A MAP OF ELT
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'If you don't scale the mountain, you can't see the plain'
(Chinese proverb, from Crystal 2006)

Why a map of ELT?
There have been many histories of ELT, tracing the development of ideas and methods over the last few decades and beyond. But I think that a conceptual geography of the current state of play would also be useful. In other words, a map of contemporary ELT. The objective of this would be to orient ELT practitioners in what is a bewildering territory of acronyms and concepts. You might ask who needs a map in this age of GPS and satellite navigation. My answer would be that the sat-nav voice tells you where to go, but do nothing to develop your spatial awareness of the whole territory. The problem is that if you have no sense of the big picture, you have to place blind trust in the voice, and that trust may sometimes be misguided. You risk being led by the nose. So, in what follows, I present my proposed map of ELT along with a description and explanation of it.

The four corners of the ELT world
We can begin a description of the Map of ELT by dividing the territory into four regions. In the northern half are issues relating to target language. The north west is concerned with describing the language, and the north east is concerned with analysing current and target linguistic abilities. In the southern half of the territory are issues relating to teaching and learning. The south west is concerned with how people learn, and the south east is concerned with the environment in which learning takes place.

Point of arrival
Most beginning teachers start at the centre of the island. From this point, they can't see the whole of the territory, only the immediate neighbourhood. Looking to the north west, they will perhaps see pedagogic grammar, to the north east - the next exams, to the south west - their group of students, and to the south east - their materials and classroom. Their immediate concerns are of a practical nature: issues of classroom management and lesson planning, understanding language points which they have to present next and getting familiar with the materials and technology which they have to use.

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Excursions into the surrounding territory

After time, once they have their immediate survival needs under control, the new teachers will perhaps find time to explore a bit further in the different directions and climb a few mountains to reach a higher vantage point and broaden their horizons. Here are some of the vistas that will await them:

In the north west, our explorers discover that the simplified grammar which they took for truth is actually a white lie. Real English is not something that can be prescribed in books but rather something which must be described by close observation of what happens in real life. In this territory the locals are scathing of the stilted language to be found in the teaching materials of a previous generation - and many of those of the current generation too. Here, most people trust only the corpus and naturally occurring authentic text. However, this corpus-driven description of the target language has been called into question by a growing number of inhabitants of this region. It has been pointed out that English is now a global lingua franca, with native speakers in the minority. Consequently, careful and exact descriptions of native speaker behaviour are no longer relevant.

In the north east, the locals tell our explorers that what learners *know* is less important than what they *can do*. Language knowledge is useless if the learner does not know how use it to communicate in specific circumstances. Furthermore, we can't assume that these specific circumstances will be the same for each learner. We must perform a needs analysis to discover what they require, and we will find that many of them have limited and very specific reasons for learning English. At the other extreme, we may expand what we consider as needs way beyond the merely linguistic, to include life, career, learning and technology skills - the so called '21st Century Skills.

We must also assess each learner's current competence and the target competences they need to achieve. This business of assessing level and targets has developed into two major industries in this region: examining, and publishing respectively. This is also the region of most interest to major ELT stakeholders and policy makers such as ministries of education. There is by no means a happy political consensus in this part of the ELT world, though, with some inhabitants critical of what they see as neo-colonial motivations amongst the key players.

In the south west, our explorers will encounter ideas about second language acquisition. They will face questions such as, 'Is presentation / controlled practice / freer practice a valid procedure?', and they will hear about alternatives like task-based learning. They will be told that classrooms should be less teacher-centred and more learner-centred. They will have to consider learner variation and the idea of multiple intelligences. They will come across the issue of motivation and they will hear about humanistic approaches. In some areas of this region, the locals are concerned with broader educational issues going beyond the traditional concerns of ELT. In the area of CLIL, for example, the locals believe that English is more effectively learnt when integrated with the subject content of other areas of the curriculum.

In the south east, our explorers will find a gradual multiplication of components arriving with their course book package. Indeed, there is so much on offer that co-ordinating it all will become a crucial skill. On the other hand, they will meet individuals who recommend going the other way entirely, relying only on the resources that they and their learners carry in their heads. But undoubtedly the fastest growing area in this region is concerned with information and communications technology. Our teachers will be faced with the idea that the virtual learning environment offered by the internet is growing so fast as to rival the physical learning space of the classroom. Some of the locals talk about blended learning, whereby classroom and web-based learning are combined. The relative importance of the two may vary, as well as the nature of the work done in each environment. Some have suggested that the kind of work that was traditionally done in class should now be done entirely on-line, leaving class time for other uses. Technology also allows the possibility of no physical classroom at all, with classes conducted by video-conference.

The benefit of a bird's-eye view
The map is intended as a big picture within which to slot the various ideas we come across in the ELT literature and presentations. Without the big picture, it is all to easy to be carried away by one idea and magnify one area of the territory out of proportion,

at the expense of neglecting other areas. ELT writers and speakers, naturally enough, wish to convince you of the central importance and relevance of their topic. In the metaphor of the map, they are geographically egocentric - they magnify the importance of their own region. For example, a speaker talking about using technology in ELT may remain entirely in the south east region of the map, saying nothing about how we describe the target language, how we construct a syllabus or how learning happens. And yet an audience of practising teachers must also consider these questions. No matter how great the technology might be as a learning tool, it doesn't absolve you from thinking about issues of syllabus (north east), language (north west) and learning (south west). Similarly, taking an example from the north west corner of the map: no matter how accurate your corpus-driven language description, you still have to consider how it relates to learner needs (north east), learning style (south west) or form of classroom delivery (south east). Having a bird's eye view of the whole territory encourages a balanced consideration of all of the regions.

Putting yourself on the map
Explorers in the land of ELT might try locating different the different experts they have heard or read as one or more pencil points on a map - this one , or another. This is especially useful at a conference, for instance, where you are confronted by a wide range of ideas from all different conceptual regions. Locating them in space relative to one another is a way of assimilating such diverse information.
And finally, you, the reader of this article, might try locating yourself on the map!

Crystal, D (2006) *As they say in Zanzibar*, HarperCollins, London