



The Game of ULLU



In an almost inaccessible mountain valley hidden deep in the forests of Borneo live the Dyaks known as the Orang Ullu. Until only a few years ago this shy and suspicious tribe shunned contact with the outside world, and all explorers, scientists and missionaries were forbidden entry to their territory unless they could pass the strange Ritual of Friendship.

To date only six outsiders have entered the hidden valley and brought back reports of Ullu culture and traditions, and as these hardly differed from other Dyak peoples like the Murut, Iban and Punan, there was little interest in the Ullu among anthropologists. But there was great excitement among Linguists. This was because everyone who has spoken to the Orang Ullu brought back a very different account of their language and could not agree on the meaning of even the simplest of words. It seemed that the whole Ullu language changed after a stranger visited.

In this game you are a linguist trying to make your reputation by unraveling the mysteries of the Ullu language. But first you have to pass the Ritual of Friendship!

The game can be played by two or more people.

Players are divided into **Orang Ullu** and **Linguists**.

Equipment.

2 X Pens and paper

On a table place a number of objects of varying shapes, sizes and colours. Start with about six objects.

For example: tangerine, table tennis ball, coffee mug, box of tissues, soup bowl and sugar cube.

Play.

Round 1.

The Linguists now leave the room. The Orang Ullu think of a set of instructions involving the objects on the table.

For the first round keep it simple. Something like:

Put the tangerine in the soup bowl.

Now the Orang Ullu must work out what *Put the tangerine in the soup bowl.* is in the Ullu language.

Once again for the first round keep it simple.

For example, you could use a simple substitution without the preposition 'in'; Ong = tangerine . Pong = put. Ping = bowl.



Thus *Ong pong ping* or *Pong ong ping* or *Pong ping ong*.

Or include an 'in' preposition if you like, perhaps *Pung*.
Pong ong pung ping = *Put tangerine in bowl*.

Let us imagine that *Pong ong pung ping* is the chosen phrase in Ullu and that the game is being played by four players, two Orang Ullu and two Linguists.

The Orang Ullu now summon the Linguists back into the room where they are instructed to carry out the **Ritual of Friendship** with the phrase *Pong ong pung ping!*

Linguists can ask questions, but the only words the Orang Ullu understand are a few words of English grammar they have learned from previous visiting linguists. These are:

Noun

Verb

Preposition

Adjective

Adverb

Suffix

Prefix

Infix

Other terms can be added in later more complex games.

Two important points.

1. In Orang Ullu culture **it is extremely rude to move your hands** in front of a stranger before they have passed the **Ritual of Friendship**.
2. To say **Yes** the Orang Ullu shake their heads. To say **No** the Orang Ullu nod their heads.

Let us imagine the two Linguists are told:

Pong ong pung ping!

Linguist 1 asks: *Pong noun?*

Orang Ullu 1 nods her head to indicate No.

Linguist 2 asks: *Pong verb?*

Orang Ullu 2 shakes his head to indicate Yes.

Linguist 1 picks up the soup bowl and asks: *Ong?*

Orang Ullu 1 nods her head to indicate No.

Linguist 2 asks: *Ong noun?*

Orang Ullu 2 shakes his head to indicate Yes.

Linguist 1 picks up the tangerine and asks: *Ong?*

Both Orang Ullu shake their heads to indicate Yes

Linguist 2 mimes putting the tangerine on the tissue box saying *Verb Ong?*

And so on until by trial and error the Linguists have worked out and performed the **Ritual of Friendship**. If they have not completed the task within ten minutes they have failed and the players swap roles.

Winning the game.

The Linguists get 10 points if they manage to complete the task in less than five minutes. 5 points for completing the task in between 5 to 10 minutes. If they fail to complete the task they get no points.

The Orang Ullu get 5 points if the Linguists complete the task in between 5 to 10 minutes. No points if the task is completed in less than 5 minutes and no points if the task is not completed. A point is deducted every time an Orang Ullu nods for Yes or shakes her head for No. A point is deducted if an Orang Ullu moves his hands while answering a question.

After both teams have played both Linguists and Orang Ullu they total their points and highest wins.

Further rounds.

More objects may be added to the table and the instructions may become more complex. For example:

Turn the soup bowl upside down. Put the tangerine in the tissue box and place it on top of the soup bowl.

The Orang Ullu may want to include the Ullu words for Yes and No and a few useful phrases like, *I don't understand*, or *That's forbidden!*

The Orang Ullu can try experimenting with more complex language, using prefixes, gender and tones, but they should always try not to make the instructions impossible for the Linguists to interpret.

Note: The Orang Ullu should not be confused with the Orang Ulu.

