

# Call My Bluff

## Description:

panel game in which the audience guesses meaning of idioms

**Aim:** show the difference between literal and true meaning

## Audience:

teenagers and adults, any size group, minimum 6

**Time:** 20-30 min.

## Equipment:

3 Panel Scripts, 3 True/False cards, overhead projector and transparency or data projector and PowerPoint slides.



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## Leader's Instructions:

1. Make three double-sided True/False cards. Colored paper or cardstock works well.
2. Make an overhead transparency from page 13 or Powerpoint slides from pages 14-19.
3. Invite three volunteers to come sit at the front, forming a panel that faces the audience. Give each of them a different Panel Member's Script and a True/False card.
4. Explain the game using the Audience's Instructions below.
5. Begin round one by showing the first idiom on the overhead. Make sure the other four are covered up!
6. Read out the information about the language and the idiom, using your Leader's Script.
7. Tell the panel members to read out their definitions.
8. Have the audience vote on whose definition they think is correct.
9. Ask the panel members to hold up their True/False cards to reveal who was telling the truth.
10. Finish all five rounds in like manner and then close with the *Discussion and Application* section.

## Audience's Instructions:

1. Every language has expressions and idioms which are not meant to be understood literally. For example in English we say, "I'm pulling your leg" to mean, "I'm joking." These idioms can not be translated literally from one language to another. Instead translators must look for the meaning *behind* the idiom.
2. This is a game of *Call My Bluff*. Each of the five rounds highlights an idiom from a different West African language.
3. At the beginning of each round, I will display the idiom on the overhead, together with a literal translation of it into English.
4. Each member of the panel has a definition of the idiom. Two of them are false and one is true. Each member of the panel will read out their definition in turn and try to convince you that theirs is the correct one. You'll have to decide which one is correct.

## LEADER'S SCRIPT

Notes:

### Round 1: The Vagla Language

The Vagla language is spoken by 13,500 people in Ghana. The New Testament was published in 1977.

Vagla idiom: *I doo hiah werge*

Literal English translation: *You have a lot of liver.*

- A) This phrase means "You're a brave hunter."  
**FALSE**
- B) This phrase means "You sure can eat a lot!"  
**FALSE**
- C) This phrase means "You have no respect for your elders."  
**TRUE**

### Round 2: The Mbembe (Cross River) Language [mm-BEHM-bay]

The Mbembe (Cross River) language is spoken by 100,000 people in Nigeria. The New Testament was published in 1985.

Mbembe (Cross River) idiom: *Odim kwe ovohko ejo che*

Literal English translation: *Her husband broke her water pot.*

- A) This phrase means "He tried to help his wife in the home and, as you would expect, made a mess of it."  
**FALSE**
- B) This phrase means "Her husband broke her heart by divorcing her."  
**TRUE**
- C) This phrase means "Her husband made her jealous by flirting with another woman."  
**FALSE**

## Notes:

### Round 3: The Kusaal Language

The Kusaal language is spoken by 420,000 people in Ghana. The New Testament was published in 1976, reprinted in 1995.

Kusaal idiom: *Mya'a kpi da kum*

Literal English translation: *When I die, don't cry.*

A) This phrase means "You love me now, so there's no need to show how much you care by weeping and wailing at my funeral."

**TRUE**

B) This phrase means "When I go away from the village, don't worry if I'm gone a long time."

**FALSE**

C) This phrase means "I'm the greatest' because in this society, if you reach the top, nobody mourns for you when you die."

**FALSE**

### Round 4: The Konkomba Language

The Konkomba language is spoken by 500,000 people in Ghana. The New Testament was published in 1984, the Bible in 1998.

Konkomba idiom: *Ngisubil*

Literal English translation: *Tree children*

A) This phrase means "illegitimate children," born to unwed mothers. They are homeless, not included as part of any family, and live around one of the sacred trees near the village.

**FALSE**

B) This phrase means "fruit," especially the kinds that hang on trees like bananas.

**TRUE**

C) This phrase means "monkeys," because monkeys look like children when they're climbing trees. It works the other way around, too: when children climb trees, people refer to them as monkeys.

**FALSE**

## Round 5: The Kasem Language

The Kasem language is spoken by 130,000 people in Ghana and Burkina Faso. The New Testament was published in 1988, and re-printed in 1997.

Kasem idiom: *Sana bam keeri ba ti*

Literal English translation: The beer has cried and finished.

A) This phrase means “The beer has finished fermenting and is ready to drink.”

**TRUE**

B) This phrase means “The beer has run out, so the party’s over.”

**FALSE**

C) This phrase means “Your youth is over. It’s time to forget about having a good time and to prepare yourself for the after-life.”

**FALSE**

**Notes:**

## Notes:

### SCRIPT FOR PANEL MEMBER A

You should not change the basic content of the text, but do anything else you like to persuade the audience that your definition is the correct one. For example, you may exaggerate, add a story to illustrate the point, or disagree with the definitions of the other panel members.

1. Vagla idiom: *I doo hiah werge*

Literal English translation: *You have a lot of liver.*

**Your definition:** This phrase means “You’re a brave hunter.” (You might bluff by making up an explanation like this: The hunter who kills the animal always gets to eat the best piece of meat—the liver—therefore, the bravest and best hunter has eaten a lot of liver.)

**FALSE**

2. Mbembe (Cross River) idiom: *Odim kwe ovohko ejo che*

Literal English translation: *Her husband broke her water pot.*

**Your definition:** This phrase means “He tried to help his wife in the home and, as you would expect, made a mess of it.”

**FALSE**

3. Kusaal idiom: *Mya’a kpi da kum*

Literal English translation: *When I die, don’t cry.*

**Your definition:** This phrase means “You love me now, so there’s no need to show how much you care by weeping and wailing at my funeral.”

**TRUE**

4. Konkomba idiom: *Ngisubil*

Literal English translation: *Tree children*

**Your definition:** This phrase means “illegitimate children,” born to unwed mothers. They are homeless, not included as part of any family, and live around one of the sacred trees near the village.

**FALSE**

5. Kasem idiom: *Sana bam keeri ba ti*

Literal English translation: *The beer has cried and finished.*

**Your definition:** This phrase means “The beer has finished fermenting and is ready to drink.”

**TRUE**

## SCRIPT FOR PANEL MEMBER B

You should not change the basic content of the text, but do anything else you like to persuade the audience that your definition is the correct one. For example, you may exaggerate, add a story to illustrate the point, or disagree with the definitions of the other panel members.

## Notes:

1. Vagla idiom: *I doo hiah werge*

Literal English translation: *You have a lot of liver.*

**Your definition:** This phrase means “You sure can eat a lot!” (You might bluff by making up an explanation like this: Because the liver produces bile for digesting food, someone who can eat and eat is said to have a lot of liver.)

**FALSE**

2. Mbembe (Cross River) idiom: *Odim kwe ovohko ejo che*

Literal English translation: *Her husband broke her water pot.*

**Your definition:** This phrase means “Her husband broke her heart by divorcing her.”

**TRUE**

3. Kusaal idiom: *M ya 'a kpi da kum*

Literal English translation: *When I die, don't cry.*

**Your definition:** This phrase means “When I go away from the village, don't worry if I'm gone a long time.”

**FALSE**

4. Konkomba idiom: *Ngisubil*

Literal English translation: *Tree children*

**Your definition:** This phrase means “fruit,” especially the kinds that hang on trees like bananas.

**TRUE**

5. Kasem idiom: *Sana bam keeri ba ti*

Literal English translation: *The beer has cried and finished.*

**Your definition:** This phrase means “The beer has run out, so the party's over.”

**FALSE**

## Notes:

### SCRIPT FOR PANEL MEMBER C

You should not change the basic content of the text, but do anything else you like to persuade the audience that your definition is the correct one. For example, you may exaggerate, add a story to illustrate the point, or disagree with the definitions of the other panel members.

1. Vagla idiom: *I doo hiah werge*  
Literal English translation: *You have a lot of liver.*  
**Your definition:** This phrase means “You have no respect for your elders.”  
**TRUE**
2. Mbembe (Cross River) idiom: *Odim kwe ovohko ejo che*  
Literal English translation: *Her husband broke her water pot.*  
**Your definition:** This phrase means “Her husband made her jealous by flirting with another woman.”  
**FALSE**
3. Kusaal idiom: *M ya 'a kpi da kum*  
Literal English translation: *When I die, don't cry.*  
**Your definition:** This phrase means “I'm the greatest' because in this society, if you reach the top, nobody mourns for you when you die.”  
**FALSE**
4. Konkomba idiom: *Ngisubil*  
Literal English translation: *Tree children*  
**Your definition:** This phrase means “monkeys,” because monkeys look like children when they're climbing trees. It works the other way around, too: when children climb trees, people refer to them as monkeys.  
**FALSE**
5. Kasem idiom: *Sana bam keeri ba ti*  
Literal English translation: *The beer has cried and finished.*  
**Your definition:** This phrase means “Your youth is over. It's time to forget about having a good time and to prepare yourself for the after-life.”  
**FALSE**

## Discussion and Application:

1. **Focus on the game itself:** What made it difficult to guess correctly? (All the idioms in this game come from West African languages which now have a translation of at least the New Testament. The game highlights the difference between literal and true meaning in translation. Literal translation often gives no clue as to real meaning. If there is a link, it is often rooted in some aspect of the culture that outsiders would not be aware of. That's one reason why it's so important for a mother-tongue speaker of the language to be directly involved in the translation, either as the main translator or as part of a larger team. The goal is to convey God's message in an accurate, natural way. Idioms make the translation speak more powerfully to the reader.)
  
2. **Focus on the English Bible:** Can you explain what these idioms mean? Do you know where they come from in the English Bible?
  - ◆ 'Their hearts sank' (It means 'they were suddenly disappointed.')
  - ◆ 'You're out of your mind!' (It means, 'You're insane!')
  - ◆ 'Everyone's eyes were fastened on him' (It means 'Everyone stared at him intently.')
  
3. **Focus on the Konkomba Bible:** Can you guess what these idioms mean and what part of the Konkomba Bible they come from?
  - ◆ 'I will pull their ears.' (It means 'I will punish them.')
  - ◆ 'He went away spoiled in his stomach.' (It means 'He went away sad.')
  - ◆ 'He walked, he only.' (It means 'He didn't wear any clothes.')

## Notes:

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4. ***Focus on the translation task:*** Imagine you are an African Bible translator who speaks one of the languages in the game. How can you make sure that you're using the idioms of your own language correctly in the translation? (You could ensure an accurate translation by doing any of the following:
  - ◆ Get consultant help. Translation consultants are able to draw on a lifetime of experience to help others. The consultant may not know the answer, but can give guidelines and principles which help crack awkward problems.
  - ◆ Go to workshops. Getting together to discuss their translations helps translators, especially if others are working on related languages. Or they may be working on the same book of the Bible. Workshops provide important training and give translators time to work out real-life problems they are facing at that time.
  - ◆ Test the draft translation. Read and discuss the translation with different groups of people; young and old, men and women, educated and uneducated, Christians and non-Christians. See if they get the intended meaning loud and clear.)
5. ***Focus on the end result:*** Use the *Spitting Image* story to illustrate the impact that a good translation made on one man's life.

### ***Spitting Image***

In one part of Africa, revenge is such a normal part of life that there isn't even a word for forgiveness in the language. However, if you want to make it quite clear that you forgive someone who has wronged you and have no intention of taking revenge, you go to the offender and 'spit out the wrong,' spitting a mouthful of water over them. So the phrase, "God will forgive your sins," (Mark 1:4) was translated, "God will spit your sins out over you."

When one man heard this, he said, "Ah! Now I understand it! Sin is actually something important to God! What's more, when He forgives us, He really means it!"

## **Alternative Ideas for Use:**

- ◆ Add a scoring system to the game if you like.
- ◆ Use only three or four rounds of the game if time is short.
- ◆ After two or three rounds, change the panel to involve more people.
- ◆ Have audience line up in front of their choice for correct answer, instead of just raising their hands.
- ◆ In a small home meeting, play without an audience. Divide into two panels of three people each, who face each other and take each round alternately. One panel gives definitions, the other votes.

## **Notes:**

**REAR**

# REFRESH

# Call My Bluff

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- 3. Kusaal idiom:** *M ya'a kpi da kum*  
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- 4. Konkomba idiom:** *Ngisubil*  
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# Call My Bluff

## 1. Vagla idiom:

*I doo hiah werge*

Literal English translation:

*You have a lot of liver.*

# Call My Bluff

## 2. Mbembe (Cross River idiom:

*Odim kwe ovohko*

*ejo che*

Literal English translation:

***Her husband broke***

***her water pot.***

# Call My Bluff

## 3. Kusaal idiom:

*Mya'a kpi da kum*

Literal English translation:

*When I die, don't cry.*

# Call My Bluff

## 4. Konkomba idiom:

*Ngisubil*

Literal English translation:

*Tree children*

## 5. Kasem idiom:

*Sana bam keeri ba ti*

Literal English Translation:

*The beer has cried  
and finished.*

# Call My Bluff

## Review

- 1. Vagla idiom:** *I doo hiah werge*  
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