

# Survey of the language use by Urban, Minyag-speaking Tibetans: A case study on Minyag people living in Lucheng Town, Kangding Municipality, Ganzi Prefecture

Dawa Drolma  
(Minzu University of China)

## *Introduction*

**H**istorically, various forms of exchange between different ethnic groups or different nationalities and societies has led to mutual contact between languages. When a society achieves a specific level of development, frequent, long-term contact occurs between languages and thus tends to intensify intensifying mutual linguistic influence. There are different types of language contact, which have different types of outcomes, including language shift, borrowing of language components, code-switching, bilingualism, and use of multiple languages.<sup>1</sup> As long as there is a certain amount of contact between languages, there will be some extent of language change.

I have lived in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural environment in Kangding Municipality, on the eastern Tibetan Plateau, since childhood. Through observations in the family, school, or other contexts, I found that in Lucheng Town, the urban centre of Kangding, whether in government units, restaurants, schools, markets, or residential communities, or on public transport, people of different nationalities habitually switch between several languages, to communicate with each other. Lucheng Town is a site where the population of Minyag-speaking Tibetans is relatively concentrated, and multilingual practices are common amongst this population. In recent years, with the acceleration of urbanisation, language contact has intensified, causing a large number of lexical borrowing and code-switching in the Minyag language, as well as changes in the language attitudes of Minyag speakers. Therefore, this paper mainly takes the Minyag-speaking residents of Lucheng Town as an example to observe patterns of language use and attitudes in daily communication, with the aim of assisting the development of language policy, bilingual teaching and language use in the region. It is also hoped that this article will raise awareness regarding the challenges of multilingualism in a Tibetan urban context.

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<sup>1</sup> Chen 1983:138.

1. *The basic situation of language use in Lucheng Town  
(Kangding Municipality)*

Kangding, meaning 'to pacify the Khams region' (in reference to the Tibetan cultural and linguistic region of Khams) is the governmental seat of Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province. Its Tibetan name is Dartsendo. In the early years of the Republic of China, the urban centre of Kangding was given the name Lucheng. The town is under the jurisdiction of Kangding Municipality and is also the seat of the Ganzi Prefecture People's Government and Kangding Municipal People's Government. Kangding Municipality covers an area of 201.4 square kilometres and has a population of nearly 50,000 (2014). Lucheng Town is not only a multi-ethnic area but also a multi-faith region where Tibetan Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Confucianism, Han Buddhism, Taoism and other religions coexist. Tibetans constitute the majority, and 17 ethnic groups, including Han, Hui, Yi and Sui also live there. At the end of 2012, the resident population was 132,451, of which 92,397 were Tibetans, accounting for 69.8% of the total population; 37,441 were Han, accounting for 0.3%; 1,319 were Hui, accounting for 1%; 347 were Yi, accounting for 0.3%; and 947 were other ethnic groups, including Mongol, Miao, Zhuang, Naxi and others, accounting for 0.7%.<sup>2</sup>

Lucheng Town was historically the centre of the "tea-horse trade". It is also the central region of the "ethnic corridor," where the ethnic groups frequently passed and migrated since earlier time. It is also the transportation hub between the Han Chinese inland and Tibet, as well as the main distribution centre of Tibetan-Chinese trade. There have always been many ethnic groups in the region, and the languages of the region are also diverse. This diversity includes both Tibetan (Khams dialect) and Chinese (Sichuan dialect), Amdo dialect (pastoralist dialect), as well as the Minyag, rGyalrong, Qiang, Yi, Guiqiong, etc.; among them, the lingua franca is Tibetan (Khams dialect) and Chinese (Sichuan dialect). Also, the Han people have long been in close contact with Tibetans here. The Tibetan-Chinese bilingualism thus has a long existence, reaching back further than in other Tibetan areas, and so the development of bilingualism today is comparatively high. Personal language use is characterised by diversity and complexity.

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<sup>2</sup> Kangding Xianzhi 1995:148-150.

## *2. On the questionnaire survey*

### *2-1. Survey sample composition*

The survey was conducted for Minyag-speaking residents in Lucheng Town. In order to have a more comprehensive and objective understanding of the language use in daily oral communication, I conducted field surveys from July to September of 2017, and December 2017 to March 2018. When the questionnaire was issued, the author selected four communities based on the nature of ethnic groups: 'Tibetans as a majority', 'non-Tibetans as a majority', 'Tibetans as a half', and 'multi-ethnicity' respectively. In the community, 200 questionnaires were distributed, and 200 were returned, with a total of 200 (100%) being considered valid.

### *2-2. Structure of the questionnaire and survey method*

This survey was based on the questionnaire, supplemented by personal interviews conducted in respondents' homes. The questionnaire consisted of five parts, with a total of 60 single-choice questions and multiple-choice questions. The first part (Q1-Q9) mainly investigated the background of the interviewee, such as age, occupation, education level, marital status, and so on. The second part (Q10-Q22) mainly investigated the language background of the participants, such as the language that was first learned, the language that parents use with the interviewee, and how many languages the interviewee spoke at the time. The third part (Q23-Q39) mainly investigated the language use of participants, such as: what language was used with different family members at home, and what language was used for different groups in different communication situations. The fourth part (Q40-Q48) mainly investigated the language attitude of the participants, including the participants' willingness to learn various languages, the expectation of language development prospects, and the attitude towards learning foreign languages.

Each question has given several options or criteria. The questions, options or indicators in the questionnaire were provided, and thus, participants only needed to make their own choices within the given scope. Some questions recorded the opinions of the respondents in more detail, and, therefore, I set a blank space for each question. Individual interviews were used to supplement the survey on more critical issues. The questionnaires in the survey were partially questioned by one-on-one; that is, the author asked questions, and filled in or checked according to the interviewees' answers. However, due to requests made by some respondents, some of the questionnaires

were completed by the respondents themselves. Personal interviews mainly took place with the interview methods for the questionnaire survey participants, selected several individual subjects with characteristics. Then, the content was more in-depth understanding of the questions set by the questionnaires, supplemented by finding suitable objects for relevant interviews on relevant issues.

### 2-3. Basic background of the participants

#### 2-3-1. Age and gender

In this survey, the author selected 200 persons between the ages of 15 and 60 as the target of the survey.

For the age, the proportion of people in each age group is moderate, among which 98 persons are between the ages of 15 and 24, accounting for 49% of the total number; 15 persons between the ages of 25 and 34, accounting for 7%; 50 persons between the ages of 35 and 50, accounting for 25%; 37 persons between the ages of 51 and 60, accounting for 19%.

The proportion of males and females was nearly equal. The number of males was 109, accounting for 55% of the total number. The number of females was 91, accounting for 45% of the total.

Table 1

Unit: person

Background	Gender		Age			
	M	F	15—24	25—34	35-50	50-60
Sample	109	91	98	15	50	37
Percentage	55%	45%	49%	7%	25%	19%

#### 2-3-2. Occupation

Based on the survey results of the occupations of the respondents, I found that 28.5% of the people are business service personnel, accounting for the largest proportion: 57 people. Next, civil servants and personnels in state-owned enterprises and institutions accounted for 50 persons and 30 persons respectively, accounting for 25% and 15% each. There were 30 unemployed persons, among whom 10 had just graduated from a college or university and had not found a stable job yet; 20 were full-time carers and had no jobs. The students and teachers accounted for 21 persons and 10 persons respectively, accounting for 10.5% and 5% each. According to the survey results, the employment situation of Minyag-speaking residents in Kangding Municipality is relatively pessimistic.

Table 2

Unit: person

Back-ground	Civil serv-ants	Teach-ers	Stu-dents	Em-ploy-ees	Busi-ness-persons	Unem-ployed	Total
Sample	50	21	10	30	57	30	200
Per-centage	25%	10.5%	5%	15%	28.5%	15%	100%

### 2-3-3. Education

In the questions on education in the questionnaire, high school students included both secondary school and vocational high schools, while graduate students included those in master and doctoral courses. Among the respondents, the number of college graduates was the highest, with 68 people, accounting for 34% of the total, followed by 49 undergraduate students or graduates, accounting for 24.5%. There were 8 persons with a master's degree, and 16.5% were junior high school graduates or junior high school students. In general, the degree of education of the respondents is relatively high.

Table 3

Unit: person

Back-ground	Junior high school	High school	Vocational high schools	Under-graduate	Graduate (master and doctor)	Total
Sample	33	42	68	49	8	200
Per-centage	16.5%	21%	34%	24.5%	4%	100%

When investigating the types of education that the subjects had received, I have found that the number of people who had attended a Chinese school since the beginning of primary school, where all courses are taught in Chinese ('Type 1' education), was 106, accounting for more than 53% of the total, while the number of people who have attended programs where all courses are taught in Tibetan from primary school, and the Chinese course begins in the third grade ('Type 2'), was 94, or 47% of the total.

According to the survey results, the situation of the Minyag-speaking residents in Lucheng Town is not optimistic regarding the employment of the Han and Tibetan education models in various sectors of the city. The results of the survey are shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4

Unit: person

Background	Type-1 education	Type-2 education	Total
Sample	94	106	200
Percentage	47%	53%	100%

Based on the above investigation, we can understand whether it is the first or the second type education for Minyag-speaking residents whose mother tongue is 'Minyag language.' They are not able to receive mother tongue education. Instead, they are forced to accept education in a second or third language. Therefore, those whose mother tongue is 'Minyag language' have not received mother tongue education and have not achieved the standard bilingual teaching effect.

#### 2-3-4. Marital status and interethnic marriage

Among the 200 respondents, 124 were married, accounting for 62% of the total, and 76 were unmarried, accounting for 38% of the total. Among the 124 respondents, 2 had intermarried with other ethnic groups, accounting for 1% of the total, of whom 1 person was married to a Han Chinese, and the other was married to a Qiang. Judging from the composition of the family and ethnic groups, the majority of households with the authentic Minyag Tibetans account for 198, or 99% of the total. The 'authentic Minyag Tibetan' here refers to the Minyag people who speak the Minyag language and Kham Tibetan. This can be seen from the table below:

Table 5

Unit: person

Background	Marital status		Interethnic marriage	
	Married	Single	No	Yes
Sample	124	76	198	2
Percentage	62%	38%	99%	1%

The attitude of the respondents to intermarriage shows that there are 23 persons who choose to promote it, accounting for 11.5% of the total, and 97 persons who choose to respect (but not promote) it, accounting for 48.5% of the total, the largest number. There were 50 persons who said that mixed marriages were acceptable, 25% of the total, and 30 persons who claimed that mixed marriage was unacceptable, accounting for 15% of the total.

In general, interethnic marriages in the survey location are less common, but attitudes toward interethnic marriage are relatively open, and the proportion of people who state that mixed marriages should be respected or that they are acceptable was moderate. Some

respondents believed that when they choose their spouse, they can marry as long as they have the same beliefs. Some people thought that the customs and habits of different ethnic groups are different, and it may be tough to get along with each other, so they do not agree with intermarriage between different ethnic groups.

Table 6

Unit: person

Back-ground	Promote	Respect	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Total
Sampel	23	97	50	30	200
Percentage	11.5%	48.5%	25%	15%	100%

### 3. Language use depending on various occasions

The language use in different occasions is investigated and analyzed according to the following aspects: (1) language use in the family and in communication, and within the family including father (or male elder), mother (female elder), siblings (or spouses), and juniors (or children); (2) language use in communicative situations including communicative occasions, objects, and topics.

#### 3-1. Situation of the language use within the family

Table 7: Situation of the language use with elders, close aged, and younger  
Unit: person

Target	Chinese (Si-chuanese)		Tibetan (Kham)		Minyag		Chinese more than Tibetan (Kham)		Chinese less than Tibetan (Kham)		Minyag more than Tibetan (Kham)		Minyag less than Tibetan (Kham)	
	Person	Percentage	Person	Percentage	Person	Percentage	Person	Percentage	Person	Percentage	Person	Percentage	Person	Percentage
With father	6	3%	15	7.5%	69	34.5%	15	7.5%	26	13%	59	29.5%	10	5%
With mother	9	4.5%	10	5%	38	19%	15	7.5%	29	14.5%	48	24%	51	25.5%
With siblings or spouse	24	12%	25	12.5%	11	5.5%	68	34%	24	12%	13	6.5%	35	17.5%
With younger	67	33.5%	56	28%	10	5%	34	17%	11	5.5%	17	8.5%	5	2.5%

According to the survey results above, whether it is an elder, an age peer, or someone in a younger generation, the Minyag language is mainly used in the family, though sometimes there is a phenomenon where Minyag and Tibetan (Khams) are mixed. The majority of Minyag-speaking residents communicated with their elders in Minyag language, because in the family, the elders' language habits are relatively conservative, so they retain their native language and communicate with younger generations in their native language. When talking with age peers, the number of Chinese-Tibetan (Khams) and Tibetan (Khams)-Minyag bilinguals is gradually increasing. When communicating with younger generations or children, Chinese is used more. This is related to increasing environments where children learn Chinese because children are frequently exposed to Chinese when they are at school or socialising with friends.

### 3-2. Situation of the language use in public occasions

Table 8: Situation of the language use in various public occasions Unit: person

Target	Chinese		Tibetan (Khams)		Minyag	
	Person	Percentage	Person	Percentage	Person	Percentage
Market	182	91%	18	9%	0	0%
Government	169	84.5%	31	15.5%	0	0%
Hospital	190	95%	10	5%	0	0%

According to the survey results above, the Minyag people in Lucheng use Chinese in public places such as government offices, hospitals, markets, or banks, followed by Khams Tibetan. No one speaks Minyag on any of these occasions. To sum, in public, the trend to use these languages is: Chinese (85.2%) > Tibetan (Khams) (14.7%) > Minyag (0%).

### 4. Influence of language contact

Sapir once said in his book *Language*: "Languages, like cultures, are rarely sufficient unto themselves. The necessities of intercourse bring the speakers of one language into direct or indirect contact with those of neighboring or culturally dominant languages".<sup>3</sup> Since ethnic mixed-residing was gradually formed in history, different ethnic groups have influenced each other and integrated into the long-term

<sup>3</sup> Edward 2010 [1921]:34-40.



historical exchanges. The use and transference of language have not only existed since ancient times but is also universal. I traced the interviews between the respondents and different groups on different occasions and found that it is ordinary that the Minyag people in Kangding use code-switching and lexical borrowing in their daily lives.

In sociolinguistics, code-switching refers to the phenomenon in which a person switches from one language or variant to another language or variant in the same conversation, and also refers to conversion between different languages. Code-switching is one of the essential research fields of sociolinguistics, and it is a communicative phenomenon.<sup>4</sup> Amongst Minyag people in Kangding, Chinese is used in two different ways. One is the use of Chinese by people who have not necessarily studied it formally, or have only studied it a little; a listener can tell immediately that the speaker is not a native Chinese speaker. The other way that Chinese is used is by people who have studied or been educated in the language, and can skillfully switch the languages between the two languages. The former way of using Chinese accounts for the larger proportion of the Minyag population, while the latter has a smaller proportion.

In this survey, the author found the following questions from the respondents' answers to the questionnaire. First, when asked "When you talk with Han Chinese friends, will you mix your native language (Minyag) with Chinese?", 186 people answered that they basically did no switch to their native language in this situation, accounting for 97.7% of the total number of people surveyed; however, 9 people said that they do not, accounting for 2.3% of the total number. Second, when asked "When you talk with a friend of the same ethnic group, will you mix Chinese or Tibetan (Khams)?", 89 people answered that they would occasionally use Chinese/Tibetan (Khams), which accounted for 12% of the total number of people surveyed, and there were 143 people who often use Chinese/Tibetan language, accounting for 86% of the total, whereas 3 persons reported that they would not mix Chinese/Tibetan (Khams). The last group is the elderly. To sum up, in usual daily communication, 94.4% of people will switch into Chinese and Tibetan (Khams).

In other words, when Minyag-speaking residents talk with their Han friends, they will not mix up the element of Minyag language in their speech. When talking to friends of the same ethnic group, they can mix Chinese and Khams Tibetan with Minyag. Among them,

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<sup>4</sup> Wang 2007:20.

young and middle-aged people mix them more, whereas older people use the Minyag language with Chinese and Khams dialect less mixed.

In terms of grammatical switching, firstly it is nouns. In the case of Minyag language, there are no specific names for the newly-produced articles. Therefore, it is common to use Chinese and Tibetan loan words, and the terms related to religious etiquettes are borrowed from Khams Tibetan. Terms for newly produced daily necessities and technologies are all borrowed from Chinese.

Therefore, in conversations that involve the names of the days, people often choose to express these in Chinese and Tibetan (Khams). Regarding the use of numbers, people are accustomed to using Chinese for numbers such as phone numbers, bus routes, room names, buildings numbers, and so on. The Minyag people who have lived in the city for a long time are relatively scattered, so they are influenced by the Han Chinese. They have established profound national feelings and formed a sense of identity with Chinese culture and Chinese language. They mainly choose the Chinese language for daily communication with the Han Chinese people.

#### *5. Survey on language attitudes*

In bilingual and multilingual societies, due to factors such as social or ethnic identity, emotions, behavioural tendencies, and so on, people will form a certain understanding or make a specific evaluation of the social value of a language or word. Such recognition and evaluation are usually called language attitudes.<sup>5</sup>

Language attitudes were mainly examined in the following aspects: (1) The behavioural tendency, including the purpose of the subjects studying Chinese, and the attitude towards learning foreign languages. (2) Social status evaluation, including their opinion on whether the Minyag language is useful or not; and whether Chinese is useful? (3) Practical function evaluation, the question is: which language is more important to you? (4) Expectations of language development prospects, including the language in which they want to teach their child; do you want to learn and master this ethnic language further?

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<sup>5</sup> Yan 2002: 15

### 5-1. Behavioral tendencies

#### 5-1-1. Purpose of learning Chinese

10 persons chose the answer that they could communicate in Chinese with more people, accounting for 5% of the total; 5 persons chose the answer that they need Chinese when attending school and being outside, accounting for 2.5%. Meanwhile 40 persons chose the answer that they were able to communicate/ work (go to school) or go out with more people, accounting for 20% of the total; 11 students said the language was required by the school, accounting for 5.5% of the total; 5 persons stated that Chinese is promising, accounting for 2.5% of the total; 81 persons chose the answer that they were able to communicate/work with more people (going to school) or the need to go out / learn Chinese proficient promising, accounting for 40.5% of the total; and 48 persons chose the answer that they were able to communicate with more people/work (school) or outing needs/school requirements / learn proficient Chinese, accounting for 24% of the total.

The interview data shows that Minyag-speaking residents believe that learning Chinese is motivated by voluntary, self-development needs. In order to go out of their native place, to go throughout the country or to go to school, they must be proficient in the national language. They believe that learning Chinese is conducive to better developing themselves, and to developing China's economic culture, the development of a harmonious society, and achieving common prosperity.

#### 5-1-2. What is your attitude toward learning a foreign language?

The survey found that 180 people supported learning a foreign language, accounting for 90% of the total number; only 20 people expressed no attitude, accounting for 10% of the total; and no one opposed learning a foreign language, indicating that Minyag urbanites are basically supportive of learning foreign languages. The interview data shows that they believe that foreign languages are currently used in the world and that everyone needs to learn them. The attitude of Minyag-speaking residents in regards to foreign languages shows that they have broad thinking, are open-minded, that they look at the real world and study foreign languages, and have hope that their next generation can master the most practical language. They think that bilingual speakers who know their mother tongue and Chinese or foreign languages have greater advantages than monolingual people who only knows the mother tongue. The survey shows their positive

and inclusive attitude towards foreign languages and their striving to absorb more knowledge and information through actively learning of Chinese and foreign languages, and striving to integrate into a more modern lifestyle. On the other hand, the real economic interests also drive Minyag-speaking residents to learn and use more Chinese and foreign language, because, compared with the Minyag language, the economic value and frequency of the use of Chinese and foreign languages are higher, that also demonstrates the insufficiency of the development of the Minyag language from the side.

### *5-2. Evaluation of practical functions*

When Minyag speakers in Lucheng were asked: “Which language(s) are more important to you?”; the answer was: 15 persons chose the Minyag language, accounting for 7.5% of the total; 28 persons chose Khams Tibetan, accounting for 14% of the total number; 37 persons chose Chinese, 18.5% of the total; 35 persons chose Minyag and Khams Tibetan, accounting for 17.5% of the total; 85 persons chose Khams Tibetan and Chinese, accounting for 42.5% of the total. The order of importance for these languages is thus: Chinese > Khams Tibetan > Minyag. The result shows that the order of importance is a direct measure of government support.

Through the investigation, it was found that the Minyag-speaking residents of Lucheng had a negative attitude towards the practical function of their own language, but held a sense of identity for the Chinese language. This was mainly due to the social and economic and political status of Chinese. Mastering Chinese means having more direct channels to learn about the latest and fastest economic and cultural information, and it means more opportunities. This recognition of the practicality of Chinese directly encourages ethnic minorities to actively learn and use Chinese.

### *5.3 Expectations for the future of language development*

5.3.1 If there were schools that taught in different languages, in which language do you hope that your children or next generations were taught?

Because there is no ‘Minyag language’ model of mother tongue education in Minyag area, the model of education is to teach in Chinese and Tibetan. Therefore, the questionnaire survey involves only the bilingual education of Chinese and Tibetan. There is no survey option to ‘whether or not they are willing to receive education in Minyag language?’.

According to the questionnaire survey show that most respondents

(155 people) chose that they would want them to attend a bilingual school, accounting for 77.5% of the total number, while 25 persons chose the Chinese language school, accounting for 12.5% of the total, and 20 persons chose Tibetan schools, accounting for 10% of the total number; the number of the last two is similar. The tendency to choose a language is related to the language level of each respondent. If the level of Minyag/Tibetan (Kham) is not high, the parents who do not speak well their native language tend to choose Chinese schools because they think that learning Chinese can help their children find a good job. Now they know that in society bilingual people are more likely to be employed, so most parents choose to send their children to bilingual schools, which are more important for both Chinese and Tibetan (Kham).

### 5.3.2 Do you hope to learn your own language in more details and to master it?

The number of people who wish to study their own language constituted a significant majority, being 168 persons, accounting for 84% of the total. No respondents did not wish to study their own language, while 24 persons did not care, accounting for 12% of the total. Those that thought that learning or not has little effect on their daily life, being 8 persons, accounted for 4% of the total. Almost all Minyag-speaking residents have deep feelings regarding their mother tongue and have a strong desire to protect their mother tongue, hoping that their language will be maintained. Therefore, in daily life, most Minyag people use their native language as a language amongst themselves.

Table 9

Unit: person

Back-ground	Minyag		Kham Tibetan		Chinese	
	Person	Percentage	Person	Percentage	Person	Percentage
Great develop	0	0	181	90.5%	179	89.5%
To some extent develop	20	10%	19	9.5%	10	5%
Naturally develop	2	1%	0	0	19	9.5%
No more use shortly	178	89%	0	0	0	0
	200	100%	200	100%	200	100%

Participants had high expectations for the future development of Chinese and Tibetan (Khams), and no one chose to "no longer use it shortly." On the contrary, no one in Minyag language chose to "have great development", 178 persons chose "no longer use shortly", accounting for 89% of the total, and 20 persons chose to develop within a certain range, accounting for 10% of the total. It shows that Minyag speakers in Lucheng believe that their language will shortly fall out of use.

#### 5-4. Evaluation of the social status

Table 10: Whether Minyag, Khams, or Chinese is useful Unit: person

Background	Minyag		Khams Tibetan		Chinese	
	Person	Percentage	Person	Percentage	Person	Percentage
Useful	11	5.5%	169	84.5%	180	90%
Useful for a part of people or in a limited area	39	19.5%	31	15.5%	20	10%
Useless	150	75%	0	0	0	0
N/A	0		0	0	0	0
	200	100%	200	100%	200	100%

In response to the above question, 180 persons answered that Chinese was "useful", the highest proportion. 20 participants think that Chinese is "useful for some people or within a certain range," all of whom are elders. The answer of Minyag language "Useful for a part of people or in a limited area" and "useless" was given by 189 persons – a significant majority. 169 persons answered that "Khams Tibetan" was useful, accounting for 84.5% of the total.

According to the above data, it can be seen that Minyag speakers in Lucheng have a relatively high evaluation of the social status of Khams Tibetan and Chinese. They think that Khams Tibetan and Chinese are very useful in daily life. As for the specific usefulness of the Minyag language, most people thought that it was useless or of limited use.

#### 6. Analysis of relevant factors affecting language use

The following analysis examines factors that influence language contact, according to five factors.

### *6-1. The family language environment*

The family is the most direct and primary place to learn a native language. The results of the survey show that 96.7% of the participants first learnt their mother tongue before the age of five, and 96.6% of their parents spoke the native tongue before the age of five. The language used in conversations between husband and wife in the family is mainly the mother tongue. Therefore, parental language choice and language use are the most important factors affecting the next generation.

According to the survey, 65% of Minyag speakers in Lucheng have a positive attitude towards inter-ethnic marriage, and they are more open to intermarriage; 35% of the participants have a negative attitude, that is, unwilling to accept intermarriage between different ethnic groups; but such families are relatively few. In general, Minyag-speaking residents are more tolerant of other national languages and have a stronger willingness to maintain their mother tongue. Therefore, the intermarriage between different ethnic groups and the attitude towards intermarriage are also important factors affecting language use.

### *6.2 The community language environment*

Most of the Minyag cadres and teachers working in the municipal and state organizations at all levels in Lucheng were transferred from the towns and villages of Kangding Municipality in the mid-1980s and 1990s. In recent years, the Minyag people who have worked in Lucheng and attended junior high school have also become increasingly common. These Minyag people were scattered in the residential areas of various agencies and failed to form compound settlements. Therefore, the degree of mixed living was high, and the Minyag language failed to become the primary means of communication. According to the survey data, the frequency of using Minyag language in places where Minyag people live is higher, and the possibility of using multiple languages in multi-ethnic mixed places is higher. Chinese is most commonly used, with Tibetan (Khams) as a supplement, whilst the position of the Minyag language is secondary.

There are two common languages in Lucheng: Chinese (Sichuanese) and Tibetan (Khams). Lucheng is an important transit point from Tibet to the Chinese inland. It is the seat of Ganzi Prefecture and the seat of government agencies at all levels. In addition to the Minyag people, Tibetans, Yi and Qiang nationalities are in a mixed or diaspora state. Because of the long-term mixed living, exchanges

between different ethnic groups have required a common language, and hence, Chinese has dominated.

Chinese is the language of the main ethnic group in China, and it is also the common language used by various ethnic groups to communicate with each other, and Chinese is thus the primary language. Tibetan (Khams) is the lingua franca of the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and is the secondary language. For the Minyag language, because of the small population of Minyag speakers in Lucheng, the use of the language limited to within the group, particularly within the family.

### *6-3. The social language environment*

Schooling and social interaction are the main ways for Minyag speakers in Lucheng to learn Chinese. The language environment is an essential factor that restricts the degree of language use. According to the survey, 36% of people received Tibetan-medium education, while 64% received bilingual education in Chinese and Tibetan. There are two middle schools in Kangding Municipality (Kangding Middle School, Kangding Municipality National Middle School [Shi Yizhong]), four primary schools (Xidajie Primary School, Dongdajie Primary School, Huimin Primary School, and New District Experimental Primary School), and three kindergartens (New District Kindergarten, Dongguan Kindergarten, State Kindergarten), as well as Ganzi Prefecture National Cadre School, Sichuan Tibetan School. Except for Sichuan Tibetan School, the schools above all implement Chinese-medium education.

Taking Kangding Middle School as an example, the school implements Chinese-medium teaching, with each subject mainly taught in Chinese, with a Tibetan language class added. It can be seen that the bilingual education model of the school affects the language use of the participants. Therefore, school education and school language environments are both important places for cultivating bilingual people, and they are also the factors of the language use of both Chinese and Tibetan. The implementation and popularization of Tibetan-Chinese bilingual education has accelerated the process of ethnic residents switching to Tibetan-Chinese, which has led to the decline of the Minyag language. However, the policy of bilingual education only considers strong local languages. Languages that are deemed to be dialects or patois (*dijiaohua*), such as the Minyag language, will not be taken into account, so bilingual policies have not been implemented in areas where such languages are used. The



existing educational modes<sup>6</sup> – Tibetan-medium and Chinese-medium – do not take such languages into account they fail to take into account the existence of native, non-tibetic languages within the educational system.

According to the survey data, 91% of the participants use Chinese in markets, government offices, hospitals, and so on, because the majority of people working in those places are Han Chinese. Therefore, those Han Chinese people do not speak Tibetan or Minyag, and so Minyag speakers must use Chinese to communicate with them. Also, 60% of the participants chose to use the language depending on addressee's ethnicity. Talking to foreign friends, neighbors or strangers mainly uses Chinese/Tibetan (Khams). It can be seen that the surrounding language environment has a greater impact on the language use and choice of the participants in daily communication. The Han Chinese is the most numerous ethnic group in China. In order to communicate smoothly with each other, it is the best choice for different ethnic groups to use Chinese as their common language or regional communication language among ethnic groups in almost all ethnic mixed areas

#### *6-4. Language attitudes*

The survey found that 75.6% of the participants hoped that their children would receive Chinese medium education or Chinese-Tibetan bilingual education, which is a reflection of their language and national consciousness, indicating that they hope that their national language and culture can be passed down, but they do not exclude Chinese and foreign languages, and this represents an inclusive attitude towards other languages; the trend of global economic integration makes them realize the importance of learning foreign languages. This attitude is the embodiment of the positive function of national consciousness, which is conducive to preserving ethnic characteristics and languages. However, although the participants all hope that their mother tongue can continue to be maintained and their feelings for the mother tongue are very deep. But the realistic economic value of the Minyag language is relatively low. Fewer people choose to educate their children in their mother tongue in terms of behavioral orientation, which creates contradictions to some extent. Because they have no choice.

Minyag speakers in Lucheng have a negative attitude towards the

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<sup>6</sup> One is that each subject is mainly Tibetan, and a Chinese course is added, which is called class I teaching mode. Each subject is dominated by Chinese, and a Tibetan language is added, which is called class II teaching mode.

practical function of their language, but they hold a sense of identity for the Chinese language. This is mainly due to the status of Chinese in the social and economic realms. Mastering Chinese means more direct channels to understanding the latest and fastest economic and cultural information, and it also means more opportunities. This recognition of the practicality of Chinese directly encourages ethnic minorities to learn and use Chinese actively. But this is also their helpless choice and expression of the fact that they did not use "Minyag language" as an opportunity for mother tongue education.

#### *6-5. Level of education*

The survey found that 79% of participants were multilingual people who knew more than two languages, while 20% of the participants are bilinguals who master two languages, and only 1% are monolinguals who only know a single language. Moreover, most of these bilingual and multilingual people have received undergraduate education and above. This shows that the higher the level of education is, the more languages are available as well as, the more inclusive and usable the other languages are.

#### *Conclusion*

Through a field questionnaire survey and interviews with Minyag speakers in Lucheng, this paper made a comprehensive and detailed statistical description of language use and language attitudes of Minyag speakers in daily life, and analyzed the reasons for this. On these bases, it concluded the characteristics of Minyag language use. The investigation found that the language use of Minyag-speaking residents in Lucheng showed the following characteristics.

First, most of the Minyag speakers in Lucheng are bilingual or multilingual, and they have a high degree of mastery of Chinese and Tibetan (Khams), in addition to speaking their own language. Second, in the areas where Minyag speakers are clustered, and in the home, the Minyag language is used, and in other situations, bilingualism and code-switching are more common. The trend of language shifting in the family is from monolingual to bilingual, and the family language is in transition from Minyag monolingualism to Minyag-Tibetan (Khams) bilingualism from the previous generation to the next generation. In daily dialogues, the mixed use of Chinese and Tibetan more happens; in particular, borrowing Chinese words into Tibetan (Khams) is more common. Influential factors include the family, school, and surrounding language environment. Also, Minyag-speaking residents have higher recognition of the use of Chinese and

Tibetan (Khams), and they are more open-minded in learning languages of other ethnic groups, but they are worried about the development prospects of the Minyag language. The situation is not optimistic.

The results of this survey provide a comparison of the characteristics of language use and language exposure and language impact of Minyag-speaking residents. It not only helps to understand the current situation of language life in the Minyag area, but also deepens our understanding of it, and it also fills in the shortcomings in the study of the spoken language use of urban Minyag-speaking residents. With the rapid development of urbanization, various ethnic groups and their languages are in a period of increasing contact with each other. The detailed observation and description of the language behaviour of the Minyag group can be referred to for language policy formulation and bilingual teaching in the Minyag area. Also, the study of the status quo of language use provides essential reference information. At the same time, from the perspectives of multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic areas, ethnic unity, social stability, national unity, and cultural development, this study can enrich the study of sociolinguistics and add an example to the study of Tibetan language use, and thus make predictions about the development of language.

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