



Observations on learning ConTeXt



And how to make it easier

Reasons to learn ConTeXt

▶ Publishing

- ▶ Exact control of the layout and visuals in general
- ▶ Easy handling of large documents
- ▶ Combining material from different sources
- ▶ Interactive pdf, multiformat output

▶ Academics

- ▶ Structure, consistency, bibliography
- ▶ Maths, chemistry, plotting (MetaPost)
- ▶ Linguistics, non-Latin languages

▶ Other

- ▶ Just because it is something new and exciting

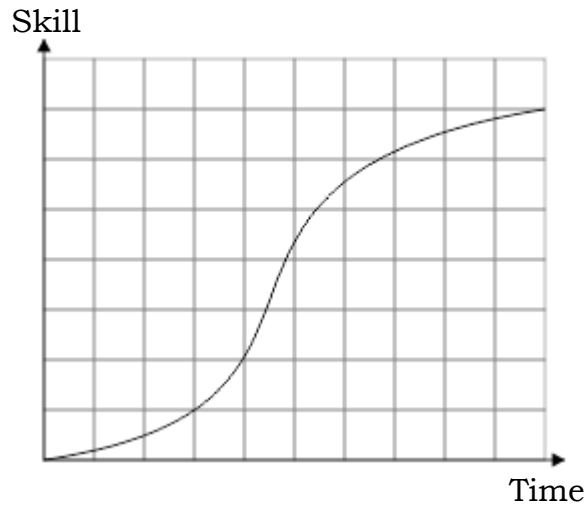
Learning strategies

- ▶ “Fiddling around” – learn-by-doing
 - ▶ The Apple approach (a 3-year-old can use an iPad)
 - ▶ Not suitable for more abstract/specialised software
- ▶ How did he do *that*? – learn-by-example (or imitation)
 - ▶ Learn-by-tweaking – sometimes called “stealing”
- ▶ How do I do x? – learn-by-asking
 - ▶ Strictly “need-to-know” basis
 - ▶ Once in a while called “laziness”
- ▶ RTFM – learn-by-reading
 - ▶ Theoretical, “want-to-know-everything” basis
 - ▶ Seldom appears in pure-bred form

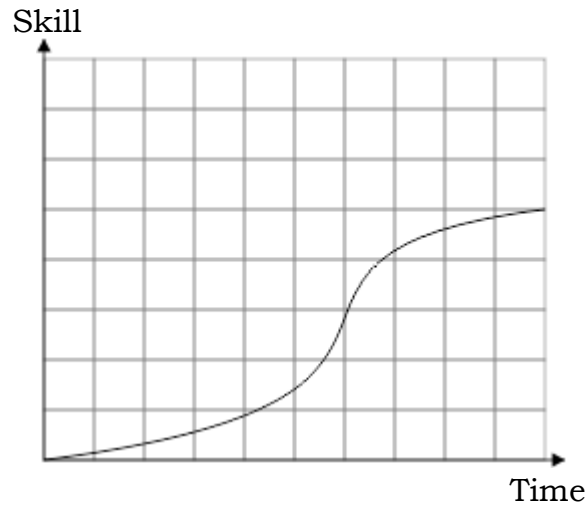
Migrants

- ▶ From LaTeX
 - ▶ ConTeXt allows easier control of the visuals
 - ▶ Understanding of the basic concepts
- ▶ From WYSIWYG desktop publishing (InDesign, PageMaker)
 - ▶ Looking for automating workflows
 - ▶ Good grasp of the visual theory
 - ▶ Maybe not familiar with command line or descriptive tagging
- ▶ From WYSIWYG word processing (MS Office, OpenOffice)
 - ▶ Need to handle large documents or maths or linguistics
 - ▶ Background can vary, shaky knowledge of the basic concepts
 - ▶ Not interested in the deeper workings

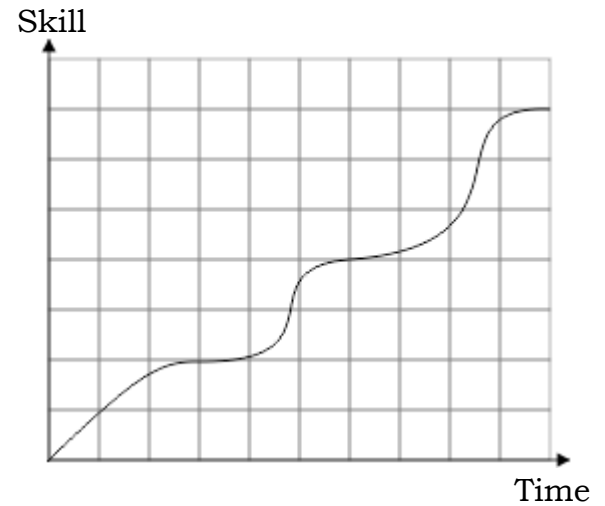
Learning process



Theory

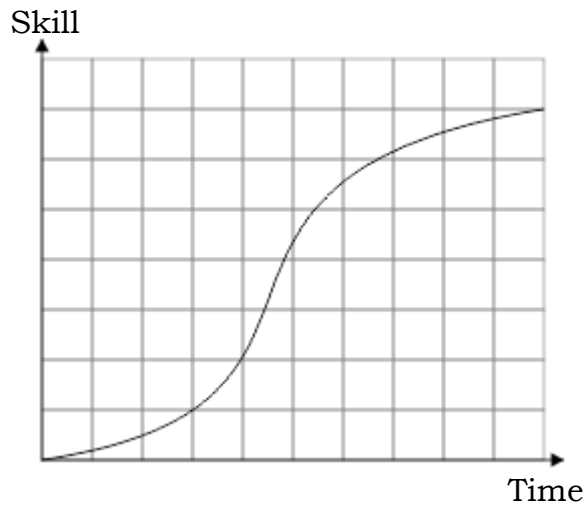


Word

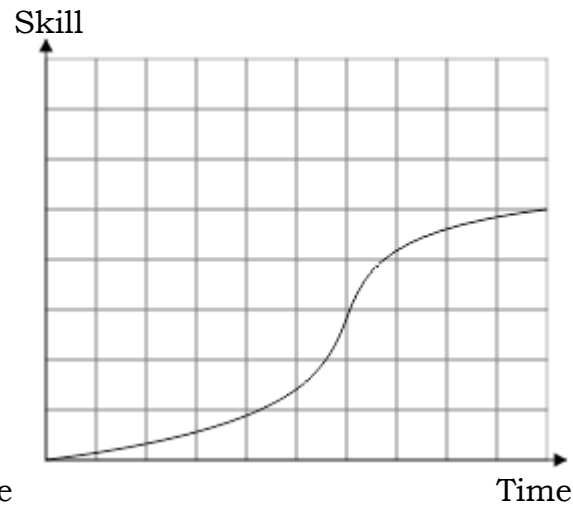


ConTeXt?

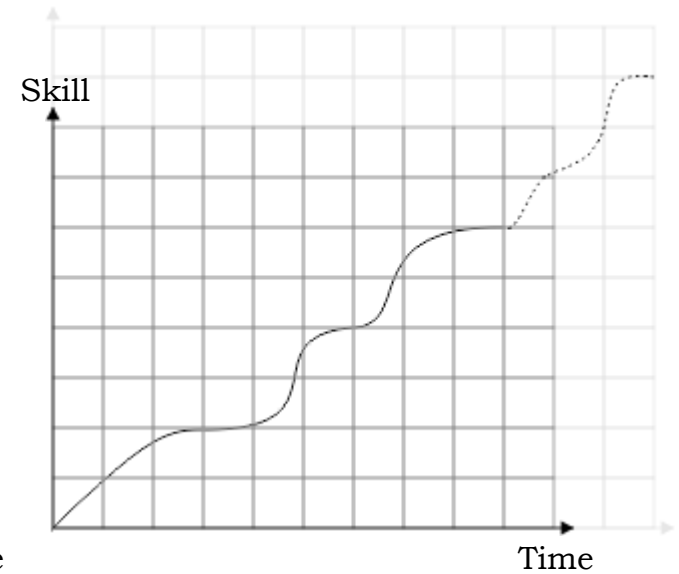
Learning process, revised



Theory



Word



ConTeXt?

How to help?

- ▶ **Software usability**
 - ▶ Ease of installation
 - ▶ Editor integration
 - ▶ context live @ contextgarden.net
 - ▶ Modules
- ▶ **Documentation**
 - ▶ Cheat sheets for LaTeX users
 - ▶ Short manuals with a single recipe in each
 - ▶ Reference manual
 - ▶ **The ConTeXt Community**; wiki, mailing list, user meetings
- ▶ **Example files**
 - ▶ “File per feature” enables easy debugging
 - ▶ Special sets for WYSIWYG migration?