Linguistic repertoires and resources of Tibetan people in France: Representations and usages

Introduction

In this presentation, I will try to give an overview of the linguistic resources of Tibetan people in France, how they use different languages in the daily life, and how they consider these languages.

It is based on interviews made with 5 Tibetan families with 2 to 4 children, living nearby Paris. In these families, the parents came from different parts of Tibet, they arrived in South Asia as adults, stayed there a few years, and moved to France during the last 10 years. The children are born in Tibet, in India or in France. In two of the 5 families, the parents come from the same region in Tibet, and the three others are mixed families and each parent has a different mother language / mother dialect.

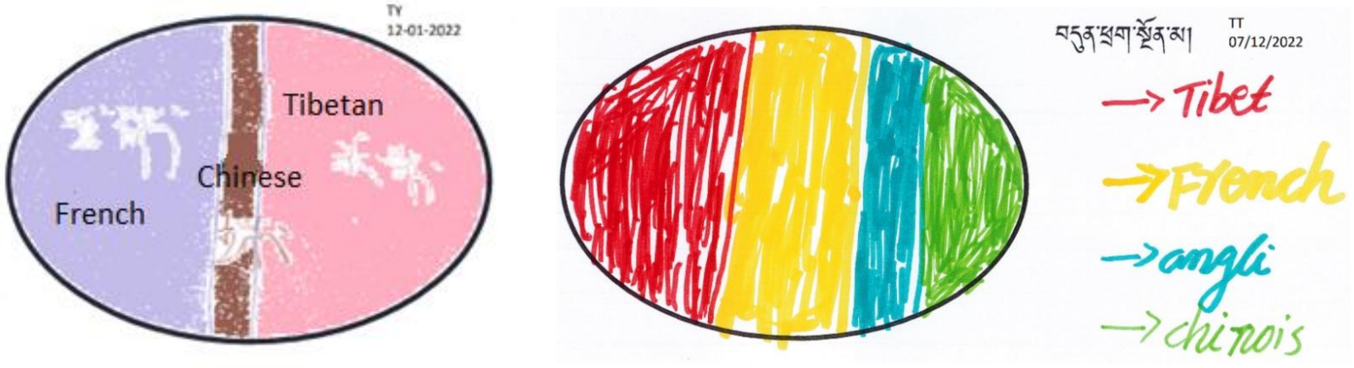
In the first part, i will describe the characteristics of the linguistic repertoire of the Tibetan people living in France, focusing on major, well recognised languages. And in the second part, i will focus on Tibetan language(s) and varieties, and how they are maintained and transmitted in exile.

1. Linguistic repertoires of Tibetan refugees in France

1.1. A daily use of three to four languages

These are the typical figures you get when you ask questions such as "What languages did you use last week?":

Fig. 1 བདུན་ཕྲག་སྔོན་མ་སྐད་ཡིག་ག་རེ་ག་རེ་བེད་སྤྱོད་བཏང་པ་ཡིན། **What languages did you use last week ?**



a. Woman working in a restaurant, Education level: Primary school

b. Woman in training as a caregiver, Education level: University

Distribution in the daily life domains:

- **At home** and with the family: they use mostly or exclusively Tibetan (some basic use of English and/or Chinese related to the children's homework)
- For the **communication with the administration and the institutions**: they use mainly French (+ some use of English and/or Chinese with automatic translation tools or to get help)
- **At work**, for the communication with colleagues, customers and employer: they make use of all the possible linguistic resources available to them, depending on the hearer and the situation.

Distribution according to the medium:

- **Written Tibetan** is not used as an intrafamilial communication language. It is either not well mastered by the children, or by the parents, or by both.

(1) PT ད་དཔེ་ལེན་རྒྱུ་ན། ཁྱེད་རང་རེད། ཁྱེད་རང་གི་ང་ལ་བོད་ཡིག་སྐད་ནས་འཕྲིན་ཐུང་ཅིག་བཏང་ཡོད་ན། ངས་འདི་ལ་ལན་རྒྱག་ཐུབ་ཀྱི་ཡོད་མ་རེད། (...) ཀློག་ཐུབ་ཀྱི་ཡོད་རེད། ད་ཕར་འ་འབྲི་དགོས་བསམ་ན་དག་ཆ་ཡའི་གོ་གི་མ་རེད་དྭ།

For instance, you: You sent me a message in written Tibetan, and i couldn't answer (…) **I can read, [but] if i want to answer, i don't know the spelling**.

(2) PA *Avec ma mère, euh, pour lui envoyer un texto bah j'lui écris en tibétain mais avec plein d'erreurs, donc euh, ma mère elle me gronde mais c'est pas grave… Elle me dit c'est pas… c'est pas bien. Mais… c'est tout (…)*
With my mother, uh, to send her a text message, well, **I write in Tibetan but with lots of mistakes**, so uh, my mother scolds me but it's fine... She tells me it's not... it's not right. But... that's all (...)

CS *Et donc c'est que avec ta mère que tu écris en tibétain ?*
And so, it is only with your mother that you write in Tibetan?

PA *Oui, mais c'est très, très rare, euh… lorsqu'elle m'répond pas, bah je lui envoie un texto, mais… elle me rappelle pour m'dire euh, j'comprends rien à c'que t'as mis, donc euh… voilà.*
Yes, but it's very, very rare, uh... when she doesn't answer the phone, well I send her a text message, but... **she calls me back to tell me, uh, I don't understand anything you've written**, so uh... there you go.

The lack of use of written Tibetan as a normal means for daily-life communication within the family is, of course, a major obstacle for the maintenance of written Tibetan in exile.

1.2. Additional or intermediary languages (Chinese, English, Hindi, Nepali)

Besides Tibetan and French, Chinese and English can be qualified as intermediary languages, insofar as they play a crucial role for integration (to find a job, get a housing etc.), as explained in (3):

(3) TY རྒྱ་མིའི་སྐད་འདི་གིས་ང་རང་ལ་…་དཀའ་ངལ་ཡང་མང་པོ་བསལ་སོང་ལྷ། (…) ང་ཧྥ་རན་སི་ལ་སླེབས་ནས། ང་དང་པོ་ཁང་པ་ཞུ་ཀར་འགྲོ་དུས། ཡིན་གཅིག་མིན་གཅིག་ལས་ཀ། ལས་ཀ་/ ལས་ཀ་ཡི་གེ་ཕྱིར་ཤོག་ལབ་སོང་ལྷ། (…) ད་ང་ལས་ཀ་ག་པར་འགྲོ་གི་རེད། ལས་ཀ་མེད་ན་ཁང་པ་རག་གི་མ་རེད་ལབ་སོང་ལྷ། ད་ངས་རྒྱ་མིའི་སྐད་ཐ་རེ་ཕོ་རེ་ལབ་ན། ད་འདི་རྒྱ་མིའི་ཡི་གེ་འདྲ་པོ་ཡར་མར་བརྒྱབ་ནས་རྒྱ་མི་གི་ལས་ཀ་རག་རེད། ང་ལ། (…) ད་ཁོ་…་འེའེ། ད་ཡའི་རྒྱ་མི་གི་ཕོར་པ་ཁྲུད་ཡག་ད་ལས་ཀ་ཐེབ་ཡག་དེ་རེད་ལྷ། ཁོ་ལམ་སང་རག་སོང་ལྷ། དེས་…་དཀའ་ངལ་མང་པོ་བསེལ་ཐུབ་ས། ང་རང་ལ།

"**Chinese got me out of many difficulties**. (...) After I arrived in France, at the beginning, when I went to apply for (social) housing, they told me that I had to bring a work contract. (...) They told me that if I didn't have a job, I wouldn't get housing.
So, since i speak a little Chinese, i looked at some ads in Chinese and I found a "Chinese job". (...) It was, uh, it was washing dishes at a Chinese [restaurant]. I got it right away [this job]. So, well, it got me out of a lot of troubles."

For other people, this role of "problem solver" can be taken on by English. For instance, they explain that knowing English allows them to ask other users for help in administrations. These language tend to play a less and less important role over time.

People also mentioned other languages they used to practice in past periods of their lives. These languages reflect the different steps of their migration history but they do not play a role anymore in the daily life in France: mainly Nepali and/or Hindi.

Some people insisted that found it very easy to learn Hindi, which contrasts with their experience of learning French:

(4) WU རང་གི་སྐད་རིགས་མ་གཏོགས་གཞན་པ་ད་…་ལམ་སང་ཤེས་ནི་པོ་ད་ཧིན་དི་རེད།

Except [my] own language, as for other [languages]… **the one i knew at once was Hindi**.

(5) PT ཨ་ནི་རྒྱ་གར་སྐད་ད་…་སྤྱིར་བཏང་གིས་ང་རང་…་ག་དུས་ཡིན་ན་ངའི་རོགས་པ་ལ་སྐད་ཆ་དེ་འདྲས་བཤད་ཀྱི་ཡོད། སྤྱིར་བཏང་གིས་…་རྒྱ་གར་འདི་…་ལུང་པ་སྐྱི་དགས་བས་ཡིན་ནི་ལྷ། ལུང་པ་འདི་…་ད་འདི་…་ཅིག འེའེའེ། མི་ལ་འབྲེལ་བ་སྦྲང་ནས་ངོ་ཚ་མི་དགོས་བ། སྐད་དེ་ལས་སླ་པོ་འོའོའོ་སྦྲང་ནས། ད། ཤེས་དགོས་བ་བསམ་སྨོང་མེད་ནའི་རང་བཞིན་གིས་ཤེས་འགྲོ་འདྲ་ཅིག་འདུག་ལྷ།

> "And the language of India, in general, i used to speak all the time with friends. In general, was it because this area of India was so nice… Or because in this place, uh… I didn't feel like intimidated to make contact with people…
> This language, **I knew it easily, as if I didn't even thought I had to know it!**"

English and Chinese can also be counted among these "languages of the Past" (although in general, they tend to be better and longer maintained after arrival to France).

(6) PT ད་དབྱིན་ཇི་ད་སྔོན་མ་ཤེས་ཀྱི་མ་རེད་དེ་་་། ཏིའུ་ཏིའུ་ཅིག་ལབ་ཡག་འདྲ་པོ་ཡོད་རེད་ད། ད་ཚང་མ་བརྗེས་ཚར་འདུག ད་ཕྲ་རན་སི་གི་སྐད་འདི་བེད་སྤྱོད་བཏང་།
ད་དབྱིན་ཇི་དི་ད་བེད་སྤྱོད་བཏང་ཐུབ་ཀྱི་ཡོད་མ་རེད་བ།
Well, i didn't really know English before, but i could speak a little bit. Now i have completely forgotten. **I use French now, and i am not able to use English anymore**.

1.3. Linguistic repertoire of parents vs. children

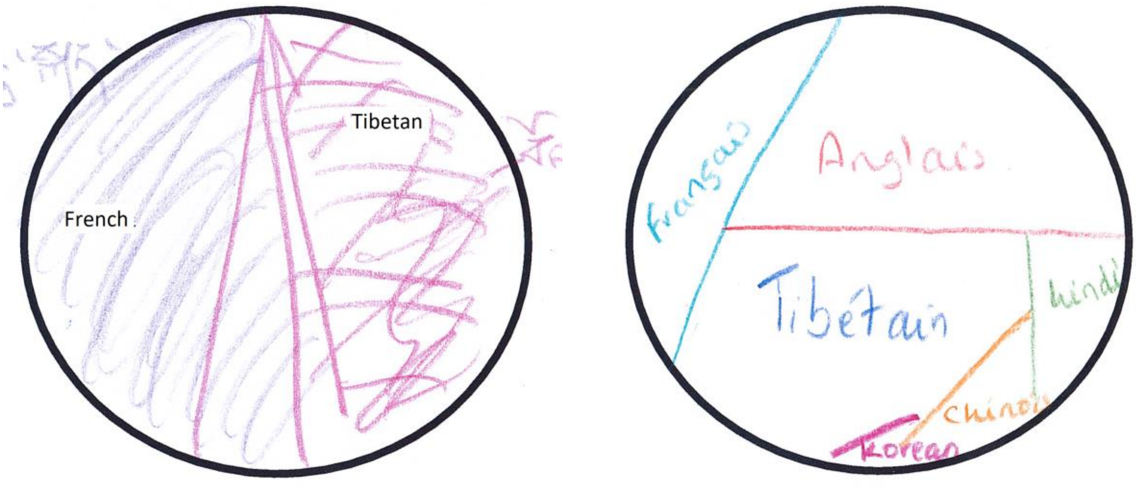
When we ask Tibetan parents about their aspirations for the linguistic repertoire of their children, we get this kind of answer:

(7) CS Ideally, what languages should your children learn ?
DT ཨ་ནི་འེའེའེ། ཕྲ་སྐད་ད་ཁོང་ཚོ་ཤེས་ཀྱི་རེད་བ། ད་འདིའི་ཞོར་ལ་བོད་སྐད་དང་་་ཨ་ནི་དབྱིན་སྐད་འདི་ཚང་མ་ད་ཤེས་དགོས་ཀྱི་འདུག་ག། དབྱིན་སྐད་འདི་གལ་ཆེན་པོ་རེད་བསམས་ཀྱི་འདུག དབྱིན་སྐད་འི་ཤེས་ཚར་ན་ངས་བལྟས་ན་ད་རྗེས་ལ་རྒྱ་ཡིག་ཅིག་་་རྒྱ་སྐད་ཅིག་མི་སྦྱངས་རང་སྦྱངས་རེད་བསམས་ཀྱི་འདུག
Well, uh… **They know French**, don't they! And besides that, Tibetan and English: **they should know everything in English and Tibetan**. I think English is important. Once they know English, then I think **it's essential for them to learn Chinese**.

There are two main reasons given to explain why the children should learn Chinese: (1) parents felt that Chinese was very useful when they arrived, and (2) they hope their children will be able to visit Tibet in the future.

But in fact, it seems that at least some children (teenagers) considerably exceed their parents expectations:

Fig. 2 ཁ་སང་སྐད་ཡིག་ག་རེ་ག་རེ་བེད་སྤྱོད་བཏང་པ་ཡིན། **What languages did you use yesterday ?**



a. Mother *b. Daughter (16 ½ y. o.)*

These results must be confirmed by further interviews, but the three teenagers and young adults interviewed so far have a similarly rich linguistic repertoire, with either Japanese or Korean on top of French, Tibetan, English, Hindi and Chinese. It must be added that, of course, it does not mean that these young people have an equivalent proficiency

of these languages. Some of them are used passively while others are used more actively, and they correspond to distinct contexts (formal classes, interactions with pairs or with the family, consumption of cultural products, etc.).

2. One vs. several Tibetan language(s)

The second part of this talk will focus on the Tibetan component of the linguistic repertoire. "Tibetan" refers to several, structurally quite different varieties, with little mutual intelligibility. So, it is interesting to see how these varieties are, or are not represented in metalinguistic discourses.

2.1. A blind spot in a discourse of national unity

First, we can observe that nobody spontaneously mentions the dialectal variation in Tibetan, even in families in which the parents come from a different region: In the five families, linguistic diversity among Tibetan is finally addressed only after 15-20 minutes of conversation, at best, (sometimes after more than one hour) and always in response to a direct question about this topic, like in example (8), with a woman from Amdo, or in (9), with a man from Kham:

(8) CS The Tibetan language you speak right now and the one spoken in your region are not the same, right ?

PT ཧེ་ཙ་འདྲ་གི་མ་རེད། འོང་།

It's a bit different, yes.

(9) TN ད་ག་རེ་ཟེར་དགོས་རེད། སྤྱིར་བཏང་པ་ཡུལ་གྱི་སྐད་ད་ཡང་…འདི་…ཕྱི་ལོགས་ཀྱི་བོད་པའི་སྐད་འདྲ་གི་མི་འདུག་གྲ། ད་པ་ཡུལ་ནས་སོ་སོ་གི་…ད་…ད་…ལུང་པ་གི་སྐད་རིགས་བརྒྱབ་ན་གཙང་བ་གཙང་རྐྱང་རེད། བོད་སྐད་གཙང་མ། ཨ་ནི་རྒྱ་མིའི་སྐད་གཅིག་གཉིས་འདྲེ་ཡག་འདི་འདི་རེད། མ་གཞི།

How to say... Basically, **the language of [my] native region, well, it doesn't look like the language of the Tibetans outside**, you know. Well, back home, you speak the local language and it's pure, pure Tibetan. And then there's one or two Chinese [words] mixed in, but that's it.

ད་ཕྱི་ལོགས་ཡིན་ན་ང་ཚོ་འདི་ཡང་…ཨེའེ། (…) བོད་ནང་ལ་བོད་པ་དེ་ཚོད་རྒྱ་གར་ལ་སླེབས་ན་…ཡང་…ཅིག་…ཅི་ཟེར་གྱི་དགོས་…ལྷ་ས་གི་སྐད་འདྲ་པོ་ཅིག་སྦྱངས། ལྷ་ས་གི་སྐད་ཏག་ཏག་མ་ཡོང་བ། དགང་ལྟར་ང་ཚོ་ནམ་རྒྱུན་བཤད་བསྡད་རྒྱུ་བོ། ད་མང་ཆེ་བ་དེ་འདྲས་བཤད་ཀྱི་ཡོད་རེད།

And outside (Tibet), uh… (…) When the Tibetans from Tibet arrive in India, then, how to say… [we] learn something like Lhasa Tibetan, [but] **a [kind of] Lhasa Tibetan variety that doesn't come perfectly**… Anyway, what we are speaking… well, most [of us] speak like that.

In (9), it is also interesting to note that it took this man 25 minutes to finally address the question of dialectal variation in Tibetan, while his wife spontaneously mentioned the existence of different varieties of Chinese during the first five minutes of the interview.

That this "blind spot" in the metaliguistic discourse probably reflects a general attitude that promotes national and political unity of all the Tibetans in the context of exile, especially in front of a foreigner who speaks some kind of Common Tibetan. I expect that I might have got different results if the interviews had been conducted in the native varieties of the people.

2.2. Maintenance and transmission of the Tibetan language(s) in Exile

As we have already seen, when they arrive in Exile, Tibetan people see their language evolve to adapt to 'Common' Tibetan. There are various, positive or negative attitudes toward this 'Common' Tibetan, but all agree that its existence is absolutely necessary to communicate within the community.

The acquisition of some form of 'Common' Tibetan is quick: people who come from Kham or Amdo explained that they had great difficulties at first because of the linguistic differences, but they all estimated that they could understand and be understood without much problem within 6 months after their arrival.

They also explain that some mixing of 'Common' Tibetan with their original variety occurs after some time, and this is highly stigmatised by their family in Tibet:

(10) PT ད་ཕ་ཡུལ་ལ་མཚམས་མཚམས་འ···ཁ་པར···དང···ད་དེ་གིས་བྱས་ན···སྔོན་མ་འདྲ་པོ་ཡིན་ན···ང་ཧྥ་རན་སི་འ་དང་པོ་ཡོང་རྒྱུའི་དུས་ཚོད་འདྲ་པོ་ཡིན་ན···ཕ་ཡུལ་གྱི་སྐད་འདི···ཏ་ལམ་མཚམས་མཚམས་འ་གོ་གི་མེད་རྒྱུ་པོ་འདྲ་པོ་རེད་བ྄ུ། འདུག ངའ་ནང་མི་དེ་ཚོ་གིས་དཔེའེའེ་གཤེ་གཤེ་འདྲ་པོ་བཏང་གི་འདུག ཁྱོད···ཕྱི་ལོགས་ལ་འགྲོ་ནས་མང་པོ་མ་རེད། ཁྱོད་ངོ་ཚ་གི་མི་འདུག་གས་ཟེར། ད་སོ་སོ་གི་སྐད་འདི་ཞྭི་འདྲ་བྱས་ནས་བཤད་ན། ཁྱོད་ཞེ་པོ་ཅིག···ཇིག་པོ་ཡིན་བསམས་གྱི་འདུག་གས།

Sometimes, when I call my home region by phone, or whatever... Before, at the beginning, when I came to France, **it was almost like sometimes I couldn't understand the language of my home region anymore. My family blamed me a lot (for that)**.
[They said to me:] "You haven't been abroad very long, **aren't you ashamed? Speaking your own language like that!** Do you think it's fancy?! "

On the contrary, those who are able to maintain a strict distinction between the two varieties, unsually with conscious efforts, are congratulated:

(11) TN ང་སྔོན་མ་ ༢༠ ∴ ∴ ཡ་བོད་ཕར་འགྲོ་དུས་ད་ཚང་མ་གིས་ཨ྄ུ། (...) ཚང་མ་གིས། ཨ྄ུ། ཁྱོད་སྐད་འདི་བསྲེས་བརྡུད་ཀྱི་འདུག་དུ། (...) ང་ཡ། ད་ཐད་དེ། དེ་ནས་ང་གཟབ་གཟབ་ཞེ་དྲགས་བྱས་པ་ཡིན། དྲང་པོ་དྲང་པོ་བཤད་ན། སོ་སོ་དངོས་གནས་གཟབ་གཟབ་དཔེ་བྱས་པ་ཡིན། ∴ ∴ སྐད་བརྒྱབ་ལག་ལ་ཐབས་ཤེས་བྱས། ∴ ∴ སྐད་ད་སྔོན་མ་གཅིག་ཡོད་རེད་བ྄ུ། ང་ཚོ་ཕ་ཡུལ་རང་སྐད་བརྒྱབ་ལག་དེ···འབད་བརྩོན་དཔེ་བྱས་པ་ཡིན།

When I went back to Tibet in 20XX, everyone said, "Ah, your language is mixed!"
After that, **I was very careful**, to put it frankly. I was really careful. I tried to speak X Tibetan - there is [a variety of] X Tibetan, isn't there? **I made a lot of effort to speak the language of our region.**

ང་མཉམ་དུ་གྲྭ་བ་ཅིག་འདུག་གྲུ། (...) ངེད་གཉིས···གྲོང་པ་གཅིག···ལབ་ན་ད···། དེ···གཅིག་པ་རེད། ད་ལྷ་འདི་རེད། འེའེ། xiang རང་ལ་གྲོང་ཁྱེར་གཅིག་པ་རེད། གྲོང་ཁྱེར་ལབ་ཀྱི་རེད་བ྄ུ། གྲོང་ཁྱེར་གཅིག་པ་རེད། གྲོང་ཁྱེར་གཅིག་པ་ཡིན་དུས། རྟག་པར་ཐུག་གི་འདུག་གྲུ ང་ཚོ། དེ་འདྲས་ཡིན་དུས་གྲྭ་པ་འདི་གི་ཨ་ཅག་ཅིག་ཡོད་རེད་དུ། ཨ་ཅག་འདི་གིས་ལབ་ཀྱི་འདུག་གྲུ ངས། ཨ྄ུ། ∴ ∴ ། ཁྱེད་རང་སྐད་ཁྱོན་ནས་འགྱུར་མི་འདུག ཁྱོད་རང་གི་ ∴ ∴ སྐད་དཔེ་ཡག་པོ་བརྒྱབ་ཀྱི་འདུག ཁྱོད་རང་སྐད་འགྱུར་མི་འདུག ངའི་ཨ་ཁོ ངའི་ཨ་ཁོ་ཟེར་ན་ངའི་ཅོ་ཅོག་ཟེར། ངའི་ཨ་ཁོ་ ∴ ∴ སྐད་ཁྱོན་ནས་བརྒྱབ་ཤེས་ཀྱི་མི་འདུག་ཟེར། ད།

With me [in exile], there was a monk. We both come from the same neighborhood, uh, the same xiang [township], the same town. Since we're from the same town, we saw each other all the time. We... And this monk, he has a sister, you know. This sister said to me, **"Oh, TN, your language has not changed at all! You speak very well!** Your language hasn't changed! My ako - (my ako, that means my elder brother) - My ako, can't speak the X Tibetan anymore at all!"

The attitude is quite different toward the variety spoken by the children. Tibetan as an heritage language corresponds to 'Common' Tibetan, without any doubt. In mixed families, if the father and the mother come from different regions, speaking 'Common Tibetan' is considered as a necessity:

(13) CS - Your children's way of speaking Tibetan is not exactly the same as your way of speaking Tibetan, is it?

Father རེད།

- Right.

Mother ད་ང་གཉིས་གིས་་་ད་ག་རང་འདི། ལྷ་ས་སྐད། དབུས་གཙང་སྐད་འདྲ་པོ་འདི་བརྒྱབ་བསྡད་ཀྱི་ཡོད་རེད་བླ། གང་ཡིན་ཟེར་ན། ཕྲུ་གུ་གཉིས་ཚ། ངས་ཨ་མདོ་སྐད་བརྒྱབ། ཁོ་ཁམས་སྐད་བརྒྱབ་ན་ད། ད་འདི་འཁྲུག་ནས་ཡོང་གི་མ་རེད་བླ།

ཨ་ནི་་་ག་རེ་རེད། དབུས་སྐད་ཡིན་་་། སྤྱི་སྐད་ནས། ད་ད་ལྷ་ང་ཚོས་སྐད་ཆ་བཤད་གི་ཡོད་ནི་པོ་འདི་འདུག་སེ་བསྡད་བསྡད་ཡོད་རེད།

- Well, both of us, we changed to speak Lhasa Tibetan, Central Tibetan. Because **if i speak Amdo-skad, and he speaks Kham-skad, the children will mix and it will not work**.

And so, that's why we speak Central Tibetan, the Common language, we speak like that.

(…)

Father སྤྱི་ཡོངས་ཀྱི་ཆ་ནས། ཨ་ནི་ཕྱི་རྒྱལ་ལུང་པ་ལ་ད་་་། ད་ང་ཚོ་ད་ལྟ་བཤད་ཡག་ད་འདི་་་ཆེ་ཟེར་དགོས་རེད། དབུས་གཙང་གི་སྐད་འདྲ་པོ་འདི་་ ད་དབུས་གཙང་སྐད་འདི་བེད་སྤྱོད་བཏང་གི་ཡོད་རེད་བླ། (…) ད་མང་ཆེ་བས་འདི་བཤད་བཞག་གི་འདུག་གླ། ད། བོད་ནས་སླེབས་རྒྱུ་པོ་ཡིན་ནའི་རེད། རྒྱ་གར་ཡིན་ན་ཡིན་ཡིན་པ་རེད་བླ། ད་སྤྱི་ཡོངས་ཀྱི་ཆ་ནས་དེ་འགྲོ་ན་དགའ་ས་རེད་བསམ།

- Generally speaking, **in a foreign country**… well, **we use the language we are speaking now, how to say, some sort of Central Tibetan.** (...) Most people, those who come from Tibet or, of course, [Tibetans] from India, generally speaking, they think it's better to do like that.

But we find a similar situation in families where both parents have the same native variety of Tibetan :

(14) Father གཞིས་ཆགས་སྐད་རང་རེད། འདིར་འཚར་ལོངས་བྱུང་སོང་། རེད་བླ། ཕྱི་ལོགས་ལ། བཙན་བཅོལ་ནང་ལ་འཚར་ལོངས་བྱུང་སོང་། ད་སྐད་ཆ་བཤད་སྟངས་ད་ག་རང་རེད། བོད་ནང་གི་ ∴ ∴ གི་སྐད་ཆ་རང་བཤད་ཐུབ་ཀྱི་མི་འདུག

[What our daughter speaks], **it's exactly the relocatees' language**. She grew up there, outside. She grew up in exile, so she speaks like them. **She is not able to speak the real language [spoken] inside Tibet, in X**.

Daughter སྔོན་མ་ཡིན་ན་ང་མཚམས་མཚམས་ ∴ ∴ གི་སྐད་ཚིག་གཅིག་གཉིས་ཙམ་ལབ་ཡོང་གི་རེད་བླ། ཨ་ནི་ཨེ་འདྲས་ལབ་སོང་ན་ད། ཕ་མ་གཉིས་ཀྱིས་གད་མོ་ཤོར་ནས། རེད་རེད་ཟེར། ཡའི། ཡིན་ནའི་དེང་སང་ང་་་།

Before, from time to time, i would try to speak a little bit, to say one or two words in Tibetan of X. **If i spoke like that, my parents would laugh** and say "Yes, yes !", you know. But, now, i...

Mother ཡིན་ནའང་མོ་ཡག་ཤོས་ལ། ཚུར་ག་རེ་ལབ་པ་ཡིན་ན་གོ་མས་གཤིས་འདུག

But the good thing is that when we talk to her, she can understand everything we say.

Daughter ཕ་ཡུལ་སྐད་ཚུར་སྐད་ཆ་བཤད་ན་ཚང་མ་་་ཚུར་་་སྐད་ཆ་ད་ཤད་ན་ཏ་གོ་བསྡད་རེད་ཡའི། ཡིན་ནའི་ཕར་སྐད་ཆ་བཤད་ཐུབ་ཀྱི་མི་འདུག གང་ཡིན་ཟེར་ན་ཚིག་དེ་ཚོ་ཏ་གོ་གི་མ་རེད་ཕླ། གང་འདྲས་ལབ་དགོས་མེད་ཏ་གོ་གི་མ་རེད།

Yes, when someone speaks to me in the language of our region, **i understand everything. But i can't answer, because i don't know the words, i don't know how to speak**.

The parents' attitude regarding the maintenance and the transmission of Tibetan is radically different if they consider themsleves or their children. They tend to try to make efforts to preserve their native variety for themselves, but when it comes to the second generation, growing up in exile (even though some children are born in Tibet), this variety is usually seen as « not very important », or not as important as learning written Tibetan. As a result children are actively or passively discouraged to use their parent's native variety.

Conclusions

- Tibetan refugees in France make an extensive use of at least 3 to 4 different languages, and more research should be done on the evolution of their repertoire during the first years after their arrival.
- Parents have high expectations regarding the various linguistic skills their children should develop, and the children also tend have their own aspirations on this topic.
- The Tibetan dialectal variation tends to disappear quickly: maintaining a distinction between one's variety and Common Tibetan is valuated among the generation of the parents, but it is discouraged for the children.
- More research should be done to describe precisely the structural differences between the parents' and the children's varieties of Common Tibetan, but it appears clearly that children do not display much traces of the parent's native variety.
- It also raises the question of a definition for the notion of "heritage language": since Tibetan, as an heritage language, does not corresponds to the language(s) spoken by the parents, it is inherited from the larger community of exiled Tibetan.