Amdo Tibetan Media Intelligibility

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Abstract

Amdo Tibetan (ISO 639-3 code adx) is one of the three major Tibetan dialect groups in China. It is spoken in all Tibetan areas of Qinghai province except for Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and it is spoken in neighbouring areas of Gansu province (i.e. the western half of Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County) and northern Sichuan (parts of Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture and parts of Gansu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture). In and surrounding this region, Amdo Tibetan also serves as a language of wider communication. Radio broadcasts, movies, television programs, and audio recordings in Amdo Tibetan use a range of registers, the entire set of which will be referred to as Media Amdo Tibetan. The goal of this investigation is to determine for which segments (if any) of the Amdo population is oral Media Amdo Tibetan an appropriate reference dialect for meeting non-print language development needs. Specifically, I investigate the question of which segments of the population are not served by development in Literary Tibetan and demonstrate adequate comprehension and positive attitudes towards Media Amdo Tibetan. Furthermore, this investigation addresses whether any particular register of Media Amdo Tibetan is better suited than the others for these purposes.

Acknowledgments

While the author remains entirely responsible for any errors or misunderstandings in the following materials, I would like to sincerely thank the following people for their kind assistance: Á Chûnlín and Zhâng Duǒ of the International Education and Exchange Centre of Qinghai Normal University, Marielle Prins and John Willis for sharing from their extensive experience in the Amdo region, Ken Hugoniot, Andy Castro, Ted Bergman, and Marie South for help with methodology and analysis, my Tibetan research assistant Don.grub Nyi.ma, and those who facilitated my time in the countryside, Bert & Jeanine Verbeeke, Rin.chen rDo.rje, Chos'phel and his family, and Shes.rab and his family. I am also grateful to my Tibetan hosts during the fieldwork for their endless hospitality and to SIL International for providing the funding for the research expenses.
1 Introduction

1.1 Amdo Tibetan

The Tibetan languages belong to the Bodish branch of the Bodic group of the Tibeto-Burman language family; they are descended from Old Tibetan\(^1\) and traditionally used Literary Tibetan as their common literary language (Tournadre 2005:16). Amdo Tibetan (ISO 639-3 code \textit{adx}) is one of the three major Tibetan dialect groups in China. Amdo Tibetan (AT) is spoken in all Tibetan areas of Qīnghǎi\(^2\) province except for Yùshù Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (\textit{玉树藏族自治州} (“Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture” will hereafter be abbreviated as “TAP”)), and it is spoken in neighbouring areas of Gānsū province (i.e. the western half of Gānnán TAP 甘南藏族自治州, and Tiānzhù Tibetan Autonomous County 天祝藏族自治县) and northern Sīchuān (parts of Ābā Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture 阿坝藏族羌族自治州 and parts of Gānzī TAP 甘孜藏族自治州).\(^3\) This makes the Amdo region at least 350,000 km\(^2\) in area.\(^4\)

\(^{1}\)This statement is not as circular as it sounds, since much is known about Old Tibetan. For example, unlike other Tibeto-Burman languages, the words for ‘seven’ in Old Tibetan and its descendants are cognate to \textit{*bdun} (Beyer 1992:7).

\(^{2}\)Chinese words are given throughout in \textit{Hànyǔ Pīnyīn} romanization, with Chinese characters in addition for names of lesser-known places.

\(^{3}\)See, e.g., Gésāng Jūmiǎn and Gésāng Yāngjīng 2002:173.

\(^{4}\)Area figures from Marshall and Cooke 1997. I added up the sizes of these Tibetan Autonomous areas, except for Hǎixī Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture 海西蒙古族藏族自治州, in which Amdo Tibetans only live in part. To make up for not including Hǎixī, I rounded the figure up to the nearest 10,000 km\(^2\).
The vast majority of Tibetans living in the Amdo region are speakers of Amdo Tibetan. These Tibetans call themselves [wɵl] or [wɵt] (Bod6) ‘Tibetan’ or [amdowa] (A.mdo.ba) ‘Amdo Tibetan.’ In addition, members of other ethnic groups, such as Mongolians in Hénán Mongolian Autonomous County 青海省黄南藏族自治州河南蒙古族自治县 are known to speak AT as their first language (Slater 2003:11–12). In and surrounding the Amdo region, AT also serves as a language of wider communication, for example, by the Tóngrén Tǔ (Fried 2009:23) and the Wǔtún (Janhunen et al. 2008:19–20), both in Tóngrén county in Qinghǎi’s Huángnán TAP 黄南藏族自治州同仁县. Some Tibetans who speak tonal (i.e. non-Amdo; see below) Tibetan dialects in eastern Gānnán TAP are reported to “understand at least some Amdo Tibetan” (Prins 2003:16), and some Tibetans from Nang.chen 囊谦县 in Yǔshù TAP report understanding mGo.log speech (Guǒluò TAP 青海省果洛藏族自治州), but not other Amdo varieties (Causemann 1989:22–23). In Sìchuān, speakers of some Qiangic languages (Sun 1990:13) and rGyalrongic languages (Jesse Gates, personal communication) are also reported to use Amdo as a language of wider communication.

Proper genetic classification has not been carried out in most parts of the Tibetan language cluster.6 Those varieties spoken in the Amdo region are no exception.7

A Tibetan variety is usually considered to be an Amdo dialect if it is spoken in this region, and if it exhibits relatively many complex onsets, no complex codas, no contrastive tones, and no diphthongs (Jiāng 2002:11).

The Language Atlas of China (Chinese Academy [CASS] 1987:C11) recognizes four Amdo sub-dialects: 'brog.pa 牧区土话 ‘Nomad,’ rong.ba 农区土话 ‘Farmer,’ rong.ma ‘半农半牧区土话 Farmern-Nomad,’ and rta'u 道孚土话 (a place-name). Other Chinese linguistics divide Amdo dialects up differently: according to Zhang 1996:116–117, sKal.bzang 'Gyur.med/Gésāng Jūmiǎn 和 Hú Tǎn 只 recognize a split between Nomad and Farmer varieties, and Zhang sees that split as primary, and then recognizes Northern and Southern branches of Farmer Amdo (presumably corresponding to CASS et al.’s Farmer/Farmer-Nomad split). Amdo Tibetan linguist Cham.tshang Padma Lhun.grub (2009: 107ff) agrees with CASS et al.’s Farmer and Farmer-Nomad classifications, but divides the Nomad dialects (and rta'u) up into 'brog.skad rnying.ba ‘Archaic Nomad’ and 'brog.skad phel.ma ‘Developed Nomad.’ The boundary between the two roughly corresponds to the A.mnye.ma.chen mountain range 阿尼玛卿山: Developed Nomad is spoken to the north, and thus includes most of the nomad territory in Qinghǎi province, and Archaic Nomad is spoken to the south, in most of Guǒluò TAP, the southern part of Gānnán TAP, and the Amdo areas of Sìchuān province (including CASS et al.’s rta'u). Following Cham.tshang Padma Lhun.grub, the following subdivision of Amdo Tibetan dialects will be assumed for the purposes of this investigation: Northern Farmer (CASS et al.’s ‘Farmer’), Southern Farmer (CASS et al.’s ‘Farmer-Nomad’), Northern Nomad, and Southern Nomad.

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5Tibetan words are given throughout in Wylie romanization (Wylie 1959), with spaces between words, periods between syllables, and capitalized root letters in proper nouns.


7That said, it appears that we may be able to classify as Amdo those varieties that share at least these innovations: *b > /w/, *dp- > /χw-/, *db- > uvular (/ʁ-/ or /ʁʷ-/), and *dbj- > /hj-/. *sh > /xʰ-/ is common, but not universal within Amdo.
Although the variation from one Amdo variety to another is generally reported to be much less than is found in other Tibetan regions, those Amdo Tibetans who speak Nomad varieties still report some difficulty communicating with those who speak Farmer varieties, and vice versa. Education is reported to mitigate this difficulty, because educated Amdo Tibetans will choose lexical items from the written language over those they know to belong only to their own vernacular (personal communication).

Lexical items are not the only difference between AT vernaculars and the Tibetan language taught in the school system and found in books. The Tibetan language situation is characterized by diglossia: the written language is different enough from any of the spoken varieties that a Literary Tibetan text read aloud will be incomprehensible to an illiterate Tibetan.

Tibetan-medium education is available throughout Qinghai, as well as in Gannan TAP and in at least parts of Aba TAP. This education is available at all levels, from primary through post-secondary, even at as high a level as university as Lanzhou’s Northwest Nationalities University 西北民族大学. There have also been adult literacy classes in Qinghai administered in partnership with foreign development workers (personal communication).

Despite the high availability of Tibetan-medium education, only about 30 percent of Tibetans in China are estimated to be literate, perhaps because of the low population density (resulting in schools close to some of the population but far from most), the difficulties of rural life (children are needed at home to

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8This is supported by the lexical similarity percentages reported by Moore et al. (1992:18).
9According to the 2000 national census (Guowuyuan 2002), 45.49 percent of all Tibetans in China have never attended school, and 35.17 percent attended some primary school but had no education beyond that level. Statistics specific to the Amdo population are unavailable.
help with the animals or farm work), and also because diglossia makes learning Literary Tibetan something that requires a very high degree of motivation.

1.2 Media Amdo Tibetan

Radio broadcasts, movies, television programs, and audio recordings in Amdo Tibetan use a range of AT registers. We shall refer to this entire range as Media Amdo Tibetan. A preliminary investigation into the registers of AT media products revealed three distinct registers in common use. Dialogue in films and television dramas, in radio call-in programs, and in interviews, especially impromptu (“man on the street”) interviews, is either pure spoken vernacular AT, preferably with Nomad phonology (Prins 2002:41), or very closely approximates it, for example, by including the occasional literary lexical item or grammatical function word. Even formal interviews, although containing a higher proportion of literary lexical items, will still be recognizable as vernacular AT. We shall call this register Low Media AT. A consequence of this definition is that we see Low Media AT as a range that includes vernacular AT at one end, and includes formal lexical items but vernacular phonology and grammar at the other end. Data on the intelligibility of vernacular AT will thus be considered to have implications for the intelligibility of Low Media AT.

At the other end of the spectrum is language which either is, or is clearly aiming to approximate Literary Tibetan, read with an Amdo accent. As with Low Media AT, a Nomad accent is preferred: Nomad AT dialects tend to preserve more of the phonological distinctions of Old Tibetan than Farmer dialects do, making them better able to communicate the literary spellings. This is heard in news broadcasts, most commercials, prepared speeches, songs, and voice-over narration. We shall call this High Media AT.

In addition, some media products seem to attempt a compromise between these two registers, perhaps in an attempt to meet the conflicting demands of the cultural value placed on Literary Tibetan and intelligibility or a sense of Amdo distinctiveness. For example, the voice-over narration at the beginning of the Amdo Tibetan translation of the Hollywood movie Braveheart combines formal vocabulary and Literary Tibetan grammatical constructions with concessions to spoken phonology, grammar, and lexical items which would not normally characterize the reading of a Literary Tibetan text. It has too many features of vernacular AT to be considered High Media AT, yet too many features of Literary Tibetan to be considered Low Media AT. (A transcription of this text is included in appendix B.) We shall call this Mid-level Media AT. Dialogue in older media products included much more Mid-level Media AT than is normally found presently, perhaps indicating a shift towards greater acceptance of vernacular/Low Media AT in media products.

1.3 Ethnic and language contact in the Amdo region

Contact in the Amdo region has been extensively described elsewhere.10 The Amdo region is part of the Qinghai-Gansu Sprachbund: members of the Han, Hui, Mongolian, Salar, and Tu ethnic groups, speaking Mongolic, Sinitic, Tibetan, and Turkic languages, live in the immediate vicinity of Amdo Tibetans. Other Tibetans, speaking Khams and as yet unclassified Tibetan languages, Qiangic languages, and rGyalrongic languages live at the edges of the Amdo region.

In the course of this fieldwork, I observed businesses run by Han and Hui in larger towns in Tibetan areas, hotel staff who could not speak Tibetan in Tŏngdé county town and Tàngkè township, Hui men negotiating to buy motorcycles from Amdo Tibetans in a Tibetan village in Huālóng county, and a Han teacher of Chinese language in a Tibetan village school in Tŏngrén county. Although the nomad areas in the Amdo region are typically home only to Tibetans, a short trip to the nearest town is all it would take for any Tibetan to meet speakers of either Qinghái or Sichuān Mandarin Chinese and be in contact with non-Tibetan cultures.

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10See, e.g., Dwyer 1995, Slater 2003, and Janhunen 2008 as a starting point.
1.4 Previous research

Much has been written about Amdo Tibetan, including at least three grammars (Roerich 1958, 'Brug.mo Tsho 2003, Haller 2004), two dictionaries (Huá and Klui.bum rGyal 1993, Gěng et al. 2006), comparative wordlists (Moore et al. 1992, Huá 2002), and a handful of textbooks.

The only mention of what we call Media Amdo Tibetan that we are aware of is in Prins 2002:41–42.

Although it is not uncommon for a high degree of mutual intelligibility throughout the Amdo region to be reported,\(^\text{11}\) we are not aware of any actual research into the question. Moore et al. 1992:120–122 comes closest with interview data about intelligibility.

2 Purpose of the survey

The goal of this investigation is to determine for which segments (if any) of the Amdo population is oral Media Amdo an appropriate reference dialect for meeting non-print language development needs. Specifically, we want to know which segments are not served by development in Literary Tibetan and demonstrate adequate comprehension and positive attitudes towards Media Amdo Tibetan. Furthermore, we hope to determine whether any particular register of Media Amdo Tibetan is better suited than the others for these purposes, and if so, which register.

The research questions concern two areas:

1. Language attitudes
   - What are people's attitudes toward the language and the other content of the broadcasts they are watching/hearing, at both higher and lower registers?

2. Comprehension
   - How well do people comprehend the broadcasts they are watching/hearing?
     1. Depending on register?
     2. Depending on location?
     3. Depending on social category? (sex, age, education, occupation)

3 Methodology

3.1 Site selection

One site was chosen in each of the four Amdo dialect subgroups used in this study, based on the researcher’s acquaintance with available helpers from these specific places.

\(^\text{11}\)See Sung and Lha.byams rGyal 2005:xviii for a typical report.
Table 1. Fieldwork locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialect subgroup</th>
<th>Prefecture</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Township</th>
<th>Chinese full name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Farmer</td>
<td>Hǎidōng region</td>
<td>Huálóng</td>
<td>Gǎndū/sKam.mdo</td>
<td>青海省海东地区化隆回族自治县甘都镇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Farmer</td>
<td>Huángnán TAP</td>
<td>Tóngrén</td>
<td>Jiāwú/rGyal.wo</td>
<td>青海省黄南藏族自治州同仁县加吾镇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Nomad</td>
<td>Huángnán TAP</td>
<td>Zékù</td>
<td>Wénjiā/Bon.rgyal</td>
<td>青海省黄南藏族自治州泽库县文家乡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hǎinán TAP</td>
<td>Tóngdè</td>
<td>Jūnmáchāng</td>
<td>青海省海南藏族自治州同德县军马场</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Nomad</td>
<td>Ābà TAP</td>
<td>Ruò’èrgāi</td>
<td>Tángkè/Thang.skor</td>
<td>四川省阿爸藏族自治州若尔盖县唐克镇</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the North Nomad dialect area, the two main sites listed were visited due to the limited availability of interview subjects, and data were also collected in Zékù county town. In the South Farmer dialect area, two of the interviews were conducted in Tóngrén county town.

Aside from those interviews conducted in county towns, and a handful in the largest town in each of Tángkè and Wénjiā townships, all data were gathered in Amdo Tibetan villages.

3.2 Instruments

Two instruments were used to collect data from each participant: a sociolinguistic questionnaire and recorded text testing (RTT). The questionnaire was administered in two parts: before the RTT, participants gave informed consent and data such as age, gender, and social category, and then were asked screening questions to ensure that data were only collected from mother-tongue speakers of the appropriate dialects. After the RTT, subjects answered questions designed to give information about their attitudes toward the language in the recordings. The questions were asked in vernacular Amdo Tibetan. The questionnaire and a translation of its questions into English are included in appendix A.

The recorded text testing procedure was based on the RTT-Retelling method described in Kluge 2006. Each listener listened to up to four recordings. Each recording was played first in its entirety to give the listener the opportunity to become familiar with the speaker’s dialect and the content of the recorded text. The recording was played a second time with pauses after every sentence or two. During the pause, the playback device was paused and the listener had to retell the part of the recording they had just heard. Listeners were allowed to either mimic the speaker word for word or retell the content in their own words. Each test was scored by listening for words or phrases with certain meanings in the response.

The responses which were deemed correct were determined ahead of time by testing a “hometown panel” of eight educated Amdo speakers in Xīníng. Any part of the recording that was successfully retold by all eight was considered correct, and subjects in the field testing were scored based on how well their responses corresponded to those correct responses.

The first recording was chosen from the popular Amdo Tibetan-language television drama series Yesterday’s story (Kha.sang.gi gtam.rgyud), and most test subjects were found to be familiar with the series and its characters. The language in the recording is Low Media AT; in particular, it is as close to pure colloquial Amdo (North Nomad dialect, specifically, that spoken in Hénán Mongolian Autonomous County) as could be found in media products. One South Nomad speaker reported, “Everybody likes Yesterday’s story because they speak like we do.” Based on reports like that, it was expected that all listeners would have very little trouble understanding the recording, and, by extension, other Low Media
AT products. This recording was used to teach the test procedure and screen out poor test takers. This test was not scored formally, but if test-takers were able to mimic or tell back parts of the recording by the end, they were considered to have passed the screening test.

The second recording was a one-minute stretch of dialogue from the Amdo Tibetan translation of the Hollywood movie *Braveheart* (*dPa'.bo'i chod sens*). This movie was familiar to 36 percent of the test subjects, and the language of the chosen dialogue was also of the register we are calling Low Media AT.

The third recording was the narrated introduction to the movie *Braveheart*. The language of this part of the movie is Mid-level Media AT.

The fourth recording was a reading of the Literary Tibetan description of the movie *Braveheart* which is found on the back of the movie’s packaging. The reading was done by a highly literate speaker of a North Nomad dialect who is widely considered to read clearly and beautifully.

This text was pure Literary Tibetan in a North Nomad Amdo pronunciation, hence, High Media AT.

It was assumed that test subjects who scored poorly on the Mid-level Media AT RTT would score even worse on the High Media AT RTT, so those who scored below 50 percent on the Mid-level Media AT test were not made to take the High Media AT test. This assumption was validated by the results: the vast majority of points in Figure 1 are below and to the right of the dashed line which represents an equal score on tests B (the Mid-level Media AT RTT) and C (the High Media AT RTT).

Transcriptions and translations of the four texts, along with those words and phrases which represented correct answers, are included in appendix B.

### 3.3 Subject selection

The factors hypothesized to be most relevant to comprehension of the various registers of Media Amdo Tibetan were gender, age, and level of education. Discussions with Amdo Tibetans familiar with the education system and its recent development led to dividing age into two categories: age less than 30 and age greater than or equal to 30. Education level was likewise divided into two categories: 0–3 years
of school, and 4–6 years of school. Sixth grade is the end of primary school, and knowledge of the Tibetan-track schooling system’s curriculum led to the assumption that students who continued their schooling into middle school would have adequate ability in Literary Tibetan to be able to understand all registers of Media Amdo Tibetan sufficiently.

With three factors, each of which has two categories, we required individuals in eight \(2^3 = 8\) strata. At each location, in each stratum, 4–6 individuals were sought based on a goal of 30–40 individuals from each sub-dialect. In practice, contacts in each location led us to test subjects, and we interviewed whoever was available and fit into the strata for which we still needed subjects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Sampling strata</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>0–3 Years of School</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age &lt; 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age ≥ 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age &lt; 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age ≥ 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Actual numbers of subjects tested and interviewed are reported in section 4.1.

### 3.4 Fieldwork timeline

Permission was obtained from Qīnghǎi Normal University to carry out the fieldwork portions of this study on a student visa during the period September 2009–June 2010. The research progressed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Fieldwork schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November–December 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.5 Analysis

Concepts which relate to the question of language attitudes are ethnolinguistic identity, attitudes towards a language variety’s speakers, and attitudes about the language variety itself. Subjects’ responses to questions on these topics are discussed in section 4.2.

Results from the recorded text tests in the three registers of Media AT were recorded as raw scores (e.g., 18/25) and then evaluated as percentages. The raw scores were useful for interpreting the percentages when an individual’s results deviated from observed patterns. Scores were then examined graphically and statistical calculations were performed using a statistical software package called R.\(^{12}\) Results are reported in section 4.3.

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\(^{12}\)http://www.r-project.org/
In addition, anecdotal evidence in support of a high level of comprehension of Low Media AT was provided by the ease with which the researchers—one of whom is not a native speaker of AT—were able to converse in vernacular AT with people in all locations. This evidence did not figure into the calculations, but did put an optimistic slant on our evaluation of the numerical data.

4 Results

4.1 Sample population

It was difficult to find subjects in some of the sampling strata. Specifically, in the fieldwork locations, educated Tibetans were few and far between, especially educated females. There is no reason to suppose that the situation is different in other villages in other locations. Table 4 gives the actual numbers of subjects interviewed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Numbers of subjects interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0–3 Years of School</th>
<th>4–6 Years of School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Farmer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Age &lt; 30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Age &lt; 30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Age ≥ 30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Age ≥ 30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Farmer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Age &lt; 30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Age &lt; 30</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Age ≥ 30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Nomad</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Age &lt; 30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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<td>Female Age &lt; 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male Age ≥ 30</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Age ≥ 30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Nomad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Age &lt; 30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Age &lt; 30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Age ≥ 30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Age ≥ 30</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of these 111 subjects, three did not pass the RTT screening test: one older North Farmer male, one younger North Farmer female, and one younger North Nomad female, all with 0–3 years of education. They could therefore not answer questions about the recordings in the post-RTT interview. Hence, the post-RTT questionnaire was administered to 108 subjects.

One younger South Nomad male with 4–6 years of education was clearly nervous during the screening test. We decided to consider him to have passed it, but then he told us during the first test that he has hearing problems, so he was excused from the RTT portion of the interview. However, because he was able to listen to some of the recording, he was asked the post-RTT questions.
Of the 107 subjects who completed the Low Media AT RTT, some opted to stop participating in the recorded text testing after that first test. Those for whom we have scores on the Low Media AT RTT, but not the Mid-level or High Media AT RTTs are one older North Farmer male and two younger North Nomad females, all with 0–3 years of education. Hence, 104 subjects completed the Mid-level Media AT RTT.

Finally, as discussed in section 3.2, a number of subjects were not required to take the High Media AT RTT, based on their performances on the Mid-level Media AT RTT. In addition, sometimes a subject was excused from taking the High Media AT RTT in order not to discourage other potential test-takers who were present. In total, 51 subjects completed the High Media AT RTT. Table 5 summarizes the numbers of subjects who completed the various RTTs; “A” is the Low Media AT RTT, “B” is the Mid-level Media AT RTT, and “C” is the High Media AT RTT.
Table 5. Numbers of subjects who completed the RTTs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recorded Text Test</th>
<th>0–3 Years of School</th>
<th>4–6 Years of School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age &lt; 30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age ≥ 30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age &lt; 30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age ≥ 30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Farmer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age &lt; 30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age ≥ 30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age &lt; 30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age ≥ 30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Nomad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age &lt; 30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age ≥ 30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age &lt; 30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age ≥ 30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Nomad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age &lt; 30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age ≥ 30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age &lt; 30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age ≥ 30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was decided to treat age as a continuous variable instead of a categorical one. This allowed us to collapse the age categories and just look at the rows labeled “Total” in Table 5. There were not enough subjects in enough of the categories to test whether years of schooling made a difference in the RTT scores. Another way to divide up the data that allows for meaningful results is to group subjects into “educated” (one or more years of school) and “uneducated” (no schooling at all) categories. This grouping is based on the fact that the Tibetan-track school system introduces students to Literary Tibetan right from the start, so a student who only attended first grade will have been introduced to Literary Tibetan grammatical structures and vocabulary in a way that gives that subject an advantage over an uneducated subject when it comes to comprehending those features that distinguish High and Mid-level Media AT from Low Media AT or vernacular AT. Dividing subjects into groups based on whether or not they had attended school leaves us with the numbers of subjects in Table 6.
Table 6. Numbers and ages of educated and uneducated subjects who completed the RTTs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recorded Text Test</th>
<th>Uneducated</th>
<th>Educated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>20–74</td>
<td>20–53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>19–48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>18–69</td>
<td>18–57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>20–46</td>
<td>20–33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>23–40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>17–72</td>
<td>17–39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>21–69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>20–75</td>
<td>55–75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 4.2 contains analysis of the results of the sociolinguistic questionnaire on language attitudes, and section 4.3 contains analysis of the scores on the recorded text tests.

4.2 Language attitudes

Responses to questions about ethnolinguistic identity indicate that the test subjects identified the speakers in the recordings as fellow Amdo Tibetans. Attitudes were overwhelmingly positive towards the speakers themselves: question 34 asked if the speakers spoke Tibetan well, and the vast majority of responses were affirmative. Questions 42–43 asked whether subjects would allow their children to marry the children of someone from where the speakers were from, and why, and again most answers were affirmative, with reasons like “they’re Tibetans” or “they speak Tibetan well” being given. The only hint of negativity is found in responses showing that some subjects identified the speakers as being from a distant part of the Amdo region. This demonstrates their knowledge that the Amdo region is vast and that it is home to a variety of dialects, but there is no reason to conclude that it bodes poorly for the acceptance of Media AT.

Questions 44–45 asked whether the subjects had gone to where they thought the speakers in the recordings were from, or whether people from that area had ever travelled to the subjects’ locations. Most subjects had never travelled outside their home areas, but they took the question of whether someone from the speakers’ area had come to theirs quite seriously: they tried to think whether they personally knew or had heard of someone from that place who had come to their area. In many cases, they could not think of any such travellers, but the fact that they took the question so seriously suggests there is no reason why someone would not make such a trip. Specifically, we can conclude that there is
nothing in their attitudes about speakers from other parts of the Amdo region that would prevent such travel.

Questions 40–41 asked where listeners thought the speakers were from, and why they thought so. Table 7 summarizes whether subjects thought the actors were from the same or a similar dialect area to their own, from a different area, whether they didn't know, and the numbers of those who did not respond.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From same/similar</th>
<th>From different</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Farmer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Farmer</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Nomad</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Nomad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned in section 1.2, Nomad pronunciation is preferred in Media AT. Most Amdo media is produced in Xīníng, the capital of Qīnghǎi province, so most Nomad speakers in media products are from the North Nomad dialect area. When North Nomad speakers are unavailable, speakers from the South Farmer area are also used, because that dialect is also considered fairly standard. It can be seen from Table 7 that subjects accurately judged where the speakers were from: South Farmer and North Nomad subjects tended to think the speakers were from a similar dialect area, and North Farmer and South Nomad subjects tended to think the speakers were from a different dialect area. An identification of someone as from another area does not necessarily indicate a negative attitude towards that person’s speech: the subject’s opinion of his or her own vernacular must also be taken into account. North Farmer subjects, for example, often commented that the speakers spoke better Tibetan than they themselves do, indicating positive attitudes towards Media AT. In contrast, South Nomad speakers did not appear to have a low view of their own dialect, so perhaps they would prefer their own vernacular over Media AT.

Attitudes towards the various registers of Media AT were also overwhelmingly positive. Questions 35–36 asked if listeners liked the way the speakers in the recordings spoke, and why. The speakers’ accents were identified, especially by subjects in Qīnghǎi, as “standard,” “true,” or “pure” Amdo Tibetan. Most subjects did not differentiate in their responses between the registers, so we conclude that attitudes towards the two higher registers were more positive than might have been expected, given their low intelligibility. It was not uncommon for subjects who scored poorly on the Mid-level Media AT test to identify its language as “Literary Tibetan,” despite its vernacular features, and then mention their lack of education as the reason they couldn’t understand it.

Tibetan culture values literacy as an ideal, even though literacy has never been widespread. It can be expected that even though most Tibetans would not report (or hold) negative attitudes towards the more literary registers of their language, they would not make use of products in those registers if the products were too difficult to understand.

Those subjects who differentiated among the registers in their responses reported liking Low Media AT and not liking the higher registers. In addition, the identification of Mid-level Media AT as ‘Literary Tibetan’ suggests that, in the mind of Amdo Tibetans of a low education level, there are two registers to their language: vernacular (including Low Media AT) and literary (including Mid-level and High Media AT).

As part of the “hometown” pre-testing to determine the correct answers for the retelling, as described in section 3.2, literate Amdo Tibetans were also interviewed, and four of the eight had negative attitudes towards Low Media AT, calling it “too vernacular.” The other four had positive attitudes towards it.

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13Of the ten South Farmer subjects who identified the speakers as being from a different area, all but two thought the speakers were from the North Nomad area.
Further research into the literate population’s language attitudes is outside the scope of this investigation.

4.3 Comprehension

4.3.1 High Media AT

Fifty-one subjects completed the High Media AT RTT (“test C”). Their mean score was 40 percent and their scores’ standard deviation was 18 percent. A standard deviation greater than 12 percent on a recorded text test often indicates acquired intelligibility (Blair 1990:25), and, indeed, schooling plays a role in an Amdo Tibetan’s comprehension of Literary Tibetan in print form, or of High Media AT, which is the same language in audio form. Figure 2 makes use of box-and-whisker plots to represent the relationship between education and the results on the High Media AT RTT as follows: the top and bottom of the box represent the upper quartile (Q3: the number below which lies 75 percent of the data) and the lower quartile (Q1: the number below which lies 25 percent of the data) respectively; the solid horizontal line inside each box represents the median; the “whiskers” above and below the boxes extend to the most extreme data points which are no more than 1.5 times the inter-quartile range (Q3–Q1) from the box; and circles represent outlying data points.

As can be seen from Figure 2, the test results are much closer together for those subjects who have never attended school: their standard deviation is 12 percent, compared to 20 percent for those subjects who have attended school.

Regardless of the amount of variation in test scores, the scores on the High Media AT RTT were too low to consider High Media AT to be an appropriate language for communicating with Amdo Tibetans who are not highly educated.
4.3.2 **Mid-level Media AT**

One hundred and four subjects completed the Mid-level Media AT RTT (“test B”). Their mean score was 46 percent and their scores’ standard deviation was 23 percent. It was hypothesized that variables such as location, gender, age, and education might influence a subject’s comprehension of Mid-level Media AT, so statistical testing was performed.

Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), with age as the covariant, indicated that a subject’s gender and whether a subject had attended school or not both correlated with statistically significant differences in scores on the Mid-level Media AT RTT at the 99 percent confidence level, as did the subject’s age, but only for subjects in the North Nomad dialect area. The variation in scores among educated and uneducated male and female subjects is represented graphically in Figure 3.

Means and standard deviations for the scores in each category are given in Table 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Uneducated</th>
<th>Educated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subjects</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Uneducated</th>
<th>Educated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subjects</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The high standard deviations show that more is going on here, even among uneducated subjects.
Figure 4 illustrates the correlation between score and age for subjects from the North Nomad dialect area.

![Graphs showing correlation between score and age for North Nomad subjects][1]

**Figure 4.** Mid-level Media AT RTT scores vs. age for North Nomad subjects.

The trends illustrated in Figure 4 appear to be that subjects under the age of thirty did much better than subjects above that age, and subjects under the age of fifty did better than subjects above that age, though this is more evident for educated subjects than for uneducated ones, and for females than for males.

Due to the nature of Mid-level Media AT, being neither Literary Tibetan nor vernacular AT and thus found only in modern media, one can speculate that varying degrees of exposure to Media AT explain some of the variation illustrated in Figures 3 and 4. Unfortunately, data on media use were not collected.

As with High Media AT, regardless of the amount of variation in test scores, the scores on the Mid-level Media AT RTT were quite low. Only 16 percent of subjects scored above 70 percent on the test, and only eight scored above 80 percent. Mid-level Media AT cannot be considered an appropriate language for communicating with Amdo Tibetans who are not highly educated.

### 4.3.3 Low Media AT

One hundred and seven subjects completed the Low Media AT RTT (“test A”). Their mean score was 77 percent and their scores’ standard deviation was 17 percent.

As with the Mid-level Media AT RTT scores, ANCOVA indicated that a subject’s gender and whether a subject was educated or not correlated with a statistically significant difference in scores on the Low Media AT RTT at the 99 percent confidence level, and there was also a correlation between scores and subjects’ ages at the 95 percent confidence level. A lack of correlation with location suggests either that...
Amdo dialects are all sufficiently similar so as not to significantly hinder comprehension, or that exposure to Low Media AT is widespread enough to overcome dialectal differences. Figure 5 illustrates the relationship between education, gender, age, and scores on the Low Media AT RTT.

![Graph showing the relationship between score and age](image)

(A score of 21.7% for a twenty-three year old uneducated female is obscured by the graph’s legend.)

Figure 5. Scores on Low Media AT RTT vs. education, gender, and age.

The line on the graph shows the relationship between score and age; its slope is -0.3%/year.

Removing age from consideration, the relationships between education, gender, and scores on the Low Media AT RTT are illustrated in Figure 6.
Means and standard deviations for the scores in each category are given in Table 9.

**Table 9. Low Media AT RTT results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Uneducated</th>
<th>Educated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subjects</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lower quartile (Q1), median, and upper quartile (Q3) values are given in Table 10.

**Table 10. Low Media AT RTT Q1, Median, and Q3 for gender and education groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Uneducated</th>
<th>Educated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q1 Median</td>
<td>Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fully 75 percent of educated males scored 81 percent or higher, as did half of the educated females, with a further 25 percent of educated females scoring 71 percent or higher. Half of uneducated males scored above 75 percent, with another 25 percent of uneducated males scoring 68 percent or higher. Scores for uneducated females were the lowest, with only half scoring 71 percent or higher.
One relevant question at this point is “How good does a score on this RTT have to be to indicate adequate comprehension?” Blair suggests that 80 percent is a good threshold “for most purposes” (1990:25). Casad states in reference to a particular study that “[a]ny threshold value within the range of 75 percent to 90 percent, therefore, seems plausible for separating easily understood dialects from those understood only with difficulty” (1974:85). He concludes in general that “the need to validate the particular threshold range postulated for a given study seems obvious” (1974:86).

The researchers’ experience during this particular investigation may shed some light on the question. As mentioned in section 3.5, the researchers had little difficulty communicating with the vast majority of test subjects. The researchers’ speech would fall within the definition of Low Media AT: our phonology and grammatical structures were the same as those found in some variety of vernacular AT, and lexical items were almost entirely vernacular as well, though some more formal lexical items were also likely used, and the author is not a native speaker of Amdo Tibetan. Only in a handful of occasions, most notably in the North Farmer dialect area, was the assistance of local speakers helpful for communication. In those circumstances, among the local speakers present at the test site, there was no shortage of those who could understand the researchers and rephrase a sentence into the North Farmer AT vernacular.

This experience suggests that high intelligibility of Low Media AT is actually quite widespread throughout the Amdo region. Given the high scores of the subjects who had attended any amount of school, we conclude that Low Media AT is adequately understood by that population.

For subjects who had attended no school, the numbers, especially for females, are lower than would normally be considered adequate on an RTT. In light of the ease with which the researchers could communicate even with members of this population, it can be suggested that features of the recorded text itself may be at fault: the text was set in a foreign land, hundreds of years in the past, and contained historical and cultural references which would have been unfamiliar to many of the listeners. The text was chosen specifically because of those features, to test the suitability of Low Media AT for use in translated stories from other cultures, because, for example, the vast majority of movies available in Media AT are translations from Chinese of either Chinese or Western films. Another factor, particularly for uneducated women, could be a lack of experience and comfort with any sort of testing context. The conclusion that may be drawn from these results, however, is that Low Media AT may not be adequately intelligible to an uneducated audience—especially uneducated females—for use in that sort of media. In contrast, the familiar cultural setting of native productions such as Yesterday’s Story, part of which was used as the screening RTT, appears to aid intelligibility enough to make Low Media AT an appropriate choice for such products.

5 Conclusions

The goal of this research has been to determine which segments of the Amdo population demonstrate adequate comprehension and positive attitudes towards Media Amdo Tibetan to suggest that it could serve as a reference dialect for meeting non-print language development needs.

The research questions, repeated from section 2, were as follows:

1. Language attitudes
   - What are people's attitudes toward the language and the other content of the broadcasts they are watching/hearing, at both higher and lower registers?

2. Comprehension
   - How well do people comprehend the broadcasts they are watching/hearing?
     1. Depending on register?
     2. Depending on location?
     3. Depending on social category? (sex, age, education, occupation)
On the first question, our investigation found widespread positive attitudes towards Media AT. Those test subjects who differentiated among the registers of Media AT felt positive about Low Media AT, and negative about Mid-level and High Media AT.

On the question of comprehension, both High and Mid-level Media AT were not adequately intelligible to recommend their use in products designed to be understood by the not-highly-educated majority of Amdo Tibetans. Low Media AT, on the other hand, is adequately intelligible to recommend its use throughout the Amdo region, with the caution that comprehension can be expected to drop for an uneducated audience, and especially for uneducated females, when the content includes elements of an unfamiliar culture.

### 6 Recommendations

Widespread comprehension of Low Media Amdo Tibetan, combined with positive attitudes towards it, make it reasonable to recommend the use of Low Media AT in non-print language development in the Amdo region.

Although the vast Amdo region is homogeneous in many ways, the results of this investigation would rest on firmer footing if more data were collected from more sites and more subjects. In particular, it would be helpful to have data from the western and northern parts of the North Nomad dialect area, and from Guoluo TAP, Gannan TAP, and farther into Sichuan province. As mentioned in section 1.1, in or bordering on the Amdo region, there are Tibetans who speak tonal dialects of Tibetan in Yushu TAP, Gannan TAP and Sichuan province, as well as speakers of rGyalrongic or Qiangic languages, who are reported to use Amdo Tibetan as a language of wider communication. And in Huangnan TAP, there are people of other ethnic groups who speak Amdo Tibetan, and that is likely true of other parts of the Amdo region as well. Extension of this investigation to those populations would be welcome.

Among Amdo Tibetans, preliminary data on language attitudes suggest a possible split between literates and illiterates, with the positive attitudes of illiterates towards lower registers coming into conflict with the negative attitudes of some literates towards language that is “too vernacular” for certain purposes, including public presentations like audio-visual media. Further investigation of that issue would also contribute to the complex question of appropriate approaches to language development for Amdo Tibetans.

More clarity could be brought to the question of comprehension of Low Media AT by Amdo Tibetans who have never attended school, by testing a wider variety of media products and investigating which lexical, grammatical, or contextual features make the texts more or less intelligible.
Appendix A: Sociolinguistic Questionnaire

This appendix contains the questionnaire which was administered to each participant in the RTT. The questions which were asked before the RTT appear first, followed by a translation. Below that are the questions which were asked after the RTT, along with a translation. Finally, additional information which was recorded in English about each interview is presented.

The practical spelling conventions used for vernacular Amdo Tibetan on the pages of the questionnaire were decided upon by different members of the research team. The spelling does not always reflect the author’s preferences, nor is it always consistent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. བོད་སྲིད་ཀྱིས་འོ་བེད་་བོད།</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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Figure 7. Sociolinguistic questionnaire, page 1.
**Translation of the introductory paragraphs**

How are you? My name is _______. This is _______. We come from Qinghai Normal University. We are researching what the Tibetan language is like in different places. Today, you can help us. Is it ok if we first ask you about your own situation?

These questions are not difficult. We will ask about you and your language. You don’t need to panic. This is not the same as a school test. There is no correct or incorrect. It is fine if you answer according to your own opinion. Suppose you don’t want to answer a question, it’s ok if you don’t answer. This will take between thirty and forty-five minutes. But if something comes up that you need to do, it’s ok if you leave. Will it work for you to help us?

( ) It will work. ( ) It will not work.
Translation of the numbered questions

1. Number
8. What is your name?
9. Male / female
10. How old are you?
11. Are you married?
12. (If married) How many children do you have?
13. What work do you do? / did you do?
14. How many years did you study Literary Tibetan?
15. What village were you born in?
16. Where did you grow up?
17. Where do you live now?
18. Have you lived anywhere else for a year or more? Where? When? How many years did you live there?
19. Which language did you first know how to speak?
20. Do you know how to speak other languages? Which?
21. Which is the [language you speak the] best?
22. Which is the second best?
23. Which is the third best?
24. Have you seen this movie [Braveheart]?
   Now is it ok if I ask you about your parents?
25. Where was your father born?
26. Which ethnic group is your father?
27. Which language did your father speak when he was young?
28. When you were young, which language did your father speak with you?
29. Where was your mother born?
30. Which ethnic group is your mother?
31. Which language did your mother speak when she was young?
32. When you were young, which language did your mother speak with you?
33. When you were young, which language did your parents speak to each other?

Translation of the concluding paragraphs, which introduce the RTT

There are some stories in this [mp3 player]. If you would like to listen to this, we will let you listen. After listening to each story, will it work for you to tell us that story in your own spoken language? What we need is not the meaning of the story, it's the words.

Suppose you don't want to talk, it's ok if you don't talk. Or if you don't understand the meaning, it's also ok if you don't talk. This will take probably twenty minutes.

This is the listening device. Let's listen.
### Post-RTT questionnaire

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<tr>
<th>دکھنے کی آئیے</th>
<th>(آپ کا نام)</th>
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<tr>
<td>34. ایک ہدایت ہے کہ ہم نے بند نہیں بند کیا</td>
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<td>35. (خوشحال)</td>
<td>ہمیں دل پھیرنے ہمارے ساتھ ہمایوں کی</td>
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<td>36. (خوشحال)</td>
<td>ہمیں</td>
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<td>37. ہم کارکردہ ہے ہم نے ہمارے ساتھ ہمایوں کی</td>
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Figure 9. Post-RTT questionnaire.
Translation of the post-RTT numbered questions

34. Do these people speak well?
35. (If not well) Do you like their way of speaking Tibetan?
36. (If not like) Why?
37. Could you understand everything? Could you understand most of it? Or could you understand a little bit?
38. Is the way they speak the same as the way you speak? If the same, completely the same? A little bit the same? Or completely different?
39. (If not the same) What is not the same?
40. Where do you think these people are from?
41. How do you know this?
42. Suppose your child and a person from that place want to get married, what would you think?
43. Why?
44. Have you gone to that place?
45. Do people from that place come here?

Translation of the concluding remarks

Thank-you for helping us. My hope is that what we have done together will be beneficial. Now [we’re] finished.

Additional information which was recorded in English

1. Number
2. Location
3. Date and time
4. Interpreter's name
5. Test text order
6. .mp3 file number
7. Notes
Screening 1. Does not use Literary Tibetan for daily work: ok/not ok
Screening 2. Studied Tibetan in school for less than 7 years: ok/not ok
Screening 3. Speaks Tibetan either first or best: ok/not ok
Screening 4. At least one Tibetan parent and that parent spoke Tibetan with them: ok/not ok
46. Were there any distractions or interruptions that interfered with the flow of the interview or seemed to influence some of the responses.
47. Did the subject seem to understand the language of elicitation?
48. Did the subject seem shy or fairly confident about expressing their opinions?
49. Other observations about the interview.
Appendix B: Recorded Texts

This appendix contains transcriptions in IPA, glosses in Literary Tibetan and English, and free translations in English of the four recorded texts, along with those words and phrases which represented correct answers to the RTT-Retelling. Items in parentheses were considered optional, and alternate wordings of correct answers are separated by slashes. Segments are numbered sequentially in groups that indicate which segments of the story were played between pauses during the test. For example, “A2d” would indicate text A, second segment, line d (i.e. fourth line).

The first text was used for teaching the test procedure and screening out poor test-takers. It was not scored, so no indication is given of what sorts of answers were considered correct, as discussed in section 3.2.

Screening text

Source: Kha.sang.gi gtam.rgyud [Yesterday's story] Episode 5 ca. 504–560s.

aro tɕʰə-ȵi=ɣə soχ ʑu tsʰɐɾ=ə=tʰe (S1a)
hey 2-DU=ERG cattle milk.PFV finish = YNQ = DIR.YNQ
Hey, have you two finished milking the cows?

o tsʰɐɾ-tʰa aba (S2a)
interj finish-DIR father
Oh, (we've) finished, father.

a a teren niŋi lix ti=a dzəv= dzəo tsəve=zix ŋgor=tʰa (S3a)
Ah, ah, today I was a little late gathering the sheep.

ajo e (S4a)
interj interj
Oh!

aba teren teren caŋ=ŋa ŋo tɕʰo figorigo fidziŋ=ɛ da=jo=kə mo (S4b)
father today today afternoon LOC 2s around run = NF DUR = IPFV interj = IMMED
Father, today, this afternoon, you've been running around a bit, hey?
Your cough still hasn’t healed,

don’t go running around, ok?

Oh, there’s nothing wrong with me.

I’ve said I’m going to tell the children a story tonight.

(I went to) see about that a bit.

Hey, I have something to say to you:

Now, whether it’s the sound-box or the sound-recorder,

or a small box that has language,
it's not ok if it's brought together with me.

Yes, yes, father, yes, yes.

Ok.

Today a small tractor came to the door of Tado’s family’s shop.

Many people weren’t allowed to gather.

What could it be?

Oh, that would just have been Tado getting some merchandise.
If it was just Tado getting merchandise, that's no reason for people to gather.

Children were making loud noises, they were happy, they were very happy.

**Text A**


**Correct response(s) for segment A1**

- [fidotsa] ‘Wait a second!’
- [tɕʰi ɸɕɛkono təɾɨka] ‘what you were saying’
- [ŋa tʰapa jən] ‘I agree’

Indeed, as you know,

those people have farmland and fortresses.
Correct response(s) for segment A2
- [ɾetʂa] ‘indeed’
- [tɕʰi xʰidʑiɣa] ‘as you know’

tɕʰi ta le na ci = yə nəŋkʰa te = yə (A3a)

If you do that, it will be very dangerous.

Correct response(s) for segment A3
- [nəŋkʰa tɕʰeyə] ‘very dangerous’

te na məŋtʂʰik = kə keβ = a xʰə = sʰon = no (A4a)

In that case, (those) who died during the time of war,

məŋtsʰoχ tsaŋma nəŋkʰa me = sʰon = no = o = re (A4b)

all the masses, did they not face danger?

Correct response(s) for segment A4
- [te na] / [tamozix jən na] ‘in that case’
- [məŋtsʰikkuβa] ‘during the time of war’
- [xʰasʰonno(yə) məŋtsʰoχ tsaŋma] ‘all the masses who died’
- [nəŋkʰa me(sʰon)na.əɾe] ‘did (they) not face danger?’

m̥ ŋe tə bze = namən (A5a)

Interj 1S.ERG that say.PFV = DECL.EGO.NEG

Hm, I didn’t say that.

Correct response(s) for segment A5
- [ŋe tə bzenəmən] ‘I didn’t say that’

re = tʂa hdzəkʰup nda = yə koŋ oχ wer səm = a (A6a)

Indeed, all the people of this country from the greatest to the least,
there is nobody who is proud of (their) country.

Correct response(s) for segment A6
- [koŋ oy ɾer soma] ‘greatest to the least’
- [dzakoŋ kep ndəxʰi səɾnəzɨk mekə] ‘there is nobody who is proud of (their) country’

These nobles and England’s nobles all

Correct response(s) for segment A7
- [xkaʃʁ ndəɾika] ‘these nobles’
- [fijaŋɡəlɛŋ ʁa ɡaʃəɾx tsʰəŋmi] ‘England’s nobles’

Moreover, these nobles feud among themselves.

Isn’t that true?

Correct response(s) for segment A8
- [ndə tsʰəŋmaŋə nəŋme jekə] ‘these all feud among themselves’
Suppose you were to offend both sides,

\[ \text{Suppose you were to offend both sides,} \]

\[ \text{you would have no choice but to be on death road.} \]

**Correct response(s) for segment A9**
- [kete tɕʰi ɕoχ niya pʰoχtʰi x tʰoŋ ra] ‘suppose you were to offend both sides’
- [tɕʰo tɕʰə lɐm matoχ jo=dʑə=ma=re] ‘you would have no choice but to be on death road’

\[ \text{Oh, we all have to die.} \]

**Correct response(s) for segment A10**
- [ə-tɕʰo tsʰaŋma xʰə go=nəɾe] ‘we all have to die’

\[ \text{Indeed, it’s how one dies and what one dies for that one must look at.} \]

**Correct response(s) for segment A11**
- [tɕʰəxʰi xʰə] ‘how one dies’
- [xʰə ton] ‘what one dies for’
- [ta gonare] ‘(one) must look at’

\[ \text{I’m not one who flees in fear.} \]
Correct response(s) for segment A12

- [ŋa ɕtɕʰoχ xʰorzɨx mən] 'I'm not one who flees in fear'
- [əŋiɣe jəla tʂɛnno tɕʰɨx ra tɕʰɨx] 'we two think the same'

Indeed, we must support the nobles.

Correct response(s) for segment A13

- [ɾetʂa a-teʰo katsək=kə dzap ɕtɕʰor go] 'indeed, we must support the nobles'

Nobles. Ha ha.

I ask you,
What is noble status?

Correct response(s) for segment A14
- [xkətʂək=ka tʰoptʰeŋ tsʰə=ziŋ xkətʂək=ka tʰoptʰeŋ tɕʰə=zɨx ɾe] 'what is noble status?'

Because you have noble status,

tɕʰo ʂkətʂək=kə tʰoptʰəŋ o=no ɕtɕɛŋgə (A15a)
2S.DAT noble=GEN status have=NOM REASON

Because you have noble status,

tɕʰo sʰukəlɛŋ=gə dʑawo ndix tʰəp=nəɾe (A15b)
2S Scotland=GEN king stay able=DECL

you could be Scotland’s king.

Correct response(s) for segment A15
- [tɕʰo ʂkətʂək=ka tʰoptʰeŋ ono ɕtɕɛŋgə] ‘because you have noble status’
- [dʑawo ndix tʰəpnəɾe] ‘could be king’

Indeed, everyone does not follow the nobles.

Correct response(s) for segment A16
- [ɾe tʂa] / [jaŋ na ra] ‘indeed’ / ‘but’
- [ɲə tsʰəŋma kətʂək=ka ziy=ɑ ndʒəŋ=na=ma=re] ‘everyone does not follow the nobles’
- [χwawo ziy=ɑ ndʒəŋ=naɾe] '(they) follow a hero'
Everyone recognizes you.

They also respect you.

Correct response(s) for segment A17

• [ȵə tsʰaŋmaɣə tɕʰo tsəpkəɾ ɾa jela] ‘all people also respect you’

Suppose you were able to give freedom to everyone in Scotland,

they would all follow you.

I would likewise.

Because of a lack of consistency in the “hometown” panel’s retellings of segment A18, no response was scored for this segment.

Text B

Source: dPa’.bo'i chod sms [Braveheart] ca. 0:01:15–0:02:08.

The correct responses in this section are given in a register slightly lower than the text itself, though any response that had the same meaning as the one given, regardless of register, would have been considered correct.
I will tell you the story of William Wallace.

Correct response(s) for segment B1

- \[ŋe tɕʰətɕʰo xtamdʑəl ɸɕɛl\] 'I will tell you a story'

Correct response(s) for segment B2

- \[fįan̞gəlęŋə lɔrdzi\] 'England's history'

Correct response(s) for segment B3

- \[ɾe=tʃə lɔrdzi χwawo fımərsɔl je-kʰęŋ=ɡə dʒwij=nəɾe\] 'indeed, history has been written by those who murder heroes.'

Correct response(s) for segment B4

- \[ʃuŋəlęŋə ɾdzwawo cę̃x dʒi ɾdzəŋdʒəmə me\] 'after Scotland’s king died, there was no heir'
Cruelty great. GEN heretic = INDEF be
was a very cruel heretic.

Correct response(s) for segment B5

- [rdzawo ... fidixtsapa jən] 'king ... was cruel'

He proclaimed that he himself had the rank of Scotland’s king.

Correct response(s) for segment B6

- [kʰarga rdzawo kosʰa reŋ] 'He, the rank of king, for himself'
- [tɕʰapdʐɤχ ɸɕi] 'proclaimed'

Scotland’s nobles, for the sake of the rank of king,

Correct response(s) for segment B7

- [sʰukəlɛŋa rdzawoyə tɕʰɛtə] 'for the sake of Scotland’s king'
- [kʰo la fijapcem] 'prepared for battle against him'

Along with that, they were also feuding among themselves.

Correct response(s) for segment B8

- [nəŋmi je kokə] 'internal feuding'
At that time, for the sake of ending the war with Longlegs, they were invited to plan a strategy.

Not only was it not ok for them to bring swords,

it was not ok to bring [more followers] – that expectation was announced.

There was a farmer in that land named Malcolm Wallace.
Correct response(s) for segment B11

- [te na] ‘there’
- [ɕəŋwazɨx jokə] ‘there was a farmer’

kʰo = la reŋ = ge ceŋ sʰa teŋ (B12a)
He had his own land, and

ɾɐŋ=ge ɕəŋ sʰa tɐŋ (B12b)

Correct response(s) for segment B12

- [kʰəɾge ceŋ sʰa jokə] ‘he had land’
- [jɵhɐn zekono] ‘John QUOT:PROG:NOM’

Text C

Source: dPa’.bo’i chod sens [Braveheart] DVD package, back cover text, read by a native speaker of Amdo Tibetan from rKang.tsha county (剛察縣).

The correct responses in this section are given in a register somewhat mid-way between vernacular AT and Literary Tibetan, though any response that had the same meaning as the one given, regardless of register, would have been considered correct.

ti reb tɕəksam-bi di ndʑɨg=la (C1a)
At the end of the thirteenth century,

fiŋɡalɛn = ji fiɱɛχχɛi = la te = (C1b)
England = ERG military force = DAT rely on.PAST/FUT = NF
by means of miliary force, England
Correct response(s) for segment C1

- [tirsep tɕiksambə] ‘thirteenth century’
- [sʰukəlen həŋtə dəm] ‘took control of Scotland’

Correct response(s) for segment C2

- [sʰukələŋ gəŋkəl cə-pi tʰəmdzəŋ tʃəl tsʰə lə ndi] ‘Scotland’s hero, William’
- [tʰəmdzəŋ dʒəχ] ‘do battle’

Correct response(s) for segment C3

- [lo na tsʰəwən welen xwaleʂə=ji aŋbi pəntʃoknəm tən lən=tə] ‘William Wallace, together with his father’s companions,
- [rɨgne tən tʃəktsəl fijəŋ] ‘studied culture and military skills’
Although the situation at that time was extremely turbulent,

**Correct response(s) for segment C4**
- [xkap ti netsʰəl hatɕɐŋ saŋzaŋ tɕʰe na (j)aŋ] ‘while young’
- [welɛn xwalɛʂə=ji tɕʰoŋ ti=cçə ndzamo molɵn tɐŋ ňam=tə] (C5a)

**Correct response(s) for segment C5**
- [fidecccaça ntsʰowa rɵl na ndɵl mol] ‘wanted to live a happy life, however’
- [molɵn=ɟʝi ɸɕəɾgɵl ɸɕi-wi sʰoqtʂʰəm tɕɛl] (C6b)

**Correct response(s) for segment C6**
- [molonla netɕ ci] ‘accuse Murron’
- [sʰoqtʂʰəm tɕɛl] ‘sentenced to death’
By calling Scotland’s people to action, William Wallace called for action amidst Scotland’s people.

Correct response(s) for segment C7

- [fimeχwongi tʰamdzengə ngo tsem] ‘army starts a battle/war’
| 1. 1st person | INTERJ | interjection |
| 2. 2nd person | IPPV | imperfective aspect (Haller 2007:94, note 2) |
| 3. 3rd person | LOC | location, locative case |
| ATTR | attributive adjectivalizer | M | masculine gender |
| DAT | dative case | NEG | negation |
| DECL | declarative (Sun 1993:951) | NF | non-final verb conjunction |
| DIR | direct evidential (Sun 1993:952) | NOM | nominalizer |
| DOER | agentival nominalizer | NVOL | non-volitional (Haller 2004:137) | ^14 |
| DU | dual number | ORD | ordinal number |
| DUR | durative aspect (Sun 1993:982) | PAST | Literary Tibetan past tense |
| EGO | egophoric (Tournadre 2008:295) | PFV | perfective aspect (Haller 2007:94, note 2) |
| EMPH | emphasis | PL | plural |
| ERG | ergative case | PRF | perfect (Zeisler 2004:559–562) |
| EXIST | existential verb | PROG | progressive aspect (Sun 1993:975) |
| FROM | away/from directional (Ebihara 2005) | QUOT | quotative marker |
| FUT | future tense (Zeisler 2004:536–540) | REASON | reason |
| GEN | genitive case | S | singular |
| HON | honourific | TO | towards directional (Ebihara 2005) |
| IMMED | immediate evidential (Sun 1993:952) | TOP | Literary Tibetan topicalizer |
| IMV | imperative mood | VOL | volitional (Haller 2004:137, Tournadre 2008:291) |
| INC | inclusive (dual or plural) | YNQ | yes-no question marker |
| INDEF | indefinite article | |

^14 I also use the label “non-volitional” for the opposite of egophoric. If egophoric expresses “personal knowledge or intention on the part of the actual speaker” (Tournadre 2008:295), then it seems reasonable to apply the label “non-volitional” to that category which expresses denial of such knowledge or intention. My “non-volitional” thus includes Sung and Lha.byams rGyal’s (2005:52, 82) and Tournadre and Konchok Jiatso’s (2001:94–95) “objective.”
References


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