

Foucault's Power and Language: Bengali

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Foucault in *Power/Knowledge* (1980), describes knowledge as being conjunction of power relations and information seeking which he terms as 'power/knowledge'. He states that 'it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power.' Foucault here emphasizes that knowledge is not dispassionate, rather an integral part of struggles over power. It also draws the attention to the way that, in producing knowledge, one is also making claim for power. Hence, for Foucault it was more accurate to use the newly formed compound 'power/knowledge' to emphasise the way that these two elements depend on one another. "Thus, where there are imbalances of power relations between groups of people or between institutions/states, there will be a production of knowledge. Because of the institutional imbalance in power relations between men and women in Western countries, Foucault would argue, information is produced about women; thus we find many books in libraries about women but few about men, and similarly many about working class but few about the middle classes."

Now, we should examine the role of language in the process of knowledge formation. For illustration purpose we would refer to examples from the status of the Bangla language in East [Bengal](#) (now [Bangladesh](#)) during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era. The 'knowledge', most of us will agree, in Foucaultian sense is a tool for creating a discourse

in terms of power and hegemony. This knowledge is created in order to influence 'others' in an influencing way. What can be a better tool than the language itself in creating a particular knowledge? In fact it is the language which asserts the authenticity and superiority to ...

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...nged through ethnic appeals and a pattern was set for similar developments in future.

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