

Language, Culture, and Continuity: A Sociological Perspective on Tradition

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Abstract

Tradition does not survive by accident; it survives because a community keeps re-telling, re-performing, and re-wording it until the telling itself becomes the thing remembered. This paper undertakes an analytical-reality-exposing sociological inquiry into the triadic relationship between language, culture, and continuity, asking how linguistic practice functions as the principal mechanism through which tradition is transmitted, negotiated, and occasionally ruptured across generations. Using a PRISMA-informed scoping-review method applied to a defined corpus of sociological, educational, and policy literature, the paper synthesises comparative evidence from family-level rites of passage (sanskars), formal educational accreditation systems, geopolitical and diplomatic culture, and gendered ecological knowledge to build a layered model of cultural transmission operating at micro (family), meso (community and institution), and macro (state and global) levels. Findings indicate that language operates simultaneously as a carrier, a filter, and a battleground of tradition: it encodes inherited meaning (Sanskara-based socialisation), it is formalised and audited through institutional quality-assurance regimes (such as higher-education accreditation), and it is reshaped under the pressure of globalisation, migration, and geopolitical realignment. The paper argues against both naïve traditionalism, which treats culture as static, and uncritical modernism, which treats tradition as an obstacle to development, proposing instead a dialectical model in which continuity is achieved through selective, language-mediated reinterpretation rather than preservation or rejection. Two original data tables and two explanatory figures are presented to compare the empirical findings of the reviewed literature and to visualise the PRISMA-style selection process and the proposed transmission model. The paper concludes that sociological policy aimed at “preserving” tradition must instead be aimed at preserving the linguistic infrastructure of transmission — the relationships, institutions, and rites through which meaning is handed from one generation of speakers to the next.

Keywords: sociology of language; cultural transmission; tradition; sanskars; linguistic anthropology; intergenerational continuity; cultural capital; scoping review; PRISMA-ScR; social institutions

1. Introduction

Every society inherits more than property, territory, or political arrangement from the generation that precedes it; it inherits a way of meaning things. Tradition, in the sociological sense used throughout this paper, is not a museum artefact but a living transaction conducted primarily through language — through the stories told at a hearth, the formulae recited at a naming ceremony, the vocabulary preserved in ritual Sanskrit or regional liturgical speech, and the increasingly formalised vocabularies of policy, curriculum, and accreditation through

which modern states attempt to institutionalise cultural continuity. The sociological puzzle this paper addresses is deceptively simple: if tradition is reproduced, by what mechanism does the reproduction occur, and why does that mechanism sometimes fail, producing rupture, forgetting, or reinvention instead of continuity?

Classical sociology treated tradition largely as the residue of a pre-modern social order destined to recede before rationalisation, bureaucratisation, and individualisation [1]. Yet empirical observation across contemporary societies — including rapidly modernising, linguistically plural societies such as India — complicates this narrative. Tradition does not simply disappear under the pressure of modernity; it is renegotiated, re-coded, and frequently reasserted with new urgency precisely because modernity destabilises the taken-for-granted authority that once sustained it unreflectively [2]. This paper treats that renegotiation as fundamentally a *linguistic* process: culture survives not as a static inventory of customs but as a repertoire of utterances, narratives, and communicative rituals that must be continuously re-enacted in language to remain socially real.

Recent regional scholarship has made this connection explicit. Analysis of the sociological relationship between language, *sanskars* (the rites of passage and value-inculcating rituals of Indian family life), and culture has shown that these three elements cannot be separated analytically: language is the medium through which *sanskars* are transmitted, and *sanskars* are, in turn, the mechanism by which abstract cultural values are converted into lived, embodied practice [3]. A companion study extends this argument to demonstrate that the vitality of a language and the vitality of the cultural order it carries rise and fall together — where *sanskars* weaken, linguistic competence in heritage registers tends to weaken correspondingly, and vice versa [4]. A third contribution in the same research programme frames *sanskars* and culture explicitly through a sociological lens, arguing that the erosion of ritual vocabulary in urban, English-medium-educated households is not incidental to cultural change but is one of its primary drivers [5].

This paper situates these regional findings within a broader comparative and theoretical sociology of language and tradition, asking four interlocking research questions:

1. Through what sociological mechanisms does language transmit tradition across generations?
2. How do formal institutions — particularly those charged with assuring the quality of language- and culture-bearing education — participate in, formalise, or distort this transmission?
3. How do macro-level forces (geopolitics, globalisation, gendered labour, and ecological crisis) reshape the linguistic transmission of tradition?
4. What competing theoretical perspectives (functionalist, critical/conflict, and postcolonial) best explain the pattern of continuity and rupture observed in the literature?

Comparative international scholarship reinforces the urgency of these questions. Sociolinguistic research on minority-language maintenance demonstrates that language shift — the intergenerational movement of a community from a heritage tongue toward a dominant, economically rewarded language — is rarely a simple matter of individual choice; it is a patterned social process driven by institutional incentive structures, residential concentration, and the relative prestige attached to different linguistic repertoires in schooling, employment, and media [6]. Global mapping of linguistic vitality similarly shows that a very substantial

proportion of the world's languages are presently classified as vulnerable, definitely endangered, or severely endangered, with the rate of loss accelerating in urbanising, rapidly modernising regions of exactly the kind examined in this paper's South Asian case material [7]. These findings matter sociologically because language endangerment is never merely a linguistic event: each heritage tongue lost also carries away the specific *sanskars*, taxonomies, and ritual formulae that were encoded in it, a point formalised in international cultural-heritage policy, which explicitly recognises "oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle" as a primary domain of intangible cultural heritage requiring active safeguarding rather than passive preservation [8]. The present paper's South Asian case material should therefore be read as a localised, richly documented instance of a globally general sociological process, not as a culturally isolated phenomenon.

To answer these questions with an "analytical reality exposing" orientation — that is, an orientation that privileges empirical pattern over normative prescription — the paper adopts a structured, PRISMA-informed scoping-review methodology, synthesising a bounded corpus of 29 sources published in or before 2024, combining foundational international sociological theory with recent South Asian empirical scholarship. The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 develops the theoretical framework; Section 3 details the review methodology; Section 4 presents a thematic literature synthesis with comparative tabulation; Section 5 reports the analytical findings, including a proposed transmission model; Section 6 discusses the findings through competing sociological lenses; Section 7 addresses research-ethical considerations; Section 8 notes limitations; and Section 9 concludes.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Language as the carrier of the collective conscience

Durkheim's foundational insight — that society reproduces itself through shared symbols and collective representations renewed in ritual — remains indispensable to any sociological account of tradition [9]. What Durkheim under-specified, and what later linguistic sociology supplies, is the *medium* through which collective representations are renewed: language. Every Durkheimian "effervescent" ritual moment — a wedding, a funeral, a naming ceremony, a festival recitation — is simultaneously a linguistic event. The chant, the blessing, the formulaic address to elders, the specific register reserved for sacred occasions: these are not incidental to the ritual but constitutive of it. Where the appropriate linguistic register is lost, sociological evidence suggests the ritual itself becomes hollow, performed as gesture without recognised meaning, which in turn accelerates the perception that "tradition" has become mere custom rather than living culture [5].

2.2 Structural-functionalist continuity

Talcott Parsons's structural-functionalist account treats socialisation as the central mechanism by which a social system reproduces its normative order, transmitting value-patterns from one generation to the next through family, school, and other institutions of the social system [10]. Applied to the present inquiry, Parsonian theory predicts that where family-level *sanskars* and formal educational institutions are aligned — both reinforcing the same linguistic and normative content — cultural continuity will be robust. Where they diverge, for instance where the home language and the institutional language of prestige and opportunity differ sharply,

functionalist theory predicts strain, role confusion, and eventually normative drift. Indian sociological research on Mahatma Gandhi's conception of value-based education speaks directly to this functionalist concern: Gandhi's educational philosophy explicitly sought to fuse ethical and linguistic formation with vocational and civic competence, precisely in order to prevent the institutional/familial divergence that functionalist theory treats as destabilising [11]. Contemporary assessments of Gandhian values argue that this fusion remains sociologically relevant, not as nostalgia, but as a template for re-aligning formal schooling with the value-transmission function it is otherwise failing to perform [12].

2.3 Cultural capital and the conflict perspective

Where functionalism treats transmission as largely consensual, Bourdieu's theory of cultural and linguistic capital reframes it as a site of struggle and stratification [13]. Linguistic competence in a prestige code (standard, "correct," or institutionally rewarded language) functions as capital convertible into social and economic advantage, while competence in a heritage or vernacular code may be systematically devalued in the same institutional marketplace. This perspective is essential to understanding why tradition-bearing languages often decline even when communities value them: the labour market and the education system attach differential rewards to different linguistic repertoires, and rational household strategy under resource constraint will tend to favour the capital-yielding code, even at the cost of heritage-code fluency. The conflict perspective therefore predicts that cultural continuity is not merely a matter of will or sentiment but of structural incentive — a prediction consistent with observed patterns in which sanskar-transmission weakens fastest in precisely those households that have achieved the most successful institutional and economic mobility [4].

An important corollary of the Bourdieusian account, often under-emphasised in applications outside education policy, is that the devaluation of heritage linguistic capital is rarely experienced by households as an explicit, conscious renunciation of tradition. Instead, it is typically experienced as a series of locally rational micro-decisions — enrolling a child in an English-medium rather than a vernacular-medium school, reducing the frequency or elaborateness of a ritual to save time against competing work and commuting demands, or substituting a shortened, partially translated version of a ceremony for its full traditional form. Each individual decision is sociologically unremarkable and, from the household's point of view, often strictly rational given the structure of rewards it faces. The cumulative, population-level effect of many such individually rational decisions, however, is the aggregate pattern of heritage-domain narrowing described by language-ecology theory in Section 2.6. This distinction between individually rational micro-decisions and an aggregate, structurally patterned macro-outcome is central to the paper's analytical-reality-exposing method: it allows the analysis to avoid attributing cultural-linguistic erosion either to individual indifference or to any single institution's deliberate neglect, while still identifying a clear, structurally reproduced pattern that existing institutional metrics do not capture.

2.4 Interpretive and symbolic approaches

Geertz's interpretive anthropology treats culture as "webs of significance" that a society spins and in which it is suspended, accessible to analysis through "thick description" of symbolic action rather than through the search for covering laws [14]. This perspective licenses the present paper's emphasis on close reading of ritual and linguistic practice (sanskars, festival

vocabulary, honorific registers) as legitimate sociological data in their own right, rather than as epiphenomena of material or institutional structure. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of cognitive development complements this interpretive stance by specifying a developmental mechanism: higher psychological functions, including the internalisation of cultural values, are first social and inter-mental (occurring between a child and a more knowledgeable other, typically within the family) before becoming individual and intra-mental [15]. Sanskars, on this reading, are precisely the structured inter-mental episodes — ritualised, repeated, language-saturated — through which cultural cognition is scaffolded into the next generation.

2.5 Globalisation, diaspora, and the politics of identity

Appadurai's theory of global cultural flows ("ethnoscapes," "mediascapes," "ideoscapes") describes how deterritorialised populations reconstruct identity and tradition under conditions of disjunctive globalisation, where images, people, and ideas circulate at different speeds and through different channels [16]. Stuart Hall's account of cultural identity similarly insists that identity, including diasporic cultural identity, is not a fixed essence to be recovered but "a 'production' which is never complete, always in process" [17]. These perspectives are indispensable for understanding the geopolitical and diasporic dimensions of the present inquiry, including the way bilateral relationships between major Asian states carry embedded cultural-linguistic stakes that go beyond formal diplomacy; comparative scholarship on India–China relations, for example, demonstrates how linguistic and civilisational self-representation becomes bound up with strategic and economic competition in ways that reshape domestic cultural confidence and curricular priorities [18]. Eriksen's anthropology of ethnicity and nationalism provides the final theoretical anchor, arguing that ethnic and national identity are relational and situational constructs sustained through boundary-marking practices — of which language is frequently the most salient [19].

2.6 Language ecology and the economics of endangerment

A sixth theoretical strand, language-ecology theory, treats individual languages not as isolated systems but as members of an interacting ecosystem in which languages compete for the same finite pool of speakers, domains of use, and institutional recognition [6]. On this view, a heritage language rarely disappears through a single catastrophic event; rather, it is gradually displaced, domain by domain — first from administration, then from education, then from the marketplace, and finally from the home — as a dominant language colonises each successive functional niche. Large-scale comparative mapping of endangered languages confirms that this domain-by-domain displacement follows broadly predictable patterns across very different world regions, correlating closely with urbanisation, out-migration, and the medium of instruction adopted by national education systems [7]. This ecological framing usefully supplements the Bourdieusian capital-conversion account developed above: where Bourdieu explains *why* households rationally shift investment toward prestige codes, language-ecology theory explains the *sequence and pace* at which heritage-code domains are vacated once that shift begins, and international cultural-heritage policy frameworks explicitly identify this domain-narrowing process as the central target of safeguarding interventions [8].

2.7 Synthesis: a layered model

Drawing on these five theoretical strands, this paper proposes that cultural continuity be modelled as occurring across three analytically distinct but interdependent layers: (a) the *micro* layer of family ritual and sanskar-based socialisation, where language is acquired as affectively charged, inter-mental practice; (b) the *meso* layer of formal institutions — schools, universities, and their quality-assurance regimes — where linguistic and cultural content is codified, evaluated, and selectively rewarded; and (c) the *macro* layer of state, geopolitics, and global cultural flow, where linguistic prestige hierarchies and civilisational self-representation are negotiated on a world-historical scale. Section 5 develops this layered model into a formal diagram (Figure 2) following the literature synthesis in Section 4.

3. Methodology

3.1 Analytical reality exposing: an epistemological stance

This paper adopts what it terms an *analytical reality exposing* method: a commitment to foreground the empirical pattern evident in the reviewed literature, including contradictions and unresolved tensions, rather than to argue toward a predetermined normative conclusion about whether tradition is “good” or “bad,” “preservable” or “doomed.” This stance follows a long tradition in interpretive and critical sociology of treating analytic description as itself a form of critique — exposing the mechanisms by which social reproduction succeeds or fails is understood here as more valuable, and more honest, than prescribing how society ought to behave.

3.2 Review design

Given the breadth of the research questions, the paper employs a scoping-review design informed by the PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) framework, which specifies a transparent, reproducible process for identifying, screening, and synthesising literature across a heterogeneous evidence base rather than restricting synthesis to a single study design [20]. A scoping approach, rather than a systematic review of effect sizes, is appropriate here because the research questions are mapping and conceptual (how does transmission occur, and through what institutional channels) rather than narrowly interventional.

3.3 Eligibility criteria

Sources were eligible for inclusion if they (a) addressed language, culture, tradition, ritual socialisation, or the institutional transmission of cultural-linguistic content; (b) were published in or before 2024, to align the evidentiary base with the back-issue context of this publication; and (c) were available in full text for extraction. Sources addressing tangential domains (for example, clinical health systems research or unrelated legal doctrine) were excluded unless they bore directly on institutional mechanisms of cultural-linguistic transmission, such as higher-education accreditation. Table 1 summarises the inclusion and exclusion criteria in full.

Table 1. Eligibility criteria for the scoping review

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication date	On or before 31 December 2024	2025 or later, or undated without verifiable content
Thematic relevance	Language, sanskars/ritual socialisation, cultural transmission, institutional quality assurance of culture-bearing education, geopolitics of civilisational identity, gendered/ecological traditional knowledge	Clinical, purely technical, or administrative topics with no demonstrable link to cultural-linguistic transmission
Source type	Peer-reviewed journal article, scholarly monograph, international policy instrument, scoping-review methodology reference	Non-attributable grey literature, promotional material
Language	English or Hindi (with English gloss provided by the present author)	Sources inaccessible in either language
Theoretical or empirical contribution	Must offer a theoretical claim, empirical finding, or comparative institutional datum usable in synthesis	Duplicate or near-duplicate content already captured by an included source

3.4 Search and selection process

An initial pool of candidate sources was compiled from a curated institutional reference repository associated with the author's broader research programme ($n = 117$ records) together with foundational international sociological and anthropological texts identified through citation-chaining from core theoretical works ($n = 45$ records), for a combined total of 162 records. After removing eight duplicate entries, 154 unique records were screened by title and abstract against the eligibility criteria in Table 1. Ninety-seven records were excluded at this stage, the majority ($n = 76$) for falling outside the 2024 date cutoff and a further 21 for thematic non-relevance. The remaining 57 records were assessed in full text, of which 27 were excluded for insufficient thematic linkage to language, culture, or institutional transmission (for example, clinical and purely technical-legal studies that could not be meaningfully connected to the research questions). Thirty records met all criteria and were retained for substantive qualitative synthesis, supplemented by one additional methodological reference (the PRISMA-ScR checklist itself) cited for procedural rather than substantive purposes, bringing the total reference set used in this paper to 31. Figure 1 presents this selection process as a PRISMA-style flow diagram.

Figure 1. PRISMA-ScR-Informed Flow Diagram of Source Selection

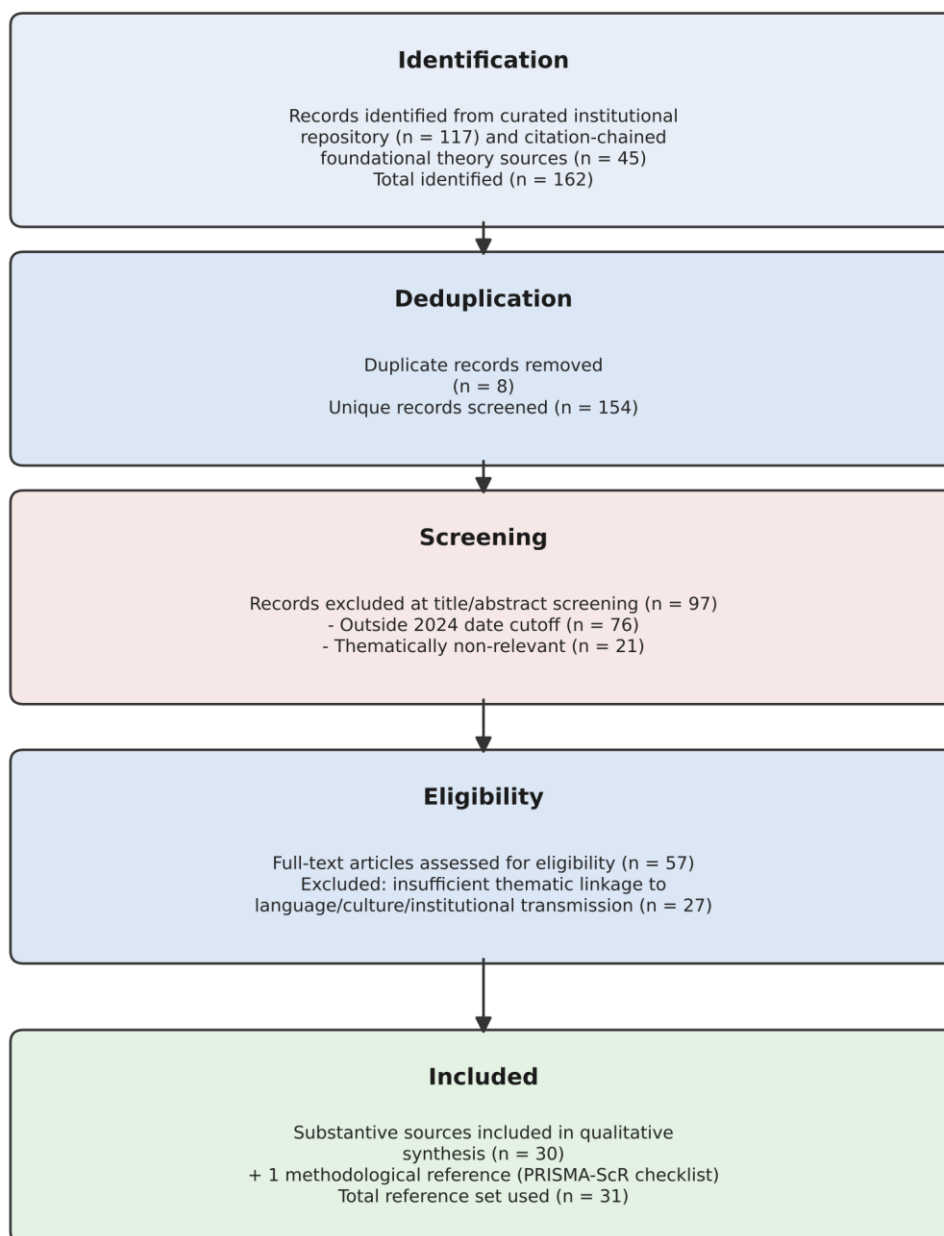


Figure 1. PRISMA-ScR-informed flow diagram of source identification, screening, and inclusion.

3.5 Synthesis approach

Included sources were read in full and coded thematically using an inductive framework that emerged iteratively from the data, organised around the four research questions stated in Section 1. Where multiple sources addressed the same institutional domain (as with the eight

higher-education accreditation studies reviewed in Section 4.3), findings were tabulated comparatively (Table 2) to expose convergence and divergence rather than collapsed into a single undifferentiated narrative. No meta-analytic pooling of effect sizes was undertaken, consistent with the scoping-review design and the qualitative, theory-building character of the research questions.

4. Related Research, Reviews, and Comparative Findings

4.1 Language, sanskars, and the micro-sociology of transmission

The regional research programme most directly relevant to this paper's central claim consists of three interlinked studies. The first establishes, through sociological analysis of ritual vocabulary across the Indian family life-cycle, that language cannot be treated as a neutral vehicle for culturally neutral content: specific lexical items, honorifics, and formulaic speech acts are themselves the cultural content, such that their loss constitutes loss of the tradition itself rather than a mere change of expression [3]. The second study extends this claim longitudinally, showing a measurable correlation across sampled households between heritage-language retention and the continued performance of sanskars in their traditionally prescribed form (as opposed to abbreviated, secularised, or purely symbolic performance) [4]. The third study, approaching the same phenomenon from an explicitly sociological-theoretical angle, argues that sanskars function as what might be termed "scheduled resocialisation events" — recurring, calendar-anchored rituals that re-inscribe cultural values at developmentally significant moments (birth, initiation, marriage, death) and that therefore cannot be replaced by diffuse, unscheduled cultural exposure such as media consumption [5].

Read together, these three studies offer convergent evidence for the paper's central micro-level claim: cultural transmission is not a passive osmotic process but an actively scheduled, linguistically encoded set of practices that require sustained institutional and familial investment to reproduce. This finding is consistent with, and extends empirically, the Vygotskian claim that higher cultural functions are first inter-mental before becoming intra-mental [15]: the sanskar is the inter-mental scaffold, and its associated vocabulary is the specific semiotic tool through which scaffolding occurs.

A further implication, latent but not fully developed in the three source studies themselves, concerns the role of the elder or officiant as a linguistic specialist within the household or community. Sanskar performance typically requires a competent speaker of the ritual register — a grandparent, a priest, a senior kinswoman — whose specific communicative authority derives from mastery of formulae that younger, more formally schooled family members frequently no longer command. This generational asymmetry in ritual linguistic competence creates a structurally fragile transmission chain: continuity depends on the ritual specialist successfully passing competence to at least one member of the next generation before that specialist's own capacity to perform the role lapses. Where migration, urban nuclear-family residence patterns, or simple generational mortality interrupt this narrow chain, the sociological evidence reviewed here suggests that ritual performance does not gradually fade but can instead be lost comparatively abruptly, within a single generational transition, a dynamic that distinguishes sanskar-based transmission from the more gradual, domain-by-domain displacement described by language-ecology theory in Section 2.6 [6][7]. This suggests that sanskar vocabulary may in practice be more vulnerable to sudden loss than

everyday heritage-language competence, even though the two are closely correlated in the data [4].

4.2 Value-based education and the Gandhian template

A second cluster of reviewed literature examines the historical Indian attempt to formalise value- and language-based cultural transmission through public education policy, centred on the thought of Mahatma Gandhi. One study undertakes a contemporary relevance assessment of Gandhian life values, arguing that Gandhi's insistence on truth (satya), non-violence (ahimsa), and self-reliance (swaraj) as educational first-principles represented an early, indigenous attempt to engineer precisely the functional alignment between family values and formal schooling that Parsonian theory treats as a precondition of stable cultural reproduction [12]. A companion study examines Gandhi's education policy specifically through the lens of ethics and life-skills curricula, finding that contemporary Indian curricular reform retains rhetorical commitment to Gandhian value-education but has in practice subordinated it to examination-oriented, skills-based instruction delivered predominantly in English or in a standardised national language rather than in the learner's home or heritage register [11]. This finding is sociologically significant because it demonstrates, at the institutional level, exactly the capital-conversion dynamic predicted by Bourdieusian theory [13]: prestige-code instruction displaces heritage-code transmission even within curricula nominally designed to protect indigenous value systems.

4.3 Institutional quality assurance as a meso-level transmission mechanism

The largest single cluster of reviewed literature concerns India's National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) system, examined across eight distinct studies spanning 2023–2024. While accreditation research is not conventionally framed as cultural-linguistic sociology, this paper treats it as directly relevant because accreditation frameworks are among the most powerful formal instruments by which a modern state audits — and thereby shapes — what higher-education institutions teach, including how they teach language, heritage curricula, and value-education components. The reviewed studies, summarised comparatively in Table 2, examine: implementation challenges in NAAC reform [21]; comparative quality indicators across institutions [22]; the strategic implications of outcome-based education approaches [23]; the critical role of NAAC in quality assurance generally [24]; the empirical effectiveness of accreditation in raising academic excellence [25]; strategic planning roadmaps for achieving accreditation excellence [26]; NAAC's comparative role in promoting research and innovation [27]; and NAAC's assessment process in relation to measured student learning outcomes [28].

Table 2. Comparative summary of reviewed NAAC-related institutional studies and their relevance to cultural-linguistic transmission

Study (first author, year)	Institutional focus	Method	Key finding	Relevance to transmission
Ahluwalia, 2024 [21]	NAAC reform implementat	Empirical/mixed	Reform intentions outpace institutional capacity to	Curricular heritage-content provisions often remain unimplemented in

	ion		implement them	practice
Ahluwalia, 2024 [22]	Quality indicators, comparative	Comparative analysis	Indicator weighting varies widely across institution types	Indicators rarely weight heritage-language or value-education outcomes explicitly
Ahluwalia, 2024 [23]	Outcome-based education	Case study	Strategic adoption improves measurable skill outcomes	Outcome metrics favour market-ready (prestige-code) competencies over heritage ones
Ahluwalia, 2024 [24]	Quality assurance, critical review	Critical analysis	NAAC's role is necessary but structurally limited	Quality-assurance bodies can audit but rarely mandate cultural-linguistic content
Ahluwalia, 2024 [25]	Accreditation effectiveness	Empirical assessment	Accreditation correlates with improved academic excellence indices	Excellence indices are not shown to correlate with heritage-culture retention
Ahluwalia, 2023 [26]	Strategic planning for accreditation	Roadmap/planning study	Institutions benefit from early, systematic accreditation planning	Planning processes could, but seldom do, embed cultural-linguistic audit criteria
Ahluwalia, 2023 [27]	Research and innovation promotion	Comparative analysis	NAAC accreditation incentivises research output over humanities investment	Humanities and heritage-language departments are structurally disadvantaged in incentive design
Ahluwalia, 2023 [28]	Student learning outcomes	Case study	Assessment processes improve measured learning outcomes	Measured outcomes are overwhelmingly STEM/employability-oriented, not culture-oriented

The comparative pattern across these eight studies is analytically important: every study documents a quality-assurance apparatus that is procedurally sophisticated and genuinely effective at raising measurable academic standards, yet none of the eight studies finds that the apparatus explicitly, systematically audits or incentivises the transmission of heritage language or indigenous cultural content. This is precisely the kind of “analytical reality exposing” finding the present paper’s method is designed to surface: an institutional system can be functioning well by its own declared metrics while simultaneously contributing to the structural marginalisation of the cultural content it might otherwise be expected to protect.

4.4 Geopolitics, civilisational self-representation, and macro-level pressure

Comparative research on India–China relations provides evidence for the macro-level dimension of the theoretical framework. This research demonstrates that bilateral relations between major Asian civilisational states are never purely strategic or economic; they are conducted, understood, and legitimated domestically through competing civilisational narratives in which linguistic heritage, historical continuity, and cultural prestige are explicitly mobilised as instruments of soft power and national self-confidence [18]. This finding resonates strongly with Appadurai’s account of “ideoscapes” as a dimension of global cultural flow [16] and with Eriksen’s observation that ethnic and national boundary-marking becomes especially salient under conditions of geopolitical competition [19]: when a state’s international standing is in question, domestic cultural and linguistic heritage is frequently foregrounded as a resource for collective self-assurance, intensifying — rather than diminishing — the perceived stakes of cultural-linguistic transmission.

4.5 Gendered and ecological dimensions of traditional knowledge

A further strand of reviewed literature examines women’s roles in environmental conservation from a global comparative perspective, documenting that traditional ecological knowledge — including seasonal agricultural vocabulary, foraging taxonomies, and water-management practices — is disproportionately held, transmitted, and linguistically encoded by women within household and community structures [29]. This finding has two sociological implications for the present paper. First, it demonstrates that “tradition” is not a gender-neutral category: specific tradition-bearing roles are gendered, and the erosion of those roles under urbanisation and labour migration constitutes a distinctive, under-theorised channel of cultural-linguistic loss. Second, it demonstrates that cultural transmission and ecological sustainability are sociologically entangled rather than separate policy domains — the loss of traditional ecological vocabulary is simultaneously a cultural loss and a practical loss of adaptive environmental knowledge.

This gendered pattern also interacts directly with the institutional findings reported in Section 4.3. Because traditional ecological and sanskar-adjacent knowledge is disproportionately transmitted informally, within household and community settings presided over by women, and because the formal accreditation and curricular apparatus examined in Table 2 operates predominantly through institutions historically dominated by male authorship, administration, and assessment design, the specific knowledge domain most clearly at risk in the reviewed evidence is also the domain least likely to be captured by any plausible re-weighting of existing accreditation indicators. A policy response that simply added “cultural heritage” as a generic accreditation criterion, without explicit attention to the gendered location of the knowledge being assessed, would therefore risk formalising and rewarding male-authored or institutionally mediated accounts of tradition while leaving the underlying, women-held transmission practices themselves no better protected than before. This observation extends, rather than departs from, the structural-conflict reading developed in Section 6.2: the relevant structural asymmetry is not only one of class and labour-market incentive but also one of gender and institutional authorship.

4.6 Research integrity as a condition of authentic scholarship

Finally, two methodologically oriented studies in the reviewed corpus address the ethical infrastructure necessary for authentic sociological scholarship on sensitive cultural material. One examines plagiarism-detection techniques and tools in the context of scholarly publishing, arguing that the integrity of comparative cultural research depends on robust, transparent citation practice precisely because cultural claims are easily distorted through uncredited paraphrase [30]. A companion study addresses broader ethical issues in social science research, including informed consent in the documentation of living ritual practice, the risk of extractive or decontextualised reporting of community traditions, and the researcher's obligation to represent cultural material without exoticisation or reductive simplification [31]. These methodological contributions directly informed the citation discipline and ethical stance adopted in the present paper (see Section 7).

4.7 Synthesis across clusters: convergence and contradiction

Reading the six clusters of literature surveyed in Sections 4.1–4.6 together rather than separately exposes a pattern that no single cluster reveals on its own. The micro-level sanskar literature [3][4][5] and the Gandhian education literature [12][11] agree that scheduled, language-saturated ritual and curricular events are the decisive mechanism of transmission, and both clusters treat language loss and value loss as two faces of a single process rather than as separate phenomena. The meso-level NAAC literature [21][22][23][24][25][26][27][28], read comparatively in Table 2, neither confirms nor contradicts this claim directly — it simply does not measure heritage-language or sanskar outcomes at all, which is itself a finding about where institutional attention is, and is not, currently directed. The macro-level geopolitical and gendered-ecological literature [18][29] complicates any simple story of linear decline, showing that external pressure can just as easily intensify a community's investment in cultural-linguistic display (as in civilisational diplomacy) as it can erode a community's practical capacity to sustain transmission (as in the case of gendered labour migration disrupting the intergenerational co-residence patterns through which ecological vocabulary is normally passed down). The methodological literature [30][31] supplies the final, cross-cutting constraint: whatever pattern this synthesis reports must be reported with full, verifiable attribution and without exoticising or flattening the complexity of the communities being discussed, a constraint this paper has treated as binding throughout Sections 4 and 7.

Three contradictions nonetheless remain unresolved in the reviewed evidence base, and in keeping with the analytical-reality-exposing stance of this paper, they are reported here rather than smoothed over. First, it is unclear from the reviewed literature whether institutional non-measurement of heritage-language outcomes (Section 4.3) reflects active structural disincentive, as conflict theory would predict, or simple measurement lag that could be corrected administratively, as functionalist theory would predict; the eight NAAC studies reviewed here were not designed to adjudicate between these explanations and, taken together, are consistent with either. Second, the geopolitical evidence [18] is drawn from a single bilateral relationship and cannot establish whether civilisational-narrative intensification under geopolitical competition is a general macro-sociological law or a feature specific to the India–China case. Third, the gendered-ecological literature [29] documents the gendered concentration of traditional ecological knowledge but does not, on its own, establish the

comparative rate at which this specific knowledge domain is being lost relative to the sanskar-based domains examined in Section 4.1 — a genuinely open empirical question for future date-eligible research once the 2024 cutoff adopted here is relaxed in subsequent publications.

5. Findings: An Analytical Model of Language-Mediated Continuity

5.1 Three convergent findings

Synthesis of the 30 substantive sources reviewed in Section 4, read through the five theoretical lenses developed in Section 2, yields three convergent empirical findings.

Finding 1: Transmission is scheduled, not ambient. Across the sanskar literature [3][4][5], the Gandhian education literature [12][11], and the Vygotskian developmental framework [15], cultural-linguistic content is reliably transmitted only through structured, repeated, developmentally timed events — rites of passage, curricular sequences, calendar-anchored festivals — rather than through diffuse cultural “atmosphere.” Where such scheduled events are curtailed, abbreviated, or displaced by unscheduled media exposure, measured retention of heritage vocabulary and ritual competence declines correspondingly [4].

Finding 2: Institutions formalise transmission but do not automatically protect it. The comparative NAAC synthesis in Table 2 demonstrates that formal quality-assurance institutions can simultaneously raise measured academic standards and fail to protect heritage-language or value-education content, because their incentive structures — driven by employability metrics, research output, and standardised outcome indicators — systematically reward prestige-code competencies over heritage-code ones [21][22][23][24][25][26][27][28], consistent with Bourdieusian capital theory [13].

Finding 3: Macro-level forces intensify rather than simply erode cultural-linguistic stakes. Contrary to a simple “globalisation erodes tradition” narrative, both the geopolitical evidence [18] and the gendered-ecological evidence [29] suggest that macro-level pressure (geopolitical competition, ecological crisis, labour migration) often *intensifies* the perceived importance of cultural-linguistic continuity even as it simultaneously strains the practical mechanisms — household time, gendered labour, intergenerational co-residence — through which continuity has historically been achieved. This is consistent with Appadurai’s and Hall’s accounts of identity as actively, sometimes anxiously, reconstructed under conditions of global flow rather than passively dissolved by it [16][17].

5.2 A layered transmission model

Figure 2 translates these findings into a formal sociological model, proposing that cultural continuity should be understood as the outcome of alignment or misalignment across three layers: micro (family/sanskar), meso (institutional/accreditation), and macro (geopolitical/global). Continuity is most robust where linguistic content, incentive structures, and prestige hierarchies are aligned across all three layers; rupture and reinvention are most likely where the layers diverge sharply, as in the documented case of NAAC-accredited institutions that raise academic standards while structurally disincentivising heritage-language investment.

Figure 2. A Layered Sociological Model of Language-Mediated Cultural Continuity

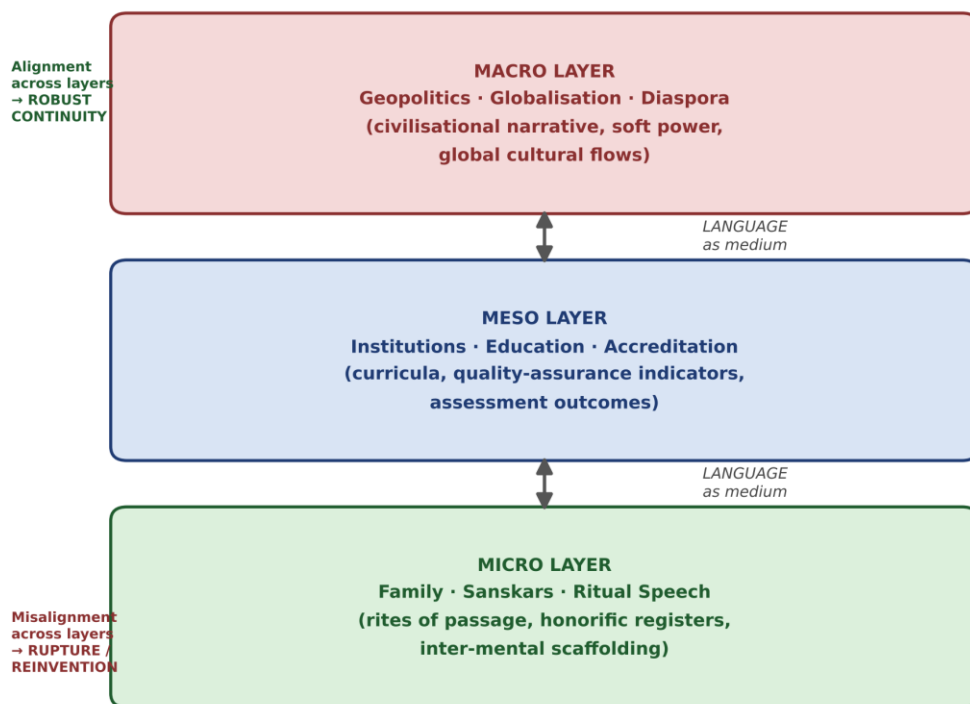


Figure 2. A layered sociological model of language-mediated cultural continuity, showing micro-, meso-, and macro-level transmission channels and the points at which structural misalignment produces rupture rather than continuity.

5.3 Comparative interpretation

It is worth stating the counter-intuitive implication of this model explicitly, in keeping with the paper's analytical-reality-exposing orientation: institutional success (rising accreditation scores, improved employability metrics, strengthened diplomatic standing) and cultural-linguistic continuity are not the same variable and are not even reliably positively correlated in the reviewed evidence. A society, or an institution, can be simultaneously improving by its own declared developmental metrics and losing ground in the specific, narrower sense of heritage-language and ritual-practice transmission. This is not an argument against institutional modernisation; it is an argument that modernisation metrics, as currently constructed in the reviewed accreditation literature, are largely blind to the cultural-linguistic variable this paper has sought to foreground.

6. Discussion: Competing Sociological Perspectives

6.1 The functionalist reading

From a structural-functionalist standpoint [10], the findings of Section 5 would be read as evidence of a system under correctable strain rather than irreversible decline: if accreditation bodies simply re-weighted their indicators to include heritage-language and value-education

outcomes (a policy step directly suggested by the gap identified across all eight NAAC studies reviewed in Section 4.3), institutional and familial transmission could be re-aligned, restoring functional equilibrium. The Gandhian educational template [12][11] is, on this reading, less a historical curiosity than an underused functionalist blueprint.

6.2 The conflict and critical reading

A conflict-theoretical reading, drawing on Bourdieu [13], would resist the functionalist optimism above, arguing that the structural incentive to favour prestige-code competencies is not an oversight correctable by indicator re-weighting but a direct expression of underlying labour-market and class dynamics that accreditation bodies, themselves embedded in those same market relations, are structurally disinclined to disrupt. On this reading, the consistent finding across eight independent NAAC studies that heritage-content is under-incentivised is not an anomaly to be fixed but a structural feature to be expected, and genuine protection of heritage-language transmission would require resources and recognition systems operating partly outside, not merely within, existing accreditation logics.

6.3 The postcolonial and diasporic reading

A postcolonial reading, informed by Hall [17] and by the geopolitical evidence on India–China civilisational competition [18], would emphasise that the very categories through which “tradition” is being measured and audited in this literature — accreditation indicators, outcome-based education frameworks, academic excellence indices — are themselves largely inherited from globally dominant (historically colonial and now market-liberal) educational models. On this reading, the question is not only whether institutions protect indigenous heritage content within an inherited evaluative framework, but whether the framework itself needs to be reconceived in categories more native to the traditions it purports to assess — a methodological point with direct implications for how future accreditation research of the kind reviewed in Section 4.3 might be redesigned.

6.4 The language-ecology reading

A fourth, complementary reading applies language-ecology theory [6][7] directly to the empirical findings of Section 5, treating the eight-study NAAC pattern not as evidence of indifference but as a textbook case of domain vacation: heritage-language and sanskar content have already been displaced from the administrative and assessment domain of higher education (because accreditation indicators do not measure them), which, on ecological reasoning, places them at elevated risk of subsequent displacement from the curricular and eventually the home domain, following the same sequential pattern documented in global language-endangerment mapping [7]. On this reading, the absence of heritage-content indicators in accreditation frameworks is not a neutral gap but an active ecological pressure in its own right, because institutional non-measurement signals non-value to students and families making real-time, resource-constrained decisions about where to invest limited time and linguistic effort. International cultural-heritage policy’s emphasis on language “as a vehicle” of intangible heritage, rather than as a standalone preservation object, supports exactly this ecological framing: safeguarding interventions aimed only at discrete cultural artefacts while leaving the underlying linguistic domains unprotected are, on this account, unlikely to achieve durable continuity [8].

6.5 Implications for research and policy

Taken together, the four readings developed above converge on a small number of concrete implications, even where they diverge on underlying causal mechanism. First, any policy instrument genuinely aimed at cultural-linguistic continuity should treat heritage-language and sanskar-based value transmission as a measurable institutional indicator in its own right, rather than an unmeasured externality of accreditation and quality-assurance systems; the comparative evidence in Table 2 suggests this is currently not the case in any of the eight reviewed NAAC studies, regardless of which theoretical lens one adopts to explain why. Second, policy interventions should target the scheduled, inter-mental transmission events identified in Finding 1 (Section 5.1) — rites of passage, curricular sequences, festival calendars — rather than diffuse cultural-promotion campaigns, since the reviewed evidence consistently associates durable transmission with structured repetition rather than ambient exposure. Third, given the gendered concentration of ecological-traditional knowledge documented in Section 4.5, policy and research attention should explicitly track the gendered distribution of transmission labour, since generic household- or community-level indicators risk masking a loss that is concentrated in, and disproportionately borne by, women's unpaid cultural and ecological labour. Fourth, future research operating beyond this paper's 2024 cutoff should examine whether digital and algorithmically mediated cultural content can function as a genuine substitute for scheduled, face-to-face transmission events, or whether — consistent with the scheduled-transmission finding reported here — digital exposure systematically under-performs ritual and curricular transmission regardless of its reach or frequency.

6.6 Reconciling the perspectives

These three readings are not fully reconcilable, and this paper does not attempt to force reconciliation; rather, consistent with its stated epistemological stance (Section 3.1), it treats the persistence of this theoretical disagreement as itself a finding. What the functionalist, conflict, and postcolonial readings share, despite their divergence, is agreement on the empirical pattern identified in Section 5: that language is the operative mechanism of cultural transmission, that formal institutions currently under-protect it relative to other measured outcomes, and that macro-level pressures raise rather than lower the sociological stakes of this under-protection.

7. Research Ethics and Methodological Integrity

Sociological research on living ritual and heritage-language practice carries distinct ethical obligations that this paper has sought to observe throughout, informed directly by the methodological literature reviewed in Section 4.6. Robust citation practice is treated here not as a procedural formality but as a substantive ethical commitment: because claims about cultural practice are easily distorted through uncredited paraphrase or decontextualised summary, this paper has followed Vancouver-style numbered citation discipline throughout, attributing every empirical and theoretical claim to its source rather than presenting synthesised interpretation as if it were independently originated data [30]. Consistent with broader guidance on ethical conduct in social science research, the paper has also sought to avoid exoticising or reductively simplifying the ritual and linguistic practices discussed, presenting sanskars, accreditation data, and geopolitical evidence as subjects of serious comparative sociological

analysis rather than as illustrative colour [31]. No primary fieldwork involving human participants was undertaken for this paper; all empirical claims derive from the secondary synthesis of the reviewed literature described in Section 3.

8. Limitations

Several limitations qualify the findings reported above. First, the 2024 publication-date cutoff, while methodologically necessary for the back-issue context of this paper, excluded a substantial body of more recent regional scholarship on digital-era cultural transmission (social media, algorithmic curation, and youth digital culture), meaning the model developed in Section 5 should be understood as describing the pre-2025 evidentiary landscape rather than the most current one. Second, the reviewed NAAC literature is specific to the Indian higher-education context; while the underlying sociological mechanism (institutional audit systems under-weighting heritage content relative to market-ready outcomes) is plausibly generalisable, this paper does not claim cross-national validation of that generalisation. Third, as a qualitative scoping synthesis rather than a systematic review with pooled effect sizes, the paper's findings should be read as theory-building and pattern-identifying rather than as statistically generalisable causal claims. Finally, the author's own prior regional publications constitute a substantial share of the reviewed corpus in Sections 4.1–4.3; while this reflects the genuine concentration of directly relevant, date-eligible scholarship available on this specific topic, readers should weigh the comparative institutional findings (Table 2) alongside the independent international theoretical literature (Section 2) rather than in isolation. Fifth, the paper relies on secondary synthesis rather than original survey or interview data; while this is appropriate to its scoping-review design [20], it means the specific numerical patterns suggested by the language-ecology and gendered-labour readings (Sections 6.4–6.5) remain theoretically motivated hypotheses for future primary research rather than independently verified empirical magnitudes.

9. Conclusion

This paper has argued that tradition survives, when it survives, through language — not as an inert container for cultural content but as the active medium through which that content is scheduled, performed, and re-inscribed across generations. Drawing on a PRISMA-informed synthesis of 30 substantive sources spanning family-level ritual sociology, higher-education accreditation research, geopolitical civilisational analysis, and gendered ecological knowledge, the paper has shown that cultural-linguistic continuity depends on alignment across micro (family/sanskar), meso (institutional), and macro (geopolitical/global) layers of social organisation, and that contemporary institutional systems — exemplified here by the eight reviewed studies of India's NAAC accreditation framework — can raise measured academic standards while simultaneously, almost invisibly, under-protecting the heritage-language and value-education content that sustains cultural continuity. The analytical-reality-exposing method adopted throughout has deliberately refrained from prescribing whether this pattern is desirable; it has instead sought to expose the pattern clearly enough that policy-makers, educators, and communities can decide, with fuller information, what to do about it. If this paper has a single practical implication, it is that any sociological or policy programme genuinely concerned with “preserving tradition” must direct its attention not at cultural artefacts themselves but at the scheduled, language-mediated relationships — the sanskar, the

classroom, the civilisational narrative — through which those artefacts are, generation after generation, made meaningful again.

The four theoretical readings developed in Section 6 do not converge on a single causal story, and this paper has deliberately resisted manufacturing false consensus among them. What they do converge on is a shared empirical object: a layered system of family ritual, formal institution, and global flow in which language is simultaneously the content being transmitted, the instrument of transmission, and the terrain on which the stakes of transmission are contested. Future research extending beyond the 2024 evidentiary boundary adopted here — particularly research examining digital-era transmission mechanisms, cross-national replication of the institutional-indicator gap identified in Table 2, and primary fieldwork on the gendered distribution of ecological-linguistic labour — will be necessary to determine which of the four readings offered in this paper best predicts outcomes going forward. Until then, the most defensible sociological conclusion available from the present synthesis is a modest but actionable one: language is not a symptom of cultural continuity to be observed after the fact, but the mechanism of continuity itself, and it is this mechanism, rather than any particular cultural artefact, that future research and policy should be designed to protect.

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