



Sénégal

## Archives Langues & Cultures Language and Culture Archives

Kuloonay Orthography  
David Lowry, Sarah Wilkinson  
©2012, SIL International

Ceci est l'une des publications électroniques de SIL Sénégal. Ces publications présentent les résultats concrets des recherches menées par les membres de SIL sur le terrain et d'autres personnes. Certaines sont des documents de travail préliminaire et non des recherches abouties. Elles sont tirées de notes prises sur le terrain et sont, dans certains cas, le travail de jeunes chercheurs avec une formation minimale. Les propositions de politique linguistique incluses dans les documents techniques ne représentent pas nécessairement la position de SIL Sénégal.

This is one of a number of electronic publications published by SIL Senegal. These publications represent the concrete results of research carried out by SIL field members and others. Some are preliminary work papers and not polished research. They are based on field notes and are in some cases the work of young researchers with minimal training. Language policy proposals included in technical documents do not necessarily represent the position of SIL Senegal.

### License

Ce document fait partie des Archives Langues & Cultures - SIL International.  
Il est diffusé « tel quel » afin de rendre son contenu disponible sous une licence Creative Commons :  
Attribution - Pas d'utilisation commerciale - Partage dans les mêmes conditions  
(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/deed.fr>).

This document is part of the SIL International Language and Culture Archives.  
It is shared 'as is' in order to make the content available under a Creative Commons license:  
Attribution – NonCommercial - ShareAlike  
(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>).



More resources are available at / Vous trouverez d'autres publications sur :  
[www.sil.org/resources/language-culture-archives](http://www.sil.org/resources/language-culture-archives) et [www.silsenegal.org](http://www.silsenegal.org)

**Kuloonay Orthography**

**Practical guide for learning  
and discovering the written  
Kuloonay language**



**BP 2075, DAKAR**

**March 2012**

## **Introduction**

This short booklet is intended to give people an idea of the most important principles of writing in the Kuloonay language. It is not intended to answer every possible question. A more thorough treatment is available in 'Karon Orthography' (SIL, 2011). The aim is that people who can speak the language fluently, and have a good level of experience in reading and writing in English, may be able to make a start at writing text in Kuloonay, according to the rules that have been agreed by the language committee.

# Contents

Introduction.....	1
Contents.....	2
A. Fundamental principles of the alphabet.....	3
B. The letters of the Kuloonay alphabet.....	4
B.1 Kuloonay vowels.....	5
B.1.1 Light and heavy vowels.....	5
B.1.2 The short vowels: a, á, e, é, i, í, o, ó, u, ú.....	6
B.1.3 The long vowels: aa, áa, ee, ée, ii, íi, oo, óo, uu, úu. 8	
B.1.4 Two consecutive vowels.....	9
B.2 Kuloonay consonants.....	9
B.2.1 Consonant combinations.....	10
C. Word breaks.....	11
C.1 Some rules of thumb.....	11
C.2 Some common mistakes.....	13
D. Punctuation.....	15
D.1 Capitals and lowercase.....	15
D.2 Contraction of niḡ.....	15
E. Exercises.....	18

## A. Fundamental principles of the alphabet

- 1) In Kuloonay, unlike in English, all the letters are pronounced. There are no silent letters (like the letters **gh**, in the English word ‘eight’, or like the **e** on the end of words like ‘like’).
- 2) The pronunciation of a letter never changes. So for example the letter **c** is always pronounced like the English ‘ch’, and never like the English ‘k’ or ‘s’. The only exception to this rule is the **n** in combinations like **nf**, **nk** and **nc** (see section **B.2.1**).
- 3) Words are written as if they were said slowly. For example ‘I know how to climb’ should be written **yíniyini pisilo** and not **yíniini pisilo**

## B. The letters of the Kuloonay alphabet

The Kuloonay alphabet has 24 letters, of which 14 are consonants and 10 are vowels. They are given below in alphabetical order:

Capital	Lowercase	Example	Meaning in English
A	a	<u>a</u> cifa	tailor
Á	á	<u>á</u> wi	friend
C	c	<u>c</u> aanak	sun
E	e	<u>e</u> kumpaan	house
É	é	<u>é</u> saapun	well
F	f	<u>f</u> álin	donkey
H	h	<u>h</u> isenkec	lizard
I	i	<u>i</u> haay	piece of meat
Í	í	<u>í</u> m	sing!
K	k	<u>k</u> asel	spoon
L	l	<u>l</u> úutoo	mango
M	m	<u>m</u> an	water
N	n	<u>n</u> ikopu	rope
Ñ	ñ	<u>ñ</u> ow	wash!
ŋ	ŋ	<u>ŋ</u> aam	grab hold!
O	o	<u>o</u> kop	ring
Ó	ó	<u>ó</u> ikon	stool
P	p	<u>p</u> ikin	village

S	s	<u>s</u> eemak	fire
T	t	tíya	peanut
U	u	<u>u</u> li	rice
Ú	ú	útiŋ	sky
W	w	<u>w</u> un	give!
Y	y	<u>y</u> aac	bee

## ***B.1 Kuloonay vowels***

### **B.1.1 Light and heavy vowels**

The ten vowels can be divided into two groups: **a, e, i, o, u** (called the *light* vowels) and **á, é, í, ó, ú** (called the *heavy* vowels). The heavy vowels are marked with an accent.

Apart from a few exceptions, vowels from the two groups are not found in the same word. A word is either light or heavy. For this reason it is not necessary to write an accent over each heavy vowel in a word. So, following the Senegalese Government decree for Jola languages, only the first vowel in a heavy word is marked with an accent.

Here are some examples of contrasts between light and heavy words.

	Light		Heavy
<b>kawufan</b>	- to give	<b>káwufan</b>	- to recover
<b>ihawu</b>	- to chop	<b>íhawu</b>	- to bark
<b>hicutu</b>	- to harvest	<b>hícutu</b>	- thread a piece of string through something
<b>hipuku</b>	- to give birth	<b>hípuku</b>	- to be soaked
<b>hikoosu</b>	- to gather	<b>híkoos</b>	- navel
<b>hiluulu</b>	- threat	<b>éluulu</b>	- fly
<b>kankalaŋ</b>	- roof	<b>ínkalaŋ</b>	- drum
<b>hiwoomu</b>	- to pound	<b>híwoomu</b>	- to curse

Note too that if a heavy word begins with a vowel that is capitalised, the accent is placed over the first lowercase vowel in the word. Thus, if the word **íhawu** needs to be capitalised (see section D.1 for when to use capital letters), it becomes **Iháwu**. Similarly, **éluulu** becomes **Elúulu** and **ínkalaŋ** becomes **Inkálaŋ**.

### B.1.2 The short vowels: a, á, e, é, i, í, o, ó, u, ú

The following table gives examples of words containing all the different short vowels.

Vowel	Examples	Meaning in English
a	<u>a</u> n pi <u>s</u> ama <u>t</u> a <u>a</u> wi <u>c</u> a	human being shoe sculptor
á	<u>á</u> yiin púnt <u>á</u> lo <u>á</u> yif <u>á</u>	man scorpion drummer
e	<u>e</u> cont <u>e</u> ye <u>n</u> <u>e</u> laame <u>e</u>	heel dog machete
é	<u>é</u> kink káahent <u>é</u> noolu pásu <u>é</u>	to enclose feather for scratching the ear softness/calm
i	<u>i</u> haay hili <u>i</u> maali <u>i</u>	piece of meat shark snack
í	<u>í</u> h <u>í</u> nu p <u>í</u> c <u>í</u> po <u>é</u> soli <u>í</u>	to do to go down arrow
o	ih <u>o</u> ku et <u>o</u> p <u>o</u> k <u>o</u> lo	to put out marsh
ó	<u>é</u> s <u>ó</u> si púwu <u>ó</u>	arrow wear a hat
u	<u>u</u> li al <u>u</u> ta el <u>u</u> m <u>u</u>	rice builder kidney
ú	<u>ú</u> ti <u>ú</u> pú <u>ú</u> k <u>ú</u> m <u>ú</u> t kénu <u>ú</u>	sky thick liquid to pound palm nuts

### B.1.3 The long vowels: aa, áa, ee, ée, ii, íi, oo, óo, uu, úu

Each short vowel has a corresponding long vowel; which is identical in quality but is roughly twice the length in duration. This can be seen, for example, in contrasts between: **can**, ‘drop of water’ and **caan** ‘estuary, canal’; between **ekon** ‘piece of wood’ and **ekoon** ‘seed’ and between **fúl** and **fúul**.

The following table gives examples of words with all the different long vowels.

Vowel	Examples	Meaning in English
aa	<u>a</u> al soka <u>aa</u> sok	woman I said
áa	<u>á</u> asi ká <u>á</u> ha <u>á</u> afeen	maternal uncle to sift
ee	pi <u>ee</u> n a <u>ee</u>	boat someone
éé	<u>é</u> siitene <u>é</u> <u>é</u> lukule <u>é</u> n	he was listened to animal; snake
ii	hi <u>ii</u> nu k <u>ii</u>	family name dance!
íi	s <u>í</u> ten wá <u>nti</u>	listen! throw here!
oo	etopok <u>oo</u> lo sok <u>oo</u>	marsh tell him!
óo	c <u>ó</u> opii lú <u>u</u> to <u>o</u>	bring! mango
uu	ep <u>uu</u> k esu <u>u</u> m	children wrestler
úu	p <u>ú</u> tu <u>u</u> n sú <u>u</u> maasu <u>u</u> m	god it is sweet, delicious

### B.1.4 Two consecutive vowels

Two different vowels should not be written consecutively in a word in Kuloonay. Wherever it sounds like you have two different vowels without a consonant in between, they should be written with either a 'w' or a 'y' in between (depending on which sounds more appropriate). This often arises when a suffix or prefix is added to a word.

Examples:

<b>liyaali</b>	- I ate (not <b>liaali</b> )
<b>áwiyam</b>	- my friend (not <b>áwiam</b> )
<b>atuwi</b>	- your younger brother (not <b>atui</b> )
<b>puhooniyoo</b>	- his face (not <b>puhoonjoo</b> )
<b>hifiiniyam</b>	- my family name (not <b>hifiniam</b> )

One important exception to this rule, decided on by the language committee, is the word **anooan** (everyone). This is not written **anoowan** to avoid any confusion with **wan** (hair).

## ***B.2 Kuloonay consonants***

Most Kuloonay consonants are used in a similar way to in English. However, there are the letters **ñ** and **ŋ**, that are not used in English, and the letter **c**, which is used differently to English. Examples of these three letters in Kuloonay words are shown in the table below.

Consonant	Examples	English meaning	Pronunciation of the consonant
<b>c</b>	<u>ca</u> pa e <u>cu</u> la miya <u>ac</u>	onion mouse wood	Like the <b>ch</b> in the English words ' <u>ch</u> amp' and ' <u>ch</u> eat'.
<b>ñ</b>	<u>ñ</u> ow a <u>ñ</u> ii hítuka <u>añ</u>	wash! baby honey comb	Like the <b>ny</b> in the English word 'c <u>ny</u> on' or the <b>ni</b> in the word 'op <u>ni</u> on'.
<b>ŋ</b>	<u>ŋ</u> aasuwan e <u>ŋ</u> enu elo <u>ŋ</u>	ten wrist life	Like the <b>ng</b> in the English word 'si <u>ng</u> '

## B.2.1 Consonant combinations

The consonant combinations **ŋk**, **ñc** and **mf** are common in Kuloonay. Following other Jola languages, these are written as **nk**, **nc** and **nf** respectively. Note however that **mp** is written as **mp**.

Examples:

- ekmpul** - palm nut
- háncant** - night
- hincu** - hammer a nail
- cancut** - a piece of cloth for carrying a baby on the back (not **caŋkut**)
- pins** - grain
- asonfaaf** - aunt (not **asomfaaf**)

## C. Word breaks

Deciding where to put in word breaks is a difficult part of writing in Kuloonay. All that will be done here is to give some rules of thumb and some common mistakes to avoid. For a more thorough treatment see 'Karon Orthography' (SIL, 2011).

### *C.1 Some rules of thumb*

1) If a word can be moved around to a different place in the sentence, then it must be a separate word.

Thus, in the examples below, the underlined word is separate.

Examples:

<u>fíyoy</u> afaanjot				- <u>today</u> he will sleep
afaanjot <u>fíyoy</u>				- he will sleep <u>today</u>
<u>ekee</u> ekii ~ ekii <u>ekee</u>				- <u>another</u> dance
<u>Puume</u> naalaane    hipuun    ha				- <u>how</u> did he drink
how        he drank    medicine    the				the medicine?
Hipuun <u>puume</u> naalaane				- <u>what</u> medicine did
medicine    what            he drank				he drink?

2) If another word can come in between, then there are probably two separate words. Thus, in each of the examples below, the underlined word is a separate word, since something else is allowed to come before it.

3)

Examples :

- sícalukun sa** - the pigs  
**sícalukun súsupak sa** - the two pigs  
**punuun empe** - these trees  
**punuun penfakat empe** - these big trees

3) Since a word must be all light or all heavy, a word that seems to start light and end heavy is probably two separate words.

(Note that this rule is sometimes a bad indicator, since there is a lot of variation from speaker to speaker as to exactly what is light and what is heavy).

Examples:

- níkin na** - the eye    The vowel in the definite article is light, but the vowels in the word **níkin** are heavy. The two words are therefore written separately.
- níkinam** - my eye    The whole word is heavy, so it is written as one word. The **-ám** is not written separately.

## ***C.2 Some common mistakes***

1) The definite article (the) should always be written as a separate word:

Examples:

- piteen pa** - the boat (not **piteempa**)  
**eyen ya** - the dog (not **eyeniya**)  
**pakan paka** - the people (not **pakampaka**)

2) Wherever a verb is 'redoubled', it should be written as one single word, even though this gives rise to some quite long words sometimes!

Examples:

- hín** - work!      **hínaahin** - I worked (not **hínaa hín**)  
**tantak** - witness!      **atantakaatantak** - he witnessed (not **atantakaa tantak**)

3) Verbal prefixes should not be separated from the verb that they're attached to:

Examples

- naasok** - he said (not **naa sok**)  
**n'kacuk** - they saw (not **n'ka cuk** - see below for an explanation of the use of the apostrophe here)

**kapikaay** - and they went (not **kapi kaay**)

**efikawac** - they will swim (not **efika wac** or **efi kawac**)

4) Be careful with word breaks when one word ends with the same vowel that the next word starts with.

Examples

**an̄a afaasok ya** - that he will say (not **an̄aa faasok ya** or even **an̄aa faa sokiya**)

**akina asok** - he said (not **akinaa sok**)

**akina awune** - he is the reason (not **akinaa wune**)

## D. Punctuation

### *D.1 Capitals and lowercase*

Capital letters will be used at the beginning of each sentence, after a full stop, question mark and exclamation mark as well as at the beginning of a quote after a colon.

Examples:

**Naasokoo:** “Unii pitejenool núufulii.”

She said to him: “We’re coming from a meeting”

**David asok:** “Inci taakaataak pakaal pákasupak.”

David said: “I have two wives”

The first letter of names of people, families, countries, towns, etc. is always a capital

Examples:

**Inci hicoopu Akoli te enuuf**  
**Pool ati Máhamuta**

I’m taking Akoli to the house  
Paul comes from Mahamouda

### *D.2 Contraction of ninj*

Very often the word **ninj** ‘and’, ‘with’ is shortened and joined to the word that follows it. Sometimes we use an apostrophe when adjoining this word and sometimes not. The system that has been adopted can be summarised with 2 rules:

1) When **ninj** is joined to a noun, an apostrophe is always used.

Examples:

Pútuun pa (niŋ aluu) - May God be with you.  
piyeno na'aluu.

Naayito nu'ulap. (niŋ ulap) - He/she wakes up in the morning. (lit. he/she wakes up with the dawn)

Inci hili (niŋ áwiyam) - I eat with my friend.  
ná'awiyam.

2) When **niŋ** attaches to a verb, an apostrophe is only used if the verb begins with a consonant other than **h**, **l**, **w** or **y**:

Examples:

n'kasok (niŋ kasok) - and they said (not **nkasok** or even **nka sok**)

n'kayeno (niŋ kayeno) - and they sat down

n'súumii (niŋ súumii) - and they felt happy

m'píhin (niŋ píhin) - and it did/worked

But note these examples with no apostrophe:

naasok (niŋ asok) - and he said  
(not **na'asok**)

núusiiteno (niŋ úsiiteno) - and we listened to him  
(not **nu'úsiiteno**)

<b>nihilafalooloo</b>	<b>(niŋ hilafalooloo)</b>	- and they (the bees) stung him all over (not ni'hilafalooloo)
<b>nihiliye</b>	<b>(niŋ hiliye)</b>	- and it (my liver) ate (not ni'hiliye)

## E. Exercises

Try to correct these Kuloonay sentences and phrases. Pay particular attention to accents, to lengths of vowels, to the nasal consonants **m**, **n**, **ñ** and **ŋ** and to word breaks. The answers are given below. Note that since there is some variation between speakers as to how some words are pronounced, probably not all speakers of Kuloonay will agree with the exact spelling of these answers. Even so, these exercises should give some practice in familiarity with the basic principles of writing. The number in brackets gives the number of mistakes to correct.

Example:

**David a sokaa sok lafi lafi pusamatapa pítoom peewallapa (7)**  
- David said, "I like my nice shoes"

Answer:

**David asokaasok: "láfilafi pusamata\_pa p*í*toom peewalla\_pa"**

(mistakes: **asokaasok** should be all one word; punctuation should be added for speech; **láf**ilafi is heavy and should have an accent; **láf**ilafi is one word not two; **pusumata pa** is two words not one; **pítoom** is light and should not have an accent; **peewalla pa** is two words not one)

**1. Añiiya naa fulii ŋkatey (4)**

- the child came out  
and ran

**2. Akinaa tatahanii tatahan (2)**

- she waited a while  
for them

**3. Chímmák chemfakat nasuwan suuwan atiyoo (6)**

- great boasting  
brings great  
shame

**4. Añiyya naa taak híyaani (2)**

- the child had a  
tail

**5. Naasoko inci yem áhampaatiina (3)**

- He said to him, "I  
am the chief"

**6. Kákup áciiti cíiti (2)**

- talking is difficult

**7. Pulukuleempa piti saateeya (4)** - the animals of the village

**8. Akinaa yina kaloon púlooj (2)** - he was more powerful than all of the Kaloon

**9. Cahom akin áamiit nii eyeniya an ati motoo alooje yo (2)**

- however, he did not know that the dog, a person with a motor car hit it.

**10. Caacata naa sokii inci siyaa, afaniñofo fo kacom n'níñofoonii (3)**

- Lion said to them: “I have heard, go back until tomorrow, then come back.”

Answers:

1. Añii ya náafulii n'katey
2. Akina atatahaniitatahan
3. Címmak cenfakat nasuuwansuuwan atiyoo
4. Añii ya naataak híyaani
5. Naasokoo: “Inci yem áhampaatiin a”
6. Káakup áciiticiiti
7. Púlukuleen pa piti saatee ya
8. Akina ayina Kaloon púloon
9. Cahom akina ámiit nii eyen ya an ati motoo aloonje yo
10. Caacata naasokii: “Inci síyaa, afaniñofo fo kacom n'níñofoonii”