skills and facilitates exploratory learning, which encourages students to engage with critical thinking through the medium of English.

5.2. Using own materials

Throughout the years it has been common practice for institutions and teachers to replace or supplement coursebooks with materials they had created themselves in order to engage and connect within their teaching environment. We ourselves as teachers have been no different, constantly feeling as though the material in the books we were using were not engaging or relevant for the students. They were learning about things that they felt no connection to and they felt frustrated and stilted by the dense rules and phonological sounds that were prescribed by the book. We felt that most mainstream coursebooks placed grammar at the centre of learning and that the publishers often opt for safe, middle-of-the-road, global coursebooks (Tomlinson, 2013) that did not fit the needs of our learners. We also felt that there was too much of a focus on English as spoken by native speakers as opposed to the concept of English as a Lingua Franca. We did not assume that our students would only be communicating with native speakers, nor did we want to make them feel restrained by trying to attain perfection from the beginning. Many people believe that *'inability in producing native-like accents is no longer felt inferior by non-native speakers'* (Salimi & Safarzadeh, 2019, p. 1640). We try to reinforce this for students in our book by having Turkish characters and Turkish accents in our listening activities.

As many other teachers, we frequently adapted books for the needs of our learners. This, of course, is a common part of teaching, but students then often questioned why some pages were being skipped and why we were not spending more time on the grammar sections. And, they asked, what was the point in buying these books at all if they weren't going to use them. We, of course, are not anti-coursebook and we can understand the benefits and even necessity of using a coursebook. As Tomlinson (2012) relates, they provide comfort for learners, teachers and administrators. They serve as a reference and a guide for learners' progress, a rich source of material and lesson plans for teachers, and help plan the curriculum and maintain a level of standardisation among the teaching staff.

5.3. Meeting students' needs

It was all agreed that a coursebook is a valuable resource and guide but we wondered if we could find one that better relates to our students' needs. One that does not disempower both student and teacher, but allows them the space to use their initiative by not overcrowding the pages with reductionist language functions and rules. This led us to wonder if we could create our own coursebook that would better suit our learners' needs and help them acquire the language in a more relevant way. Tomlinson (2013, p. 8) believes that it is possible to reconcile the wants and needs of all involved and that *'they can best be satisfied by localised projects which consult learners, teachers and administrators before, during and after the materials writing process'*. We discussed less grammar teaching, more local context, a larger focus on speaking skills, and working with a descriptive model of language as opposed to a prescriptive one. We identified key areas that we could address in our classrooms in order to help our students succeed. As Tomlinson (2013, p. 7) states *'there is a tendency to underestimate learners linguistically, intellectually and emotionally'*. López-Barrios and de Debat (2014, p. 37) argue that *'when teachers use materials produced for international markets (so-called global coursebooks), they adapt them to fit their students' needs, to comply with curricular demands, to supplement any missing information, to provide extra practice, and so on. This is also true of locally produced materials'*. Thus, in this study the authors did not want to underestimate the ability of the students. They organised the language topics, grammar points and vocabulary into units, trying to arrange them in a way that flowed as seamlessly as possible but they did not oversimplify or over explain the language.

5.4. Text types

There has been much debate about what types of text to use in materials design and whether they should be authentic or specially written and simplified for the reader. With one side arguing that simplified texts are too contrived while the other believing that they facilitate learning. As Tomlin-

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son (2012, p. 148) believes a true authentic text is *'one which is produced in order to communicate rather than to teach'*. In the A1 and A2 books, most of the texts were created by us specifically to suit our learners' needs and abilities while always attempting to maintain a natural and authentic style with functional language chunks and a glocal context. Then moving on into B1/B2 we selected authentic material to adapt and create engaging activities around. As you reach the higher levels, the amount of local references is reduced: this reflects the natural process of how language can be developed as the students become more confident in their skills. By meeting and collaborating frequently, we continued to inspire each other and maintain creative motivation. We checked and gave feedback on each other's material and suggest ways of improvement when necessary.

And so, we ended up with a book that consisted of ten units. We decided to open every unit with *The Big Picture*, an introduction to the unit and the topics that are covered along with a unit title and a commonly used idiom. This serves as a lead in for the teacher to progress into the unit. This is then followed by the *Global Knowledge* page, which is designed to help students link any grammar or vocabulary with previous knowledge to make meaningful use of it throughout the unit. We aim to help students build on previously acquired language and help them to build on it. The content of the book – its reading and listening activities – introduces a Turkish identity that students can identify with. It is created with real life expe-

riences in mind and often has a connection to Turkish culture and dialogues between people with Turkish names. For example, there is a text about clothing and shopping that includes a reference to a popular Turkish designer, and a listening comprehension activity about a holiday at a favourite Turkish resort. Food shopping texts discuss universally known food intertwined with Turkish favourites.

5.5. Skills practice

In an effort to cut back on time spent solely on grammar, each grammar point is introduced as a 5-minute grammar with examples that reference Turkish society. As the student progresses to B1 and B2 levels, they will notice that any revised grammar is presented as a 2-minute grammar point. We have created some special features that are seen in every unit such as the task and vlog. These features aim to increase the opportunity for students to practise their skills. The tasks often require the student to write or create something, such as an interview, and then the vlogs allow the student to speak extensively on a topic related to the unit. This aims to give the learner a chance to increase their fluency without focusing too much on grammatical accuracy. There is a page devoted to the different vocabulary and useful chunks that were used in the unit along with a game or activity aimed at helping the learner to retain the language. Finally, the reflections page at the end of the unit allows the student the space to think about what they have learned. This involves some extra information in *That's Good to Know*, where we give sociolinguistic knowledge about language covered in the unit. This is to reflect a more descriptive attitude towards the language and empower the teachers by motivating them to bring their world knowledge into the classroom. *English Expressions* includes some commonly used chunks and phrases related to the topic. The students then get to reflect on and evaluate on what they have learned with the *Can I Do It?* box. The last section, *My Takeaway*, is a space for students to contemplate on what they learned and to make a note of what really stood out for them in the unit.

5.6. Reflection

We thought it was important to add a section at the back of the book for students to practise and reflect on the skills that they had learned. As a result, we have the *Outside the Box* section which consists of *My Vocabulary* pages where students note down new vocabulary from each unit that stands out for them. The grammar reference offers extra support, and the *Creative Tasks* section allows students to practise their new language through an enjoyable game or task.

As we believe in the empowerment of the teacher, we wanted to design and create a teacher's guide that reflects that. We like to encourage continued professional development; with that in mind, we designed the Teacher's Guide as a type of diary, with an emphasis on teacher reflection so that the teacher can learn from and build on each lesson. We found that many teachers' books tried to spoon-feed teachers but we have faith in the teacher's ability to be creative and therefore instead of being a collection of wordy instructions, the Teacher's Guide offers suggestions for how pages are taught, but encourages the teacher to explore their practice and reflect on their teaching. Space is provided in the book for note taking and lesson planning, for reflecting on class experience and content.

6. DISCUSSION
6.1. Cultural appropriacy

Gray (2002) posits that throughout the 1990s coursebooks *'were instrumental in stimulating a considerable degree of soul searching within the ELT profession. What these books had in common was a belief that the global spread of English was inherently problematic, and inextricably linked to wider political issues, and that ELT practices were neither value free, nor always culturally appropriate'* (Gray, 2002, p. 152). In this respect, the *Less is More* English Coursebook series aims at normalising these in the use of Turkish context. By allowing local topics and cultural constructs within the English language coursebook, it tries to achieve the harmonious and equal relationship between local and global constructs.

According to López-Barrios and de Debat (2014, p. 38), '*different labels have always been applied to refer to types of coursebooks according to their context of use*'. Distinctions like *international, global, local, glocal, imported, regional, in-country, localised,* and *adapted* have all been used in the literature (Tomlinson, 2012; Gray, 2002; Arnold & Rixon, 2008; Dat, 2008). The *Less is More* English coursebook series intends to teach English to Turkish speakers with the approach of starting with more local content and extending the more global aspect as the students' language proficiency increases. The series is specifically designed for the Turkish higher education market and is very sensitive to learners' backgrounds, taking the Turkish language into consideration and comparing and contrasting Turkish and English in order to present easier access to the English language. Thus, the series has a glocalised approach and could be labelled as a glocal coursebook.

Basabe (2006, p. 68) stresses that '*the production of textbooks can also be posited to be an ideological enterprise*'. Basabe (2006, p. 66) finds that in the textbooks he examined '*the people from the target culture are characterised by at least three traits that make them distinct from that of the source and international cultures. They are technologically advanced, culturally rich and geographically expansionistic*'. The *Less is More* English coursebook series, however, does not follow hegemonic discourses. On the contrary, it leans towards more humanistic values and realistic facts, topics and values. Topics are chosen on the premise that all human beings are entitled to live with dignity and to freely navigate throughout the world.

6.2. Meeting curriculum requirements

Hasmiati et al. (2015) state that the existing English language course materials are far from the competency target curriculum and they did not meet the students' needs, which was based on the content standard of the school curriculum. The development of local coursebooks in return could meet the needs of the students and be easily in line with the local curricula. Tan (2003) believes

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that '*in countries where English is taught as a foreign language, corpora can be a useful source of information for teachers who are non-native speakers of the language. Corpora can be used as valuable resources of linguistic reference and for materials design*' (Tan, 2003, p. 98). The *Less is More* English coursebook series has also made use of the corpora available online for the vocabulary sections as well.

7. CONCLUSION

The collaboration between the local and global is golden as is the collaboration between the native English-speaking teachers and the non-native speaking local teachers. *Less is More* has been created with such a golden collaboration in mind. The coursebook series in question also aims to empower the teachers in their pursuit of excellence in teaching as well as empower the learners in their quest to learn English to become fully functioning and harmonious global citizens of the world. The series has also aimed at recognising the importance of the local culture in the learning process both as a way of diminishing the foreignness of the English language and granting smooth access into the global culture for the learner by helping construct a balanced glocal identity. The series has sparked new studies into developing glocalised skills and development of new products to meet that need. We are also aware that this type of venture needs further studies to be verified by the users and to be able to bring disruptive innovation to the ELT field/market that is too often criticised as largely dominated by giant global players.

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