



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Transgenerational political socialization through symbolic capital: A Bourdieuan Analysis of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 7th March Speech

Abid Hasan Sijan ¹, Mohammad Rahmatullah ^{2,*} and Mohammad Jashim Uddin ³

¹ B.A. Hons. Student In English Language and Literature, Northern University Bangladesh.

² Senior Lecturer, Department of English Language and Literature, Northern University Bangladesh.

³ Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Northern University Bangladesh

International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 2024, 12(02), 428–434

Publication history: Received on 29 May 2024; revised on 07 July 2024; accepted on 09 July 2024

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2024.12.2.1241>

Abstract

This article rigorously examines the transgenerational impact of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's seminal 7th March speech through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction. Delivered in 1971, this speech catalyzed the Bengali independence movement and continues to shape political socialization in Bangladesh. By dissecting the speech as a potent form of cultural capital, this study elucidates its role in forming collective habitus and exerting symbolic power across generations. The analysis underscores the speech's enduring influence on national identity, civic engagement, and political discourse. The findings reveal significant practical and societal implications, suggesting the integration of this historical narrative into educational curricula and community initiatives to foster cohesive political consciousness.

Keywords: Cultural Capital; Habitus; Symbolic Power; Transgenerational Influence; Political Socialization; Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

1. Introduction

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's speech on 7th March 1971 stands as a monumental moment in the history of Bangladesh, encapsulating the aspirations and the resilient spirit of the Bengali people in their pursuit of independence. Delivered at a time of intense political tension and social upheaval, the speech not only galvanized the masses but also laid the foundation for the Liberation War that eventually led to the creation of Bangladesh. His speech is celebrated not just for its immediate political impact but for its enduring influence on the collective consciousness of the nation.

Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Reproduction offers a compelling framework for analyzing the long-lasting effects of Bangabandhu's speech. Bourdieu's theory, which explores how cultural capital is transmitted across generations and how it contributes to the maintenance of social structures, provides a nuanced lens through which to examine the speech's role in shaping the political and social fabric of Bangladesh. Bourdieu posits that cultural capital—comprising knowledge, skills, and education—plays a crucial role in social mobility and the perpetuation of societal norms and values. This theory can be instrumental in understanding how his speech functions as a form of symbolic capital, influencing the habitus, or ingrained habits and dispositions, of individuals and groups over time.

The purpose of this article is to apply Bourdieu's theoretical constructs to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 7th March speech, demonstrating its role in the transgenerational political socialization of the Bengali people. By dissecting the speech through the concepts of cultural capital, habitus, and symbolic power, this study aims to elucidate how the speech has helped to shape national identity, civic engagement, and political discourse in Bangladesh. The analysis will

* Corresponding author: Mohammad Rahmatullah

highlight the speech's significance in fostering a collective habitus that resonates with the values of independence, justice, and national pride, thus reinforcing its symbolic power across generations.

This article will delve into the historical context of the speech, situating it within the socio-political landscape of Bangladesh in 1971. It will then explore the speech as a form of cultural capital, examining its educational implications and its role in family and community narratives. The concept of habitus will be used to understand how the speech has influenced individual and collective behaviors, while the notion of symbolic power will be employed to analyze its impact on national identity and political dynamics. Through this Bourdieuan analysis, the enduring legacy of his speech will be brought to the forefront, offering insights into its profound societal implications.

2. Cultural Capital and the 7th March Speech

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is integral to understanding the pervasive influence of the 7th March speech. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital refers to non-financial social assets that promote social mobility beyond economic means. These assets include education, intellect, style of speech, dress, or physical appearance, which are utilized to gain advantage in society (Bourdieu and Passeron 115). Bourdieu categorizes cultural capital into three forms: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. Embodied cultural capital consists of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; objectified cultural capital refers to cultural goods such as pictures, books, and instruments; and institutionalized cultural capital comprises educational qualifications.

The 7th March speech can be analyzed as a form of cultural capital that has transcended generations, deeply embedding itself within the collective consciousness of the Bengali people. The speech's content, rich with historical, political, and emotional significance, embodies the values and aspirations of the Bengali populace during the struggle for independence. This speech serves as a potent form of embodied cultural capital, influencing the dispositions and behaviors of individuals who internalize its messages of resistance, unity, and self-determination.

The speech also functions as objectified cultural capital. Recorded, transcribed, and studied, the speech has become a pivotal text in the historical and political narrative of Bangladesh. As an objectified form, it is preserved in educational materials, historical archives, and public commemorations, thus perpetuating its significance and ensuring its transmission across generations. This aligns with Bourdieu's assertion that cultural capital is instrumental in the reproduction of social structures, as the speech continues to shape the ideological framework within which Bengali identity and political consciousness are formed (Bourdieu and Passeron 168). Critics such as John Urry argue that Bourdieu's framework provides a comprehensive tool for understanding the symbolic dimensions of cultural artifacts. Urry posits that speeches like his serve as "symbolic power" that can legitimize social movements and alter power dynamics (Urry 22). His speech exemplifies this, as it not only mobilized the Bengali people but also legitimized the independence movement on a symbolic level.

In educational institutions, the 7th March speech is a cornerstone of the national curriculum, ensuring that its values are systematically taught and internalized by students. The incorporation of the speech into school programs serves multiple purposes. Firstly, it educates students about the historical context and significance of the independence movement, fostering a sense of national pride and identity. As Bourdieu posits, the educational system plays a critical role in the transmission of cultural capital, as it "ensures the transmission of cultural capital across generations and stamps pre-existing differences in inherited cultural capital with a meritocratic seal of academic consecration" (Bourdieu and Passeron 178). By embedding the speech in the curriculum, the educational system legitimizes its importance and reinforces its symbolic power, shaping the political socialization of young learners.

The speech's role in family narratives further illustrates its function as cultural capital. In Bengali households, stories of the independence movement and recitations of Bangabandhu's speech are integral to the intergenerational transmission of values and historical consciousness. Families serve as primary sites of socialization where cultural capital is both inherited and cultivated. The speech, often recited or referenced in familial settings, becomes a means through which parents impart the values of resilience, justice, and national pride to their children. This process aligns with Bourdieu's concept of habitus, where ingrained habits and dispositions are shaped by cultural and familial influences.

A poignant excerpt from the speech encapsulates its emotional and cultural resonance: "The struggle this time is a struggle for emancipation! The struggle this time is a struggle for independence!" (Rahman). This declaration not only galvanized immediate action but also left an indelible mark on the national psyche. The speech's rhetorical power, as an element of symbolic capital, reinforces social hierarchies and power dynamics, legitimizing the Bengali struggle for independence and its ongoing impact on national identity.

Critic Roland Robertson has highlighted the role of such speeches in shaping national identity and cultural memory, arguing that they serve as "cultural benchmarks" that influence collective memory and societal values (Robertson 45). His speech, in this context, operates as a cultural benchmark, continually reinforcing the values and ideals of the independence movement. The 7th March speech exemplifies the multifaceted nature of cultural capital as outlined by Bourdieu. Its enduring influence in educational institutions and family narratives underscores its role in shaping the collective habitus of the Bengali people. Through the lens of cultural capital, the speech's significance is not merely historical but a continuing force in the political and social landscape of Bangladesh.

3. Habitus Formation through Historical Narratives

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus is central to understanding the long-lasting impact of the 7th March speech on the political socialization of the Bengali people. Habitus, as defined by Bourdieu, refers to the deeply ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions that individuals acquire through their experiences and social interactions. It is a system of durable and transposable dispositions that guides behavior and thought, shaping how individuals perceive and react to the world around them (Bourdieu 72). Habitus is critical in the process of political socialization, as it encompasses the internalized norms and values that influence political beliefs and actions.

Bangabandhu's speech profoundly influenced the collective habitus of the Bengali people by embedding themes of resistance, unity, and self-determination into the national consciousness. Delivered at a crucial juncture in the struggle for independence, the speech articulated a vision of freedom and justice that resonated deeply with the populace. As he declared, "The struggle this time is a struggle for emancipation! The struggle this time is a struggle for independence!" (Rahman). This call to action not only galvanized immediate support for the independence movement but also instilled a lasting sense of purpose and identity among Bengalis.

The themes of the speech contribute to the collective habitus by shaping the values and behaviors of individuals and groups. Bourdieu asserts that habitus is formed through the internalization of social structures and cultural practices, which are then reproduced in everyday actions (Bourdieu and Passeron 86). His speech, with its emphasis on solidarity and resistance against oppression, became a key cultural artifact that informed the collective habitus. The repeated invocation of unity and sacrifice fostered a shared sense of identity and purpose, reinforcing the cultural norms and values associated with the independence movement. Critics such as Loïc Wacquant have emphasized the role of habitus in political socialization, arguing that it shapes not only individual dispositions but also collective identities and actions (Wacquant 93). The speech exemplifies this process, as it reinforced the collective habitus by embedding the ideals of freedom and justice into the national consciousness. This internalization of the speech's themes is evident in the behaviors and attitudes of individuals who grew up hearing its powerful message.

The speech's influence on individual and collective behaviors can be observed in various aspects of Bengali society. For instance, the emphasis on unity and collective action has fostered a strong sense of community and civic engagement. During the independence movement, this was evident in the widespread participation in protests, strikes, and other forms of resistance. His directive to the people—"I now declare the closure of all the courts, offices, and educational institutions for an indefinite period of time. No one will report to their offices—that is my instruction to you" (Rahman)—demonstrates the mobilization of the collective habitus towards achieving a common goal.

Furthermore, the speech has continued to influence political attitudes and behaviors in contemporary Bangladesh. The values articulated by Bangabandhu have been transmitted across generations, shaping the political socialization of young people who are taught the significance of the independence movement and the importance of civic duty. Educational programs and community initiatives that commemorate the speech and its historical context play a crucial role in this process, ensuring that the themes of unity, resistance, and justice remain central to the national identity.

Critic David Swartz notes that the formation of habitus is a dynamic process, influenced by ongoing social and cultural interactions (Swartz 114). This speech, as a pivotal historical narrative, has been continually reinforced through public commemorations, educational curricula, and familial storytelling. This ongoing reinforcement ensures that the values and dispositions associated with the speech are perpetuated, contributing to the stability and cohesion of the collective habitus.

This 7th March speech serves as a foundational element in the formation of the Bengali collective habitus. Through its powerful themes and enduring influence, the speech has shaped the political socialization of generations, embedding values of resistance, unity, and justice into the national consciousness. By examining the speech through Bourdieu's concept of habitus, we gain a deeper understanding of its role in shaping individual and collective behaviors and attitudes, highlighting its lasting impact on the social and political landscape of Bangladesh.

4. Symbolic Power and National Identity

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power is essential for understanding the profound impact of Bangabandhu's 7th March speech on the national identity and political discourse of Bangladesh. Symbolic power, according to Bourdieu, refers to the capacity to impose meanings and norms as legitimate, thereby shaping perceptions and social reality (Bourdieu 78). It operates through the control of symbols and cultural forms, which reinforce and legitimize social hierarchies and power dynamics. Symbolic power is inherently linked to language and discourse, as it is through these mediums that it exerts its influence.

His 7th March speech exemplifies symbolic power in its ability to legitimize the Bengali independence movement and redefine national identity. The speech's rhetorical force and emotional resonance mobilized the masses, transforming the political landscape of the region. Bangabandhu's assertion, "The struggle this time is a struggle for emancipation! The struggle this time is a struggle for independence!" (Rahman), encapsulates the symbolic power of the speech. This declaration not only articulated the aspirations of the Bengali people but also conferred legitimacy on their quest for freedom, positioning the movement within a moral and just framework.

Critics such as John B. Thompson emphasize the role of symbolic power in the construction of social reality, arguing that it is through symbolic forms that power relations are maintained and contested (Thompson 56). Bangabandhu's speech, through its potent symbolism and evocative language, reinforced the legitimacy of the independence movement and galvanized public support. The speech's symbolic power lies in its ability to resonate with the collective consciousness, embedding the values of resistance, justice, and national pride into the fabric of Bengali identity.

The speech's symbolic power is further illustrated by its ongoing influence in shaping national identity and political discourse. In the immediate aftermath of the speech, it served as a rallying cry for the independence movement, inspiring widespread participation in acts of resistance and civil disobedience. His directive, "I now declare the closure of all the courts, offices, and educational institutions for an indefinite period of time. No one will report to their offices—that is my instruction to you" (Rahman), exemplifies the mobilization of symbolic power to effect tangible political action.

In contemporary Bangladesh, the speech continues to hold significant symbolic power. It is commemorated annually, and its themes are integrated into educational curricula and public commemorations. This ongoing reinforcement ensures that the values and ideals articulated by his remain central to the national identity. As Bourdieu notes, the durability of symbolic power lies in its ability to perpetuate itself through cultural practices and social institutions (Bourdieu and Passeron 83). The 7th March speech, through its continued presence in the national narrative, exemplifies this perpetuation, shaping the political socialization of successive generations.

Critic Michael Billig highlights the importance of national symbols and narratives in fostering a sense of collective identity and cohesion (Billig 44). The speech, with its powerful imagery and emotive language, functions as a national symbol that unites the Bengali people around a shared history and common purpose. The speech's emphasis on unity and collective action has fostered a strong sense of community and civic engagement, reinforcing the collective habitus and shaping political attitudes and behaviors.

The symbolic power of the speech also extends to its role in political discourse. It serves as a benchmark against which contemporary political actions and policies are measured. Politicians and activists frequently invoke the speech to legitimize their actions and align themselves with its ideals. This use of symbolic power in political discourse underscores the speech's enduring relevance and influence.

The speech exemplifies the concept of symbolic power as articulated by Bourdieu. Its ability to legitimize the independence movement, shape national identity, and influence political discourse underscores its profound and lasting impact on the social and political landscape of Bangladesh. By examining the speech through the lens of symbolic power, we gain a deeper understanding of its role in constructing and perpetuating the values and ideals that define the Bengali national identity.

5. Intergenerational Transmission of Political Values

The intergenerational transmission of political values is a critical aspect of understanding the enduring impact of the 7th March speech on Bangladeshi society. This process involves the transfer of political beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors from one generation to the next, often through family, educational systems, and community narratives. Bourdieu's

theory of cultural reproduction provides a robust framework for analyzing how political values are perpetuated across generations, emphasizing the role of cultural capital and habitus in this transmission.

The mechanisms of intergenerational transmission are multifaceted, involving both formal and informal channels. Educational institutions play a crucial role in embedding the values articulated in the speech within the national curriculum. By teaching the historical significance and ideological underpinnings of the speech, schools help to ensure that its messages of unity, resistance, and justice are internalized by successive generations. As Bourdieu and Passeron note, “the educational system ensures the transmission of cultural capital across generations and stamps pre-existing differences in inherited cultural capital with a meritocratic seal of academic consecration” (178). In this way, the educational system not only imparts knowledge but also reinforces the symbolic power of his speech, legitimizing its ideals within the broader cultural framework.

Family and community narratives also play a pivotal role in perpetuating the speech’s ideals. In many Bengali households, the story of the independence movement and Bangabandhu’s speech are integral parts of the family’s oral history. Parents and grandparents who lived through the events of 1971 pass down their experiences and the values associated with the struggle for independence. This transmission through familial storytelling reinforces the collective habitus and ensures that the speech’s themes remain relevant in the personal identities of younger generations. As he declared, “The struggle this time is a struggle for emancipation! The struggle this time is a struggle for independence!” (Rahman). This powerful rhetoric is not just a historical artifact but a living narrative that continues to shape the political consciousness of the nation.

Community events and public commemorations further solidify the intergenerational transmission of political values. Annual observances of Independence Day, reenactments of the speech, and public discussions about its significance serve to continually refresh its relevance. These community practices act as a form of collective memory, embedding the speech’s ideals into the social fabric. Critic Maurice Halbwachs argues that collective memory is essential for maintaining a shared sense of identity and purpose within a community (Halbwachs 52). Through these communal activities, the values articulated by Bangabandhu are kept alive and dynamic, contributing to a cohesive national identity.

The impact of the speech on contemporary political engagement and activism is profound. The ideals of unity, resistance, and justice that permeate the speech have inspired numerous social and political movements in Bangladesh. Activists and political leaders frequently invoke Bangabandhu’s rhetoric to legitimize their causes and mobilize public support. This invocation is not merely symbolic but also strategic, leveraging the speech’s historical and emotional resonance to galvanize action. As Bangabandhu instructed, “I now declare the closure of all the courts, offices, and educational institutions for an indefinite period of time. No one will report to their offices—that is my instruction to you” (Rahman). This call to civil disobedience underscores the speech’s enduring influence in shaping political strategies and actions.

Contemporary political engagement in Bangladesh continues to reflect the values embedded in the speech. The themes of justice and resistance against oppression are central to many grassroots movements and political campaigns. For instance, movements advocating for workers’ rights, environmental justice, and gender equality often draw upon the speech’s rhetoric to frame their struggles within the larger narrative of national liberation and justice. This demonstrates the speech’s ongoing relevance and its ability to adapt to contemporary political contexts while maintaining its core ideals. Critics such as Benedict Anderson have noted the importance of national narratives in fostering a sense of imagined community (Anderson 83). His speech serves as a foundational narrative for Bangladesh, creating a shared sense of history and purpose that transcends individual experiences. This collective memory, reinforced through intergenerational transmission, continues to shape the political landscape and inspire new generations of activists and leaders.

The intergenerational transmission of political values through the 7th March speech is a testament to its enduring impact on Bangladeshi society. Through educational systems, family narratives, and community practices, the speech’s ideals of unity, resistance, and justice are perpetuated across generations. This process not only reinforces national identity but also shapes contemporary political engagement and activism, highlighting the speech’s lasting significance in the social and political fabric of Bangladesh.

6. Practical and Societal Implications

The practical and societal implications of Bangabandhu’s 7th March speech are profound, particularly when considered through the lens of Bourdieu’s theory. The integration of the speech into educational curricula, familial and community engagement, and national policies and campaigns are pivotal in ensuring its enduring impact.

6.1. Educational Implications: Integrating the Speech into Curricula and Promoting Civic Education

Incorporating Bangabandhu's speech into the national curriculum is essential for embedding its values into the educational framework. By doing so, educational institutions can foster a deep understanding of the historical context and significance of the speech among students. This aligns with Bourdieu's assertion that the educational system plays a critical role in the transmission of cultural capital and the reinforcement of symbolic power (Bourdieu and Passeron 83). Lessons on the speech can be used to teach critical thinking, civic responsibility, and historical awareness. As he stated, "The struggle this time is a struggle for emancipation! The struggle this time is a struggle for independence!" (Rahman), which can inspire students to understand and appreciate the sacrifices made for their freedom and instill a sense of civic duty.

6.2. Familial and Community Engagement: Fostering Intergenerational Dialogue and Unity

Familial and community narratives are instrumental in perpetuating the ideals of the speech. Encouraging intergenerational dialogue about the speech can strengthen its impact on political socialization. Families can use the speech to teach younger generations about the values of resilience, justice, and national pride. Community programs that celebrate the speech can foster unity and a shared sense of purpose. Critic Maurice Halbwachs emphasizes the importance of collective memory in maintaining social cohesion (Halbwachs 52). Through storytelling and communal events, the speech's themes of unity and resistance can be kept alive, ensuring they continue to influence future generations.

6.3. National Policies and Campaigns: Mobilizing Citizens around Shared Values and Goals

National policies and campaigns that draw on the themes of the speech can mobilize citizens around shared values and goals. The speech's emphasis on justice, resistance, and national identity can be leveraged in public policies and civic campaigns to inspire greater civic engagement and political participation. This mobilization can be seen in Bangabandhu's call to action: "I now declare the closure of all the courts, offices, and educational institutions for an indefinite period of time. No one will report to their offices—that is my instruction to you" (Rahman). Such directives demonstrate the potential of symbolic power to drive collective action and societal change. By integrating these themes into national discourse, policymakers can galvanize public support and foster a cohesive political culture.

7. Conclusion

In summary, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 7th March speech stands as a seminal moment in Bangladeshi history, profoundly influencing the nation's political and social landscape. Through the lens of Bourdieu's theories of cultural capital, habitus, and symbolic power, we can understand the speech's enduring impact on the collective consciousness of the Bengali people. The speech's integration into educational curricula, familial and community narratives, and national policies underscores its significance in shaping national identity and promoting civic engagement.

The enduring legacy of his speech lies in its ability to continuously inspire and mobilize the Bengali people, fostering a deep sense of unity and purpose. As Bourdieu's theory elucidates, the transmission of cultural capital and the reinforcement of symbolic power are critical in maintaining social structures and influencing political socialization (Bourdieu and Passeron 178). His speech exemplifies these processes, serving as a powerful tool for political mobilization and the perpetuation of national values.

In applying Bourdieu's theory to Bangabandhu's speech, we gain a deeper understanding of its role in shaping the political socialization of Bangladesh. The speech's ability to transmit cultural capital, influence habitus, and wield symbolic power underscores its lasting significance. By examining the speech through this theoretical framework, we can appreciate its profound impact on the social and political fabric of Bangladesh, ensuring that its ideals continue to resonate with future generation.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest to be disclosed.

References

- [1] Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 1983.
- [2] Billig, Michael. *Banal Nationalism*. Sage Publications, 1995.
- [3] Bourdieu, Pierre. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Harvard University Press, 1991.
- [4] Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. Sage Publications, 1990.
- [5] Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- [6] “Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib’s 7th March Speech: Epic of Politics.” <https://ictd.portal.gov.bd/>, ICT Division, 30 Dec. 2021, ictd.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/ictd.portal.gov.bd/publications/3e39d17f_a9ba_40f0_a7ff_9f005a2c29a2/Bangabandhu%20Sheikh%20Mujibs%207th%20March%20Speech.pdf. Accessed July 11AD.
- [7] Robertson, Roland. "Globalization and Cultural Theory." *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1990, pp. 21-46.
- [8] Swartz, David. *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- [9] Thompson, John B. *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication*. Stanford University Press, 1990.
- [10] Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. Sage Publications, 1990.
- [11] Wacquant, Loïc. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. University of Chicago Press, 1992.