

APPRAISING LANGUAGE RIGHTS UNDER NIGERIA LEGISLATION*

Abstract

Language as a means of communication covers different forms and perspectives. It is used to express different ideas and thoughts. Most times people are discriminated against because of language. They do not have access to social and economic opportunities because of the language they speak or understand. Hence, there is a distinguishing factor placed on language classified by its speakers. This paper explores existing Nigeria's body of laws to enhance language rights and equal opportunities to language speakers, and where such law does not exist, are there possibilities of having such laws especially in a multilingual nation like Nigeria?

Key words: *Language Rights, Legislation, Nigeria, Appraisal*

1. Introduction

Language is a means of communication, a distinct feature that makes man different from other animals because of his systematic use of it as a means of communication. The human language is a sophisticated concept with different levels of processing before fluent speech occurs.¹ Language has its different characteristics and these characteristics essentially define language and its role in a society. The creative and unique nature of language guides speakers along lines of its usage. Language is central to how we deal with other people, and the way we use it says a lot about us. Properties of our different language reveal us to be members of a particular speech community. It tells people with shared beliefs something about our place in a speech community; hence it basically defines a society.²

In a multilingual society where people use different languages, there exist multiple language choices. These choices are characterized by place of usage, audience and so on. Sometimes, one experiences situations where people are discriminate against because of the choice of language they make. Most language speakers classify themselves as using a superior language than others. This may lead to an abuse of one's right, more so, as language is now used as a factor in classifying and granting needs in a given society. This paper therefore explores given situations and contexts where such is applicable and how it could be treated when it violates a person's right.

Right on its part is a universal phenomenon which certainly existed in pre-modern cultures. Its understanding may be informed from the perspective the term is applied. The term 'right' is derived from the Latin word '*rectus*' which means that to which a person has just and valid claim whether it be land, a thing or the privilege of doing something or saying something³, like freedom of expression⁴. It is an entitlement which a person enjoys and which is recognized by the laws of the society where he resides or recognized by the moral standards prevalent in such society.

A right in its generic sense can also mean a privilege to which a person can lay claim which requires the doing of an act or abstinence from doing a particular act by another person or authority which recognizes the existence of the privilege in favour of the person claiming it.⁵ Right may be classified according to the institutions recognizing it thus whilst some rights may be classified as moral rights, others are known as legal rights.⁶ Moral rights refer to entitlements to which people can lay claim to

* By **Ejike Francis OKAPHOR**, Department of Public and Private Law, Faculty of Law, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Pushejyke@yahoo.com, +2348033944889; and **Orji Dereck-M. AKACHUKWU**, Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. orjiakachukwu@yahoo.com, +2348035210792.

¹ P Anagbogu, C Eme & BH Mbah, *An introduction to linguistics*. (Awka: Amaka Dreams, 2010)

² Gerard.VanHerk and F Katamba, *Language in social contexts, In contemporary linguistics*. (2nd Ed, Malaysia, 2011)

³<http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rights> accessed on 4th October, 2014.

⁴This includes the right to linguistic expression, as such all individuals have the right to use their language of choice involving expression

⁵ E Ojukwu, E A Ehi, *et al, Street law: child rights manual* (Abuja: Network of University Legal Aid Institutions Nigeria, 2014) p.7

⁶*ibid*

and which the society is ready to approve or recognize not on account of the entitlement being contained in any law but because the right appeals to the value system, norms and accepted standards of the society. These rights are approved or recognized by the society as a group and they vary from one society to another. On the other hand, legal rights are those rights which a particular society recognizes and are contained in their law to which claims can be laid by a person and which the state is ready to enforce because such entitlements are privileges contained in their law⁷. These Legal Rights may include right to life, right to dignity of human person, right to freedom of movement, right to freedom of speech, right to freedom from discrimination etc. These rights are inalienable, universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated; thus they are fundamental to human existence notwithstanding the colour, sex, race or social status.

In Nigeria⁸ and indeed other civilized societies, these rights which are inalienable to man have been entrenched in the Constitution of their countries and for countries that operate an unwritten constitution, respect for these rights have become part of their everyday life. In *Ransom-Kuti v A-G Federation*⁹, the Supreme Court speaking on the Fundamental human rights per Kayode Eso, JSC (of the blessed memory) stated thus:

It is a right which stands above the ordinary laws of the land and which in fact is antecedent to political society itself. It is a primary condition to civilized existence ...and what has been done by our constitution is to have these rights enshrined in the constitution so that the rights could be immutable to the extent of the immutability of the constitution itself

2. Meaning of Language Rights

Having established the meaning of 'language' and 'right', it becomes apposite to understand what language rights are. As earlier noted, language is a medium of communication which mirror's one's identity This means that a person can be identified by the language he or she speaks. We can therefore safely say that language (or linguistic) rights include among others, the right to use one's own language in private or public activities. It presupposes the freedom which one has to speak or to write in one's language without any form of discrimination.

Language rights are the human and civil rights concerning the individual and collective right to choose the language or languages for communication in a private or public atmosphere.¹⁰ It includes the right a person has to use his or her language with other members of their linguistic group, regardless of the status of their language. These rights evolve from general human rights especially right not to be discriminated against, freedom of expression, right to private life, and the right of members of a linguistic minority to use their language with other members of their community. In other words, language rights can also be implied in the right to freedom from discrimination on the basis of language, right to culture, right to education, right to work, right to a name, right to equality, right to a fair trial and right to the protection of the family.

3. The Need for Language Rights in Nigeria

It is a notorious fact that in any multilingual society or country, certain languages have wider spread than others. Whilst some languages have greater percentage of people that speak the language, others may have lesser or fewer persons who speak the language. This scenario often gives rise to minority or majority language in a particular country. Nigeria for instance has over 250 ethnic nationalities with different languages; yet three¹¹ (3) ethnic nationalities are today referred to as the major tribes or languages in Nigeria. What then happens to the other speakers of over two hundred (200) languages in

⁷*Ibid* p. 9

⁸ Chapter IV of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended)

⁹ (1985) 2NWLR (Pt. 6), 211

¹⁰https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/linguistic_rights accessed on 28th October, 2014

¹¹ Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba ethnic nationalities

Nigeria? Should they go into extinction so that the other three languages alone will survive? What happens to the culture of those over 200 languages?

All the above inform the need for language right, engendering a reflection on how to apply the available legal and institutional framework towards ensuring the protection of language rights of citizenry in Nigeria. Some of the reasons for the protection of language rights are:

(a) Towards Ensuring Participatory Democracy: As a country with multi language speakers who cannot read, understand or write English Language, use of their local language becomes paramount. For citizens to participate in the political activities of the country, they should be able to understand what government does, the legal instruments used in governing the country and so on. Hence there has been serious call for the translation of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the different languages in Nigeria in order to enable the people who cannot read in English language to have knowledge of what the Constitution says.¹² Ayanbode Oje, a member of the Change Movement Nigeria translated the 1999 Constitution to Yoruba Language. He is of the view that availability of the translated constitution will certainly help to empower the perceived disenfranchised, oppressed and the voiceless who could not read and understand English Language¹³.

(b) To ensure equality and equity of languages: This is necessarily to ensure that all native languages are given equal rights and opportunities to their various speakers and to avoid any form of language discrimination.¹⁴

(c) To prevent threat of extinction of some languages and whittle down linguistic imperialism

(d) To enable a people's linguistic repertoire to be treated as or become a positive empowering resource.

(e) To prevent a people's linguistic repertoire to be treated from becoming a problem or from causing them problems.

4. The Legal Framework for the Protection of Language Rights

In the early European history, there were several cases where a language was being imposed upon people while other languages were neglected. People were subjected to variants of discriminatory practices owing to their inability to speak English language or speak it fluently, and in some cases where they speak English language with an accent different from British accent. In some establishments it was an outright 'speak only English policy' and so on.

The recognition of language in relation to nationhood brought the issue of language rights to prominence. Hence, this saw countries signing bilateral and multilateral treaties on language rights.¹⁵ For instance under the aegis of the League of Nations, Peace Treaties and major multilateral and international conventions carried clauses protecting minorities in Central and Eastern Europe, as in, for example, the right to private use of any language, and provision for instruction in primary schools through medium of own language.

In 1948 linguistic rights were first included as an international human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹⁶. Article 2 of the Declaration provides:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin,

¹²<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/12/translating-1999-constitution-to-nigerian-languages-matters-arising/> accessed on February 5th, 2014

¹³*Ibid*; Also <http://nannewsnigeria.com/features-translating-1999-constitution-nigerian-languages-matters-arising> accessed February 5th, 2014.

¹⁴Language discrimination refers to the unfair treatment of an individual based solely upon the characteristics of their speech; such as, accent, size of vocabulary, and syntax.

¹⁵https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistic_rights accessed on 17th February, 2014; Refer also to the Treaty of Lausanne (1923)

¹⁶ The Declaration has thirty Articles dealing on various rights that should be accorded to person.

property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

This was a major breakthrough for persons who have suffered discrimination on the basis of language as it now became globally recognized as international human rights. Several other international and regional legal frameworks followed this Declaration.

For instance, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities¹⁷ came into being with the aim of ensuring that the signatory states respect the rights of national minorities, minority languages and education and to ensure the participation of national minorities in public life. It further undertakes to combat discrimination, promote equality, preserve and develop the culture and identity of national minorities. Similarly, the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996) also known as the Barcelona Declaration came into being to support linguistic rights especially those of endangered languages¹⁸. The legal document also has regards to several policies that motivated the respect of linguistic rights. The aim of the Declaration was to define equality in linguistic rights regardless of differences in political or territorial statuses and at the same time promote international commitment in respecting the rights of linguistic groups as well as individuals who do not reside within their native communities¹⁹. Other international and regional legal frameworks recognizing language rights include²⁰:

- (a) The International Labour Organization Convention No. 107 (1957)²¹
- (b) UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960)²²
- (c) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
- (d) Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice (1978)
- (e) UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992)
- (f) Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001)
- (g) Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993)
- (h) African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981)
- (i) African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)

4.1 Language Rights under the Nigerian Law

Nigeria like most African countries does not have a comprehensive legislation on language rights; this could be traced back to the British colonial domination of Nigeria. As a pre-colonial nation, Nigeria had communities bound together by culture and language. Language was a vehicle of culture and people were culturally identified by the languages they spoke.²³ However, the colonialists viewed language diversity as a barrier to their hegemony and administration of entire Nigeria. Thus they adopted language assimilation policies by making the English language the official language of Nigeria.²⁴ This policy forced Nigerians to accept and speak English language more than their native languages. The

¹⁷https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/framework_convention_for_the_protection_of_national_minorities accessed on 17th February, 2014, The Framework came into effect on 2nd January, 1998 and by 2009 it has been ratified by 39 member states.

¹⁸https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/universal_declaration_of_linguistic_rights accessed on 17th February, 2014

¹⁹*ibid*

²⁰https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistic_rights accessed on 20th February, 2014

²¹(Entry into force, 2nd June, 1959) <http://www.unesco.org/most/lnlaw2.htm> accessed on 19th February, 2014.

²²(Entry into force, 22nd May, 1962) <http://www.unesco.org/most/lnlaw3.htm> accessed on 19th February, 2016

²³I Maja, "Towards the Human Rights Protection of Minority Languages in Africa" www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/minority_language_Africa.html accessed on 24th October, 2014.

²⁴*ibid*

effect is far reaching in that all our laws are written in the official language without considering the interest of native language speakers.²⁵ The legislators have lost sight of the fact that Nigeria is a multilingual nation where the laws made even though they are written in official language should put into consideration the language rights of her citizens especially those who could not speak the official language. It is more worrisome that, for instance, the Electoral Act²⁶ which regulates the conduct of elections into various political positions, voting, and so on-across the federation did not make any provision in the Act that tends to recognize the language rights of persons who partake in the process especially the electorate. Rather, mention was only made of language in the entire Act where it recognized the rights of persons with disabilities at the polling place to be assisted with sign language interpretation²⁷ as well as where the Act prohibited the use of abusive languages by political parties during campaigns.²⁸

Similarly, the new Employee's Compensation Act²⁹ which repealed the Workmen's Compensation Act did not make any provision regarding the language right of an employee as usually obtainable in most countries especially in countries with divergent language speakers. It would be recalled that under the repealed Act,³⁰ provision was made protecting the language right of a workman who is unable to read and understand a particular language.³¹ One therefore wonders why the new Act which should be an improvement on the archaic law rather whittled down the little improvement made by the earlier Act recognizing the language right of a workman.

In spite of the foregoing, there are some Nigeria's legislation where though language rights were not expressly provided for, it is possible to infer language rights from rights that are expressly provided for in the legislation, thus relying on the principle that explicitly guaranteed rights by necessary implication "imply" the existence of rights not explicitly guaranteed. Some of those rights can be found in the Constitution of Nigeria as well as other legislation. They are discussed as follows:

4.1.1 The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria³²

The Nigerian constitution which is human right based in its preamble provides....

AND TO PROVIDE for a constitution for the purpose of promoting good government and welfare of all persons in our country on the principles of freedom, equality and justice, and for the purpose of consolidating the unity of our people.

The above paragraph no doubt shows Nigeria's disposition and preparedness towards ensuring freedom and equality amongst her citizenry without any form of discrimination. Chapter IV³³ of the Constitution

²⁵ The National Orientation Agency (NOA) and the relevant bodies, NGOs and good spirited individuals should be encouraged to translate our laws into various native languages especially the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as this will ensure participation of all citizenry in the affairs of the country and also know their various rights as stated in the legal document.

²⁶ The Electoral Act, 2010

²⁷ Section 56(2)

²⁸ Section 95 (1) and (2)

²⁹ The Act came into force in 2010 after it was assented to by the then President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. The Act out rightly repealed the Workmen's Compensation Act, Cap W6, LFN 2004.

³⁰ section 16(1)(b) of the Workmen's Compensation Act

³¹ that such agreement shall not be binding on him except there is evidence that the content was read, explained and an interpreter provided for him

³² The 1999 Constitution as amended in 2011

³³ In sections 33-43 the rights are listed as follows: Right to Life, Right to Dignity of Human Person, Right to Personal Liberty, Right to Fair Hearing, Right to Private and Family Life, Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion, Right to Freedom of Expression and the Press, Right to Peaceful Assembly and Association, Right to Freedom of Movement, Right to Freedom from Discrimination, Right to Acquire and Own Immovable Property anywhere in Nigeria, Compulsory Acquisition of Property

made provisions for the fundamental rights, which rights are enforceable by an action in court once there is any breach or threat of breach. Section 42(1) for instance provides for the right a citizen of Nigeria not to be discriminated against because he is of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion. Though this section did not expressly mention “language” yet it would be noted that one of the components of any ethnic group is its culture nay language, which is an integral part of culture.³⁴ Language therefore is the soul of culture and constitutes its pillar and means of expression per excellence.

Again, going by our earlier position that language rights can be implied in the right to freedom from discrimination on the basis of language, freedom of expression, right to culture, right to a name, right to equality, right to a fair trial and right to the protection of the family, etc and the fact that these rights are guaranteed in the constitution, we would safely conclude that the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria no doubt recognizes and protects the language rights of persons.³⁵

In the same vein, the constitution also recognizes language rights of a suspect and an accused person standing trial in a criminal proceeding to be informed in the language he understands, the facts and grounds of his arrest³⁶. Also, section 36(6) (a) and (e) recognize the right of a defendant in a criminal trial to be informed promptly in the language he understands and in detail the nature of the offence and be provided with an interpreter if he cannot understand the language used at the trial.³⁷ This is a mandatory constitutional provision that the courts in criminal cases are commanded by the constitution to ensure that an interpreter is in court who can interpret from English language to any language which is the language the defendant understands.³⁸

From the foregoing, we submit that the provisions of Section 36(6)(a) and (e) are very clear on the language rights of a person accused of committing a crime, by giving him the option of taking his plea in any language of choice and providing an interpreter for him at no cost. This is a fundamental right which is inalienable and non-negotiable.

4.1.2 The Arbitration and Conciliation Act³⁹

In Commercial transactions, the Arbitration and Conciliation Act as well as the Arbitration Rules recognize the right of parties to choose any language of their choice as the language for the arbitration proceedings. Thus, Section 18(1) of the Act provides:

The parties may by agreement determine the language or languages to be used in the arbitral proceedings but where they do not do so, the arbitral tribunal shall determine the language or languages to be used bearing in mind the relevant circumstances of the case⁴⁰

The above provisions have further shown Nigeria’s legislation as recognizing the language rights of persons. Thus by the provisions of the Arbitration Act and the Rules, the language of the entire arbitration proceedings and the language of the award⁴¹ should be as determined by the parties, such

³⁴ Culture is the social heritage of a people and their offspring as learnt through socialization. It is also a set of rules which allows man to interact, learn, develop his potential and capability and adjust to his environment.

³⁵ Similarly, in South Africa the Bill of Rights enacted in 1996, makes broad provision for the protection of human rights as part of the Constitution including protection for language and culture. Article 30 for instance provides that “everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice”

³⁶ Section 35(3) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended)

³⁷ *Ogidi v State* (2005) 5NWLJ (Pt. 918), SC. 286

³⁸ See also section 36(7)

³⁹ Cap A18 LFN, 2004

⁴⁰ See also Rule 22 of the Arbitration Rules which provides for the right of the parties to choose the language the proceedings should be conducted.

⁴¹ An award (arbitral/arbitration award) is a determination on the merit by an arbitral tribunal in an arbitration proceeding. In other words, they are referred to as the decisions of arbitral tribunal. An award is analogous to a judgment in a court of law.

that disputing parties in a commercial transaction who refer their dispute to an arbitrator or a tribunal may agree that the entire proceedings should be conducted in Igbo language which is the language the parties understand and speak. Whatever award emanating from the proceedings is binding and enforceable.

4.1.3 Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, No. 24, 2003

This Act of the National Assembly provides that the National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other Related Matters shall ensure that no form of discrimination is meted against a trafficked person owing to his language, race, colour, religion, national ethnic or social origin etc.⁴² This is at least recognition of the language right of a trafficked person who may not understand the language of the area where the person is found.

4.1.4 The African Charter on Human and People's Right (Ratification) and Enforcement Act⁴³

Both the preamble and the main Articles under this Charter made provisions protecting the language rights of persons. These rights may be implied from the non-discriminatory provisions of the Charter, the equality provision, right to freedom expression provision, right to culture, right to work under equitable and satisfactory condition, right to education, right to protection of family and right of every child to a name provision etc. For instance, Article 2 provides:

Every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in the present charter without distinction of any kind such as race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status.

These non-discrimination provisions proscribe discrimination on the ground of language. This is to say that if Nigeria as a state denies a person or discriminates against a person on the basis of the language he speaks, the state will be deemed to be in violation of the language right of the person. The provisions of this Charter can be relied upon and enforced by the Nigeria court having been domesticated and have full force of law and other Nigeria's legislation.⁴⁴

5. The Challenges of Language Rights in Nigeria

The foregoing discussion has shown that language right in Nigeria is not entirely in bad situation where there are no laws at all protecting the language rights of persons. It has been shown that there is no specific legislation in Nigeria on language rights. Apart from where a particular enactment makes a specific provision recognizing and protecting language rights of persons, there are other provisions where they can be implied.

Nevertheless, certain factors have contributed to the challenges of language rights in Nigeria. These factors include those that have led to the near lack of laws protecting language rights as well as those that form major clogs in the enforcement of the language rights. These include:

- (a) **Influence of Colonization:** The colonization of Nigeria by Britain and subsequent adoption of English language as the official language of Nigeria has affected the existence of legislation on language rights. The general belief of an average Nigerian especially the elitist class that makes laws⁴⁵ is that everybody can afford to speak or understand English language. This has influenced the laws they made which do not recognize the difficulty or discrimination meted against persons who cannot speak English language, worst still where most of those laws do

⁴² Section 50

⁴³ Cap A9 LFN, 2004

⁴⁴ *Abachavs Fawehinmi* (2000)6NWLJ (Pt. 660) 228

⁴⁵ In Nigeria, laws are made by the National Assembly and the various States Houses of Assembly

not make provisions recognizing the language rights of such persons or how to make them read and understand such laws in the language they speak.

- (b) **Illiteracy and/or Lack of Awareness:** People not being able to know their language right, may not know when it is infringed upon. In situation where they know they have such rights, they may not know the requisite laws to fall back on to seek for the enforcement of their language rights. In some employment places⁴⁶, people are discriminated against or denied certain positions owing to the language they speak, yet such persons complain, murmur without knowing the rightful steps to take to enforce such right or stop the discrimination.
- (c) **Lack of Speedy/Expeditious Hearing of Cases:** Delay or lack of speedy dispensation of justice has adversely affects the psyche of an average Nigerian who gets discouraged from enforcing his language rights in a court of law. They may rather let go the infringement of such instead of litigating on a particular case for two or three years as the case may be.
- (d) **Poverty:** Poverty is a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the contemporary Nigeria. The level of poverty today makes an average Nigerian to be living on less than one dollar per day. This development affects the ability of a person to enforce his language rights especially as it relates to getting the services of a lawyer or approaching the court for the language rights enforcement. This becomes more difficult in a country like Nigeria, where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.
- (e) **Corruption:** Corruption level in Nigeria is very high. There is corruption amongst the political class, the law makers, the judiciary, the employers, the employees and indeed the general public. The law makers often sponsor and make laws that favour them and the elitists without paying due attention to some innate challenges in the country like language right issue. Similarly, corruption on the part of the judiciary has greatly done much harm to the saying 'the court is the last hope of mankind', but with the level of corruption in the system, there is indeed doubt if it is still the last hope of mankind especially in a case where the language right of a person is infringed or where speakers of a particular language are discriminated against.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In a country like Nigeria where there are speakers of different languages, recognition and protection of language rights is a *sine qua non*, in order to ensure equal rights, opportunities, justice, peace and sustainable development. Denial or discriminating against a people as a result of the language they speak is denial of their cultural heritage and as such a great infringement on their human existence. This is why most international, regional and sub-regional legal instruments all tend to encourage non-discrimination against persons on grounds of race, ethnic group, colour, language, sex and so on.

Though Nigeria has not many specific laws recognizing and protecting the language rights of persons, yet a number of legislation where such language rights are expressly provided for or where they can be implied are limited and curtailed by all sort of clogs. Thus, the challenge of non or insufficient legislation on language rights can be attributed to these various clogs which include colonial influence, illiteracy and/or lack of awareness, delay in the dispensation of cases, poverty, corruption and many others; all these have adversely affected language rights. This is to say that even though the rights are there, these factors may need to be looked into and, where necessary, improvements made, in order to ensure guarantee and protection of language rights.

In the light of the above and in order to ensure that language rights are guaranteed and protected in Nigeria, we recommend as follows:

⁴⁶ This is an obvious lacuna in the Employee's Compensation Act, 2010 for not deeming it worthwhile to make provisions protecting employees who may be discriminated against owing to the language they speak

- (a) There should be general overhauling of Nigerian laws in order to bring in language rights where necessary. The focus of the legislators in that regard should be on the new Employee's Compensation Act, Electoral Act, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and so on.
- (b) Translating the Constitution and other legal documents should be carried out in order to liberate Nigerian citizens from complete ignorance. This is because a lot of citizens today do not know the contents of the Constitution not because they cannot afford to procure a copy, but simply because they cannot read in English language. Hence, effort made by the likes of Ayanbode Oje at translating the constitution into Yoruba language should be supported and encouraged in order to ensure participation of all.
- (c) The National Orientation Agency and indeed all relevant bodies should embark on creating awareness and intensive enlightenment programmes to all Nigerians and indeed all ethnic nationalities on their language rights. Similarly, the political class, the legislators, government, the judiciary etc should all be enlightened on the rights of language speakers, the need for protection of such rights, and where abused, to ensure justice.
- (d) Humanitarian services by lawyers especially for the indigent citizens who are illiterates are needed.
- (e) Government should rise up to her responsibility of providing good education, providing employment, eradicating any form of discrimination and so on.