

Let's Read and Write Makusi

A Transition Manual
by Miriam Abbott



Illustrations by the Makusi
Teachers' Language Workshop
and Anil Roberts

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About the Makusi Language Programme by CIDA GEF and Iwokrama

The Makusi Language Programme in the North Rupununi grew out of a 16-month project in 1995-96 on cataloguing Makusi Ethnobotany and Ethnomedicine and Use of Biodiversity, involving eight researchers, 7 of them women, from eight North Rupununi villages. That project was funded by the Iwokrama International Centre under a Global Environmental Facility grant.

From the donors' point of view, the 'Makusi Women's Project' ended in September 1996, when the Reports were handed over to the sponsors. But at the local level, the project had started a groundswell of interest in the Makusi culture and language. The researchers formed themselves into the Makushi Research Unit (MRU) and worked voluntarily in promoting use of the Makusi language by villagers in general and school children in particular. Within a few years, their example and teachings had led to a complete reversal in local attitudes to the Makusi language. Children and adults alike shared and promoted a newly awakened pride in their bi-lingualism, and the wealth of knowledge encoded in their own language and in no other.

In 1998-99, the CIDA Gender Equality Program sponsored a second phase of the language programme with the Makusi researchers. Among the outcomes of this phase were the donation of computers and training in their use, the publication of the research results of the first phase, and the production of 4 bi-lingual booklets on Makusi topics. By the end of this project, the Makushi Research Unit had expanded to 13 members, one from each of the North Rupununi villages in the project area.

Two years later, the programme entered a new phase with funding from the Guyana Book Foundation and the voluntary contributions of Ms Miriam Abbott, a linguist with over 30 years' experience in studying and teaching Makusi. In this phase, language teaching was formalized to include standard techniques for teaching language in schools, illustrated aids were prepared by teachers, and stories and village histories written. The constituency interested in learning about and teaching Makusi was expanded to school teachers and church workers. This momentum continues to grow, with support from villagers and leaders and local and national institutions.

The Makusi Language Programme could not have come at a more important time. The North Rupununi area is more open to majority language and culture now than ever before, as links to the coast increase, with the spread of new technologies and job opportunities. In Guyana, Amerindians sometimes refer to their languages as dialects. In Brazil, the corresponding term used is 'giria', which means slang. In both countries, there are increasing numbers of Makusi people who may be described as having no language: unable to speak their own, and with an imperfect knowledge of the language of the nation state. It is our hope that publications like this Transition Manual will help to stem this tendency, by providing teachers and their students with a structure to aid their interest in learning to read and write their Makusi language.

Janette Forte and Vanda Radzik

Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development

Contributors to the Makusi Literacy Programme

In thinking about preserving the cultural values of the Makusi, and believing that the Makusi language plays an integral part in the encoding and transmitting of these values from generation to generation, this Transition Manual was prepared by Ms Miriam Abbott to reach those Makusi schools with a high index of Makusi speakers who are also literate in English. A Transition Manual is the bridge between English literacy and Makusi literacy. It builds on what has already been taught of consonants and vowels that are similar in both languages and then teaches what is distinctly Makusi.

The student who already reads and writes in English and speaks the Makusi language will benefit more from the lessons and exercises presented in this Transition Manual. The idea of a Transition Manual is not totally new because similar manuals have been used in other indigenous languages with good results.

Miriam Abbott is an American-born linguist who has been studying and teaching the Makusi language since 1967. She was first based in the Nappi/Parishara/Haiawa area in Central Rupununi but had to re-locate to work with Makusi villagers in Brazil, in what was then Roraima Territory (now Roraima State) after the Rupununi Uprising of 1969. She returned to the Rupununi for the first time in April 2001, to teach the Makushi Research Unit and a selection of Makusi teachers from the 13 schools located in the North Rupununi District. During a packed week of lively interaction and mutual learning, Makusi Researchers and teachers practised techniques in reading and writing Makusi, first at the Bina Hill Institute in Annai, and then in Surama village. She returned to the Rupununi to lead two other workshops in 2001: the first held in St Ignatius in August 2001, where she taught over 40 teachers drawn from all Makusi villages in Region 9, and the second in Karasabai in October 2001, where the students were 7 teachers and 29 church helpers drawn from 7 South Pakaraima villages. Miriam Abbott has contributed gratis her time and knowledge and a few hundred texts to these workshops.

Major funding for this pilot Makusi Literacy Programme in Guyana has been provided by the Guyana Book Foundation, whose General Manager, Ms Leila Jagdeo, has offered unstinting support for the programme. Additional financial and other support have been provided by CIDA's Gender Fund and the Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development. The programme has also benefited from support from the Ministry of Education, the Department of Education of Region 9 and the North Rupununi District Development Board. The Makusi Language Workshop held in Karasabai, South Pakaraimas, was co-sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church. Fr Paul Martin, S.J., Fr Malcolm Rodrigues, S.J., and Doris Wall, a linguist who works among the Akawaio and Patamona peoples of the North Pakaraima area, also supported and participated in the Karasabai workshop.

The illustrations for this Transition Manual were done by the teachers who participated in the Makusi Language Workshop held in St. Ignatius in August 2001 and who produced classroom teaching aids. Additional illustrations were prepared as a community service contribution by Mr Anil Roberts of Rupertee, Annai District, currently a final year student at the Burrowes School of Art in Georgetown.

In addition special thanks are due to Makusi Researcher, Cecilia Jeffreys of Massara, for correcting the text and to the members of the Makushi Research Unit for their pioneering work in reaffirming the importance and value of their Makusi language. Special mention must be made of the villagers of the North Rupununi, their community radio station, Radio Paiwomak FM 97.1 and the Bina Hill Institute for ongoing participation and support of the Makusi language project.

The expectation is that this project and its particular process will become institutionalized within the national education system itself under the aegis of the Hinterland Curriculum section. In this way, this Makusi Language "pilot project" will have successfully contributed to developing the Amerindian linguistics and language education components prescribed for the Amerindian sector in Guyana's National Development Strategy.

Janette Forte and Vanda Radzik

Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development

Foreword

You too can read and write Makusi!

This manual is for Makusi people who can read and write English but do not yet read and write in their own mother tongue. Perhaps you have seen a book written in Makusi and you thought that the letters were very different than those in English. Or maybe you tried to write a note to a friend and gave up because you didn't know how to spell some words.

After reading this book and studying the exercises, you will not only be able to read but also write Makusi.

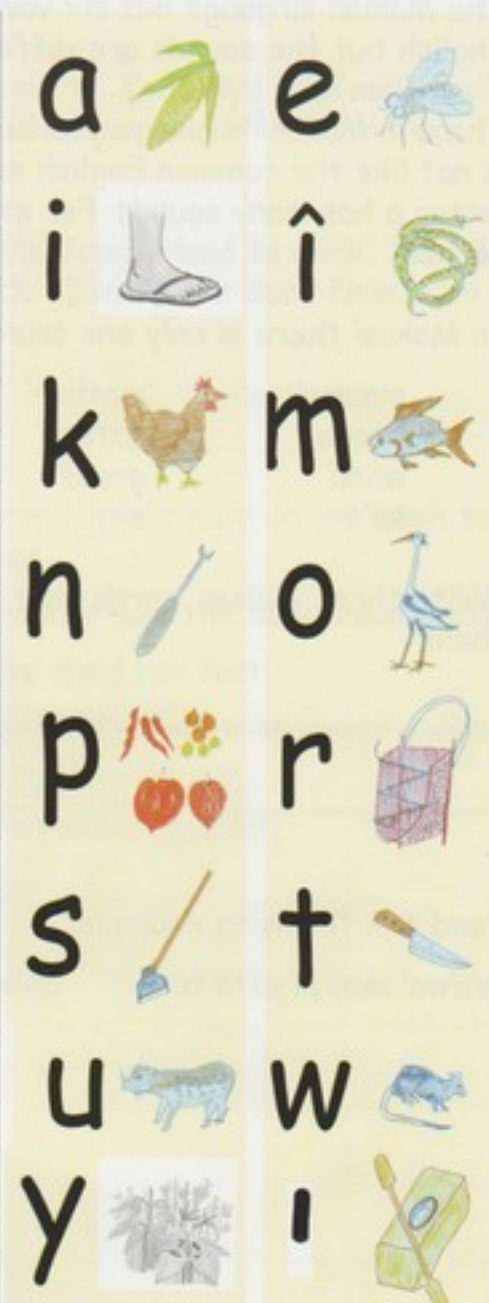
You should know that there are few languages in the world that are written in the same way. English is different from Portuguese, Spanish is different from French; even so, Makusi is written differently.

The Makusi alphabet was made to be as similar as possible to Portuguese and English. But there are some sounds in English and Portuguese that don't exist in Makusi and also some sounds in Makusi that don't exist in English. Therefore it is impossible to write the two languages in the same way. You will understand this better when you do the exercises in this book, and you will be able to learn the way to write Makusi.

We hope that you enjoy your studies in this book. When you finish you will be able to write that note to your friend and discover it isn't as difficult as you thought!

The two alphabets - English and Makusi

English 26 letters	Makusi 16 letters
A	A
B, C, D	
E	E
F, G, H	
I	I, Î
J	
K	K
L	
M	M
N	N
O	O
P	P
Q	
R	R
S	S
T	T
U	U
V	
W	W
X	
Y	Y
Z	
	' (glottal)



In the following pages we will learn the similarities and the differences between the two alphabets and the distinctive letters of the Makusi language.

Vowels

The Makusi language has six vowels. Five of them are written as in English but the sounds are different.

The **a** in Makusi is always pronounced like the **a** in the word father. It is not like the common English sound of **a** as in cat. In English the letter **a** has many sounds. For example: cat, mate, beast, pair, can, father.

In Makusi there is only one sound, the **a** as it is in father.

maama'	'mother'
paapa	'father'
wana'	'grass'
ka'	'sky'

Write three Makusi words that you can think of with the sound of **a** in them.

..... , , and

.....

Read the following example:

Wa'wa' wanîpî atta ta. 'Baby was in the hammock.'



ma'pîya



ipu'sa' kamo



Wayanmuri

Preface

The Ministry of Education continues to strive to produce quality resource material for use at all levels of the school system.

Publishers have not only expressed interest in our product but have bought copyright to some of our material.

The Ministry of Education, in its quest to promote the concept of a 'partnership in education', has, from time to time, encouraged agencies and communities to contribute to the provision of the best possible material for our nation's young people. It is in light of this that the Ministry wishes to acknowledge the efforts of all those individuals and agencies which have contributed to this Transition Manual. Such contributors must be congratulated for producing what must be recognized as a very important resource.

In Guyana we must consciously seek to preserve the culture of our many peoples and, more especially, that of our indigenous people. This Transition Manual will certainly impact the preservation of culture because the Makushi people will soon be in a position to read and write in their own mother tongue.

Best wishes to all users of the Transition Manual.

Ed Caesar
Chief Education Officer
Ministry of Education
Republic of Guyana

The **e** in English has many sounds. For example: **feet**, **wheat**, **were**, **met**, **ever**. However in Makusi, the **e** is always pronounced the same way, like the **e** in **met**.

era'ma

e'ma

ereuwe

me'ro

sa'me

'see'

'path'

'housefly'

'tadpole'

'difficult'

Read the following examples:

E'ma ta eeru era'ma'pîuya.

'I saw sister-in-law in the path.'

E'ma'ne more erepamîpî itewî ta.

'The child arrived first at his house.'

Write three Makusi words that you can think of with the sound of **e** in them.

..... , , and

.....

Pronounce the two Makusi vowels you have learned thus far: **a** and **e**



The second, fourth, and sixth syllables are pronounced more strongly. Therefore the k which follows a strong syllable is pronounced as a g. Mother tongue speakers of the language do not have to be taught this to pronounce them correctly, only those learning Makusi as a second language.

<i>weak-</i>	<i>strong-</i>	<i>weak-</i>	<i>strong-</i>	<i>strong</i>	
ka-	ri-	wa-	na		'chicken'
wa-	yan-	mu-	ri		'turtle'
ya-	pî-	ta-	nî -	pî	'endure'

Final syllables are always pronounced more strongly.

Examples:

pemonkonyamî	'people'
era'ma'pî	'saw'

The lengthened syllables occurring in the odd numbered syllables of the word change the rhythm as they always are pronounced stronger.

Examples:

uuruwai	'grave'
miikiri	'he'

A prefix added to a word will change the rhythm pattern as the first unstressed syllable will no longer be first. Therefore as an even numbered syllable it will be stressed.

Examples:

pa-ta 'place' The first syllable is pronounced very quickly because it is the first one, an odd numbered syllable.

u-pa-ta 'my place' The prefix added to this word now makes the syllable **pa** an even numbered syllable and thus the stress is on this second syllable. Because the **t** follows a lengthened syllable it is pronounced like a **d**.

erepamî	'I arrive'	atausinpa	'I am happy'
eerepamî	'he arrives'	aatausinpa	'he is happy'

Some words have many lengthened syllables and so all are stressed.

Examples:

e'-mî-sa'-ka'-pî	'I got up.'
taatausinpai	'happily'

Write more examples.

The following words do not follow the normal rhythm pattern.
Therefore a double vowel must be written to indicate this.

Paapa 'father' The first syllable is stressed in this case so we must indicate the lengthened vowel by writing it double.

Other examples:

m	'mother'	m	'wait'
p	'brother'	s	'church'
m	'quiet'	'grave'
m	'he'	'he fell'

The same is true with lengthened consonants. Our normal rule is that following a lengthened syllable, some consonants (p, t, k) become voiced. But there are occasions where this does not happen. Therefore we must write two consonants to indicate that this does not occur.

Examples:

uyette 'my hammock' uyeppa 'my backbone'

Notice the difference in the pronunciation of k in the following two words:

uyekkari 'my fruit food' uyekare 'my news'

Write the following words in Makusi showing the lengthened consonant:

'butterfly'	'with'
'he goes'	'little'
'I am shamed'	'I pick fruit'
'I return home'	'I jump'

The consonants **m**, **n** and **w** are very similar to those in English.

Write the following words in Makusi using these consonants:

'fox' 'baby'

'big sister' 'grass'

'necklace' 'deer'

'rat' 'sun'

Write three sentences using the consonants **m**, **n** and **w**.



The consonants **s** and **y** have two sounds.

sa'sa'	'grasshopper'	sa'	'potato'
se'man	'wind'	sîrîrî	'now'

When **s** occurs before or following an **i** and before a **u**, the sound changes to **sh**.

siisi	'laugh'	si'mîrikkî	'little'
i'si	'his leg'	isa'manta'pî	'a dead one'
sunpa	'basket'	su'min	'play'

Compare these three words and notice the change in the pronunciation of **s**.

asan	'your mother'	isan	'his mother'	usan	'my mother'
------	---------------	------	--------------	------	-------------

These same vowels affect the consonant **y**. It is generally pronounced like a **th** in English but when it comes before or after an **i** or a **u**, the pronunciation changes to a **y** sound in English.

ya'tî	'cut'	yo'	'meat food'
yarakkîrî	'with'	yaako	'brother-in-law'
yu'	'scrub bush'	yun	'father'
yuuku	'answer'	yi'nî	'we all will come'

The consonant **r** is not pronounced like an English **r**. It is pronounced like the **r** in Portuguese.

rona	'wash'	era'tî	'turn around'
paran	'sickness'	rintî	'cook'
rora	'green'	retî	'horn'

There is one consonant that does not occur in English. It is called a glottal stop. It is pronounced like a catch, or a stop in the throat. It is written like an apostrophe but it is a consonant. Pronounce the following words in Makusi.

tĩ	'rock'	wĩ	'mountain'
sa	'potato'	ma	'gourd'

It is an important consonant to write because it can make a big difference in which word you read. Look at the following words written in a similar way.

wanĩ	'is'	paka	'wake up'
wa'nĩ	'mother-in-law'	epa'ka	'go out'
aka	'careful'	tuna	'water'
a'ka	'light'	itu'na	'deep'
maa	'here, take it'	moo	'quiet'
ma	'gourd'	mo	'worm'

Write the following words in Makusi.

'get up'

'sweet'

'measure'

'mosquito'

'wait'

Exercise:

Put in the glottal stops in the following words:

1. Inîrî to wîrîpî konoî pî.

.....

2. Onon pata wîrîn pî naatî? Tapîiya to pî.

.....

3. Awemîsakapî moropai attîpî tewî ta.

.....

Translate the following:

1. The two children went fishing.

.....

2. I returned home in the afternoon.

.....

3. Yesterday he received a chicken.

.....

4. Next month I will leave to visit Grandmother.

.....

Now you have learned to read and write Makusi. Let's see if you can read the following story:

Kaikusi moropai Wayanmuri
Tarcila Rodrigues Nekaremekĩpĩ

Kaikusiya ta'pĩ wayanmuri pĩ: "Tonpa kenan rĩ amĩrĩ, wayanmuri?"

"Inna, arinĩkon anna, kaikusi" ta'pĩiya. "Maasa ken ayonpayamĩ yannokĩ era'mato'peuya."

Moropai wayanmuriya to' yanno'pĩ. "Pata kuau, pata kuau, pata kuau" kanraiwa etun warantĩ. Moropai kanraiwayamĩya imaimu yuuku'pĩ. Mararĩ pra e'winĩ pairĩ yuuku'pĩ to'ya kaikusi taimerunpai.

"Amĩrĩ kanan" ta'pĩ wayanmuriya kaikusi pĩ.

"Uurĩ nĩrĩ arinĩkon anna" ta'pĩ kaikusiya. Moropai ite'na'pĩ "ao, ao, ao, ao", ta'pĩiya. Tĩise itonpayamĩya imaimu yuuku'pĩ tu'ke pra, kanraiwayamĩya imaimu yuuku'pĩ ma're. Mĩrĩrĩ ye'nen eranne' pe kaikusi ena'pĩ maasa pra tu'ke wayanmuri yonpayamĩ wanĩ ye'nen. Moropai kaikusi e'tĩrĩkka'pĩ iipiapai tĩwĩ to'ya namai. Attĩpĩ.

Mĩrĩrĩ neken.



The English vowel i has many sounds also. For example: idea, nit, mite. The Makusi vowel i has just one sound, like the vowel e in the English word feet.

piipi'	'brother'
i'pu	'his foot'
mi'kî	'ant'
pimi	'pepper'

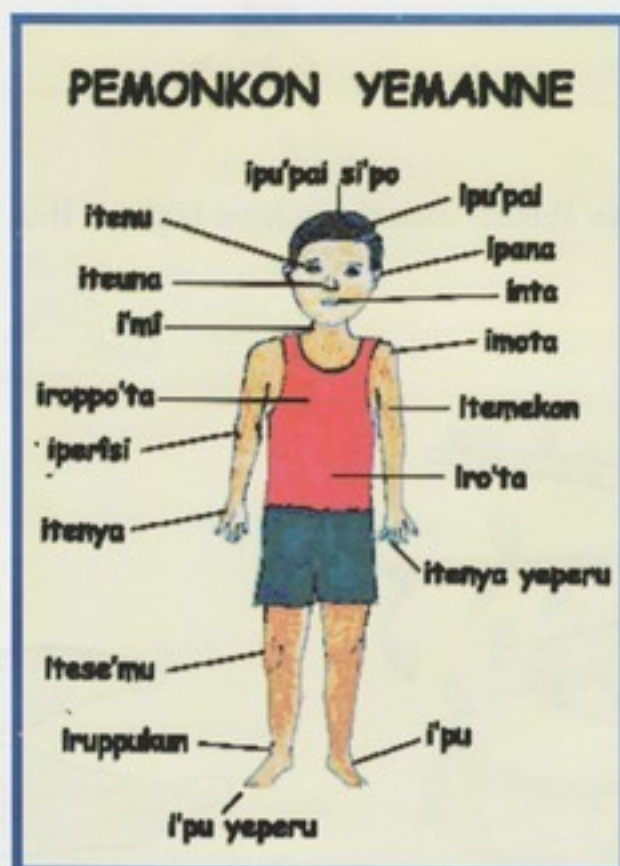
Read the following examples:

I'pu yeki'ka'pî mi'kîya. 'The ant stung his foot.'

I'mî yeki'ka'pî piipiya pimi ke. 'Brother burned his neck with pepper.'

Write three Makusi words that you can think of with the sound of i in them.

..... , , and



The English vowel **o** has several sounds. For example: one, won't, woe, woo, prone, lone, long. But the Makusi vowel **o** has just one sound like the long **o** sound in the English word 'long'.

moro'

'fish'

pon

'clothes'

o'ma

'beast'

wo'

'drink'

Read the following examples:

O'ma eporîpî amokoya moro' ya. 'Grandfather found an insect in the fish.'

"Moo e'kî", ta'pî ko'ko'ya more pî. 'Grandmother said to the child, "Be quiet".'

Write three Makusi words that you can think of with the sound of **o** in them.

..... , , and

.....

Pronounce the Makusi vowels you have learned: **a, e, i, o.**



The English u is pronounced in various ways. For example: unless, umbrella, sue, you.

The Makusi u only has one sound and it is like the u in the English word due or sue.

uurî	'I'
urutu	'my backpack; my warishi'
u'wi	'farine'
uuruwai	'grave'

Read the following examples:

U'wi wanîpî urutu ya. 'The farine was in my warishi.'

U'pu po uutî tanne usari, urana era'ma'pîuya. 'While going on foot I saw deer and labba.'

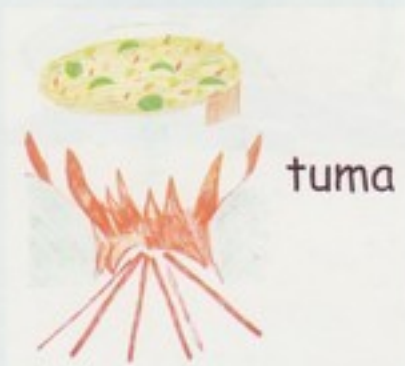
Write three Makusi words that you can think of with the sound of u in them.

..... , , and

.....

Pronounce the Makusi vowels that you have learned: a, e, i, o, and u.

tuma e'konekato'



There are 6 vowels in the Makusi alphabet. The sixth one is written *î*. This one does not occur in English. Its sound is like that of the *u* but pronounced with a smile.

mîîkîrî	'he'
îkîî	'snake'
sîrîrî	'now'
wî	'mountain'
tî	'rock'

Read the following examples:

Îkîî wîpî mîîkîrîya tî ke. 'He killed the snake with a rock.'

Mîî pe awanîpî ipîra. 'He was very proud.'

Write three Makusi words that you can think of with the sound of *î* in them.

..... , and

.....

Pronounce all of the Makusi vowels: *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, and *î*.



Vowel Glides

Makusi vowels occur frequently in pairs to form a combination of the two sounds called a glide.

Vowels combining with i:

a + i = ai (pronounced like the English i in the word idea)

Example:

mai'wa

'duck'

kaikusi

'jaguar'

e + i = ei (pronounced like ay in the English word may)

Example:

wei

'sun'

ikei

'cassava bread'

o + i = oi (pronounced like oi in the English word oil)

Example:

kono'i

'hook'

anoinna'

'midnight'

u + i = ui (pronounced like the vowels in the English word buoy)

Example:

urui

'my brother'

makui

'evil'



$\hat{i} + i = \hat{ii}$ (this sound does not occur in English)

Example:

$\hat{ii}\hat{ii}$	'clay cooking pot'
$\hat{ii}\hat{kii}$	'snake'

Vowels combining with u:

$a + u = au$ (pronounced like ow in the English word how)

Example:

$au\hat{i}$	'descend'
$arauta$	'howler monkey'

$e + u = eu$ (pronounced similar to the el in the English word help)

Example:

$ereuwe$	'housefly'
$ereuta$	'I will sit'

$i + u = iu$ (used very rarely)

Example:

$siousiu$	'sound of lightning'
-----------	----------------------

$o + u = ou$ (pronounced similar to oh in English)

Example:

$inna'pouya$	'I will return it.'
--------------	---------------------



$\hat{i} + u = \hat{i}u$ (does not occur in English)

Example:

ayannîuya 'I will eat you.'

era'ma'pîuya 'I saw it.'

Write the following words in Makusi using vowel combinations called glides:

'deer'

'cassava bread'

'savannah'

'egg'

'cooking pot'

'snake'

'humming bird'

'howler monkey'

'arrow'

'lightning'



EXERCISES:

Read the following:

Mai'wa moropai kaikusi wanîpî e'ma ta. Kaikusiya ta'pî mai'wa pî,
"ayanîuya," ta'pîiya. "Kaane," ta'pî mai'waya. Ka'ne' pe mai'wa
awainumîpî kawîne.

Duck and jaguar were in the path. Jaguar said to duck, "I will
eat you", he said. "No", said duck. Quickly the duck flew away
very high.

Read the following examples:

Amoko wîîpî ya iwo'nonse.

'Grandfather went in the bush to
hunt.'

Nari' pe îkîi era'ma'pî piipiya.

'Brother saw the dangerous snake.'

Ka'ne' pe more eka'tumîpî.

'The child ran fast.'

Waikin pokai urui wîîpî.

'My brother went to shoot a deer.'

Write two or three sentences in Makusi about yourself.

Makusi Consonants

p, t, and k each have two sounds in Makusi. They are similar to English.

pimi	'pepper'	tette	'his own hammock'	ka	'sky'
peppe	'butterfly'	tĩ	'rock'	konoĩ	'hook'
paaka	'cow'	tuma	'pepper pot'	kapoi	'moon'

When these consonants occur following a lengthened syllable, the sound is stronger, or voiced like **b**, **d**, and **g** in English.

iipĩ	'come'	a'ta	'hole'	a'ka	'light'
paapa	'father'	anta	'your mouth'	wa'ka	'axe'
i'pu	'his foot'	era'tĩ	'turn'	kaikan	'armadillo'

Lengthened syllables are those that occur:

- with a final consonant - pan-pĩ 'more' wa'-ka 'axe'
note: only an **n** or a ' (glottal) can occur at the end of a syllable.
- with a lengthened vowel - paa-ka 'cow' paa-pa 'father'
- with a vowel glide - kai-kan 'armadillo' mai-kan 'fox'
- as an even numbered syllable. The regular rhythm for pronouncing Makusi words is putting stress on the even numbered syllables. This makes the second and fourth syllables longer than the odd numbered syllables. If these consonants (**p**, **t**, **k**) occur following these even numbered syllables, they are voiced and pronounced like **b**, **d** and **g**.

Example:

a-rin-ma-ra-ka-ya-mĩ 'dogs'

Write more examples:
