

French skills. A seasoned educator has developed an interactive and user-friendly web-site to teach the core competencies of reading, writing, listening, and speaking French.

BY DAPHINE NAKABIRI

Mr Michael Kushemererwa is a seasoned educator specialising in the French language who has extended his expertise into the digital space. Through his online instruction, he guides learners from basic proficiency to advanced mastery, preparing them for the Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française (DEL F), which is an internationally recognised certification administered by the French Ministry of Education.

He holds a bachelor's degree in Education from Kyambogo University, obtained in 2000, and a qualification in Environmental Management from Makerere University, completed in 2003, both of which he pursued concurrently.

Upon completing his studies, Mr Kushemererwa says he felt a strong calling towards education. His teaching journey began when he joined Naalya Secondary School, Namugongo Campus, in the early 2000s before moving to other institutions.

However, driven by a desire to grow professionally, he pursued a series of international trainings. In 2017, he trained at Arundel International School in Zimbabwe, and a year later, he undertook Cambridge training in Germany and also travelled to Hong Kong for International Baccalaureate training.

He recounts, "These experiences, combined with my experience in the DEL F programme enabled me to develop my own distinctive methodology for teaching French."

By 2018, while teaching at Nabisunsu Girls' School, his career was progressing steadily. However, in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted this trajectory. As schools closed and operations came to a standstill, the administration informed staff that salaries would be suspended due to the loss of income during the lockdown.

"I was faced with the reality of staying home with my family, without any income, because my teaching [job] had ended. It is then that I realised that I had to find a way forward," he says.

Innovation

In response, Mr Kushemererwa turned to technology, developing an interactive and user-friendly website through which he could continue teaching. The platform was designed to engage secondary school learners, guiding them through the core competencies of reading, writing, listening, and speaking French across the different levels of the diploma.

He explains, "I wanted to add value to the learners. Instead of teaching French merely as a subject, I chose to align with Alliance Française because the programme appealed to many Ugandans."

He adds, "It allows them to sit an international French examination and earn a recognised certificate."

Although the transition was challenging, particularly with the cost of developing the platform at a time when he had no steady income, Mr Kushemererwa negotiated with developers to bring his

Harnessing technology to build French speakers



Mr Michael Kushemererwa, a seasoned educator of French language (2nd right) was awarded a certificate of recognition for promoting the language in Uganda in 2022. He was also sponsored to attend an ICT training in France. PHOTO/DAPHINE NAKABIRI

native, low-cost ways to market his idea.

He turned to digital platforms, such as creating content on TikTok and leveraging WhatsApp by sharing updates on his status and directly reaching out to potential clients through personal networks.

Through his online videos, he highlighted the importance of learning a second language and broke down how it could be achieved, with a strong focus on the four core competencies.

Mr Kushemererwa recalls, "Whoever came across what I was doing appreciated it. I started receiving calls from parents booking for their children to enroll in the DEL F programme."

One of the key challenges many young learners face in acquiring French is mastering reading and speaking. Kushemererwa notes that pronunciation often proves difficult, with learners struggling to read words correctly, an issue that requires patience and experience to address.

"If you cannot read it, then speaking it with confidence also becomes difficult," he explains.

Having recognised this gap, he deliberately tailored much of his teaching to these two areas. With this, he adopts a method that emphasises simplicity, slow progression, and repetition, allowing learners to gradually build confidence and fluency. This approach has not only improved their reading and speaking abilities but has also sparked greater interest in learning the language.

He says, "Whoever passes through my class becomes a referral. They encourage others to join teacher Michael's class."

Despite the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, Mr Kushemererwa was able to organise for his first group of learners to travel under special permission to sit the DEL F examinations. This milestone not only validated his efforts but also earned him recognition from the Alliance Française.

Harnessing technology

Through his website, Kushemererwa conducts interactive learning sessions, remaining actively engaged with his students throughout the process. Many of these sessions are scheduled during school holidays, a period he considers ideal, as learners are able to focus fully on French without the pressure of other academic assignments.

The programme runs in structured cycles, with classes held five days a week,

each lasting approximately one and a half hours. Lessons are delivered online via Zoom, where learners access shared links and participate in guided instruction.

At the end of each holiday session, students meet physically for assessment. Their progress is evaluated, and detailed reports are compiled and shared with parents, providing insight into their development and areas for improvement.

While Kushemererwa has secured discounted rates to run the classes, this has made the programme more affordable for learners, supported by the vast content available on his website and the time he invests in delivery.

To make the work effective, he also works with a team of about seven people who handle different roles, including attendance management, distribution of learning links, and organisation of audio during sessions.

Impact

The digital platform has significantly transformed the livelihoods of learners, with some securing opportunities to study abroad through scholarships, while others have successfully entered the job market in Uganda.

The platform has also grown in visibility, ranking on Google due to increased traffic from students accessing the French learning made easy site.

Mr Kushemererwa takes pride in several milestones, including receiving a certificate of recognition for his contribution to Alliance Française and to French language education in Uganda. He was also honoured in 2024 with an award for his efforts in promoting French among

young people.

Additionally, in 2023, during the launch of the Njogera Française project in Uganda, he emerged as the top teacher in the competition. This achievement earned him an opportunity to travel to France, supported by the French Embassy, where he received training in ICT integration for classroom teaching, further strengthening his ability to use digital tools in French language instruction.

Looking ahead

In a bid to make the programme more inclusive, Mr Kushemererwa plans to begin enrolling pupils at the primary level, specifically Primary Six and Seven, this holiday.

He notes, "The aim is to support early learners who struggle with French, enabling them to build a strong foundation before progressing to secondary level, where they can eventually complete the diploma programme."

Through these efforts, he envisions Ugandan learners becoming confident French speakers and attaining the DEL F qualification, a lifelong certification that positions them competitively for admission into international universities, as well as employment opportunities within organisations such as the UN.

He emphasises that while language learning requires interest; it equally demands self-belief and resilience.

In today's highly competitive job market, he encourages learners not to be short-sighted but to remain open-minded and understand that proficiency in an international language, beyond English, can significantly enhance their global opportunities.



Early learners.
The aim [of enrolling pupils P6 and P7 in French classes] is to support early learners who struggle with French, enabling them to build a strong foundation before progressing to secondary level, where they can eventually complete the diploma programme," Mr Michael Kushemererwa, a seasoned educator specialising in the French language.