

CULTIVATION THEORY AND HEGEMONY: A RESEARCH FROM TURKEY ON CULTIVATIONAL ROLE OF TELEVISION

KULTUROLOŠKA TEORIJA I HEGEMONIJA: ISTRAŽIVANJE U TURSKOJ O KULTIVIRAJUĆOJ ULOZI TELEVIZIJE

Ömer Özer

Faculty of Communication Sciences, Anadolu University, Eskisehir, Turkey
Fakultet komunikacijskih znanosti, Sveučilište Anadolu, Eskisehir, Turska

Abstract

Hegemony can be roughly defined as the overall field of practical strategies exerted by a dominant power in gaining the consent of the people under its rule (Eagleton, 1996: 167). The authority exercised on subordinated classes depends on consent, not force. Predominant classes operate hegemony through ideology; and media is one of the fields that hegemony is achieved. Cultivation theory expresses that television has a role on the social reality conceptualization and the world perception of people. For instance, heavy viewers consider that police is essential for this world. This suggests that hegemony is achieved. In this study, a research concerning the cultivation role of television on the students of Faculty of Science at Anadolu University, Eskişehir, Turkey was carried out and the cultivation role has come out as a result of the analyses. This result indicates that hegemony is achieved on the related faculty students. In the Conclusion, I will discuss whether television is an old or new technology.

1. Introduction

In this study the cultivational role of television has been demonstrated and it has been concluded that television has a functional part in achieving hegemony. In terms of purpose, Anadolu University Faculty of Science students have participated in the survey. The survey is comprised of the questions that are gained from message system analysis in terms of violence. In the conclusion part, an analysis covering hegemony, society, science, culture and technology in terms of cultivation theory is made.

Sažetak

Hegemonija možemo ugrubo definirati kao ukupno polje praktične strategije dominantne snage, u pridobivanju pristanka ljudi pod njegovom vladavinom (Eagleton, 1996: 167). Autoritet nad podređenim klasama ovisi o pristanku, a ne o snazi. Dominantni klase hegemoniju iskazuju kroz ideologije, a mediji su jedno od područja kroz koje se postiže hegemonija. Teorija kultiviranja naglašava da televizija ima ulogu u konceptualizaciji društvene stvarnosti i percepcije svijeta kod ljudi. Na primjer, redovni gledatelji smatraju da je policija bitna za ovaj svijet. To sugerira da se hegemonija ostvaruje. U ovoj studiji, napravljeno je istraživanje o kultivirajućoj ulozi uz sudjelovanje studenata Prirodoslovnog fakulteta na Anadolu University, Eskisehir, Turska. Istraživanje je pokazalo da postoji kultivirajuća uloga televizije. Ovaj rezultat pokazuje da se hegemonija ostvaruje na studentima srodnih fakulteta. U zaključku, raspravlja se o pitanju da li je televizija stara ili nova tehnologija.

Theoretical Basis

A. Hegemony Theory: Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci brought new perspectives to Marxism /1/. He is opposed to mechanical Marxism and Marxist economism, and agrees that superstructure can never be reduced to a shadow phenomenon /2/. Even though Gramsci accepted the decisiveness of economy in the last instance, he puts so much emphasis on ideology and gave much more autonomy to this concept than the traditional Marxists /3/. Hegemony can be roughly defined as the whole practical strategies field that dominant group makes use of

to get the consent of subordinate class to conform to its rule /4/. According to Gitlin, hegemony is "the systematic (but not necessarily intentional or generally not intentional) direction of mass consent to the existing rule" /5/. Gramsci argues that in the liberal-capitalist state, consent is normally in the lead, operating behind the armor of coercion /6/. Dominators operate hegemony through ideology; in addition to law, the police and the army, the superstructure institutions such as family, education system and press also are the fields where hegemony is achieved and operated through ideology. However, hegemony is not given and constant; it could be lost /7/. For that reason, it has to be constantly re-won. In Gramsci's approach, hegemony is related with civil society. On the other hand, repression is associated with the state. Yet, the ruling block responsible for organizing hegemony in a capitalist society activates the state organs as much as civil society /8/.

B. Cultivation Theory: Cultivation theory begins with the analysis of television message system. Gerbner claims that message is a socially and historically identified expression of concrete physical and social relations /9/. Accurately formed messages cultivate a common conscience. The questions used in cultivation analysis reflect from content profiles that have settled in television message system presented to vast viewer groups throughout a long period of time since babyhood /10/. Most common examples shown on television are identified with message system analysis. These findings are then assessed as to what kind of sowing they will have ideologically, and questions reflecting this are prepared.

Cultivation theory is defined as the random and unintentional learning, unconscious gaining of demographic realities of television world by the viewers /11/. In other words, the concept explains the contribution of television watching to global perception and social reality conceptualization of the viewers /12/. Cultivation theory focuses on the overall results of growing up and living with television /13/. Cultivation analysis examines the relationship between the most recurrent and expansive images and ideologies in television content with the social reality conceptualization of the viewers /14/. The analysis tries to suggest that heavy viewers perceive the most common and recurrent messages of television world as real world. It compares the responses of heavy viewers and light viewers taking demographic variables into consideration as well /15/.

C. The Meaning of Hegemony Theory in Terms of Cultivation Theory: Hegemony theory, which in essence studies the correlation between dominance and practice, has come to being an approach used in critical analysis of media /16/. With the concept of hegemony, Gramsci emphasized the significance of ideology in strengthening the existing social structure and relationships /17/. One of the main fields where the aforementioned ideology is produced is media. One of the essential hegemony strategies is common sense /18/. Media is functional in providing this common sense /19/. With a constantly consistent ideology, media serves a hegemonic function by producing a series of common sense values and mechanisms which produce and justify the self-consent of the subordinate classes to dominance /20/. Media executes the process of defining and classifying the world through the production of dominant ideology. It does not display intentional or explicit partisanship. Instead, it actively involves in defining the world in the framework of situation definition mood /21/. The relative autonomy of media ensures messages to gain legitimacy and credibility on a bigger scale. Direct control of media will not provide the same legitimacy and credibility /22/. In that sense, the functional role of television in achieving hegemony should be recognized.

This study has been done specifically on violence example. According to the sides of cultivation theory /23/, the clear result of violence display is the different level of increase in the risk and insecurity feelings for different dominant groups. This will equally increase the level of dominance and obedience to the existing power. Besides, in the social order, it will legitimize the use of power by the dominant ideology, rather than occasional threats by illegitimate forces. Gerbner and Gross acknowledge that /24/ fear is a universal emotion and is ready to explode. Symbolic violence is the cheapest way for an efficient cultivation. The ritual expansion of violence (in crimes and natural disaster news, just like in collectively produced dramas) can cultivate exaggerated hypotheses against the global dangers and threats and bring protection demands along with it /25/. It could be pointed out that this viewpoint integrates cultivation theory with Gramsci's hegemony concept emphasis. Shanahan and Morgan /26/ highlighted the same emphasis too. As a matter of fact, according to cultivation theory heavy viewers think that police, the pressure instrument of the state, are a must for the society. To legitimize police is to legitimize capitalist state. This is the moment of achieving hegemony. Cultivation tests' turning out to be meaningful will be approval of the moment when hegemony is achieved.

Method

In terms of message system analysis, an analysis conducted by Özer (2007) has been used as the source. In this analysis, it has been found out that violence is the most common element in television news and series. Cultivation analysis survey was carried out at Anadolu University Faculty of Science in March, 2008. Equal number of surveys was distributed to all departments. The survey was conducted on gender basis, and 86 male and 86 female students filled out the surveys.

According to the hypothesis developed for this study, "television presents direct messages about the moral values in a considerable part of daily life, and as the viewing of violence-oriented message system of television increases, the moral values of the viewers will be parallel to the total ideological cultural content of television." Based on this hypothesis, this basic hypothesis was tested: "As the Faculty of Science students watch more violence-oriented message system of television, their value

judgments will be parallel to the 'television world' formed by the content presented by television."

The data were evaluated by using SPSS program, and square range for cultivation test was examined. The categories reflecting the strength of relationship revealed by the tests are as follows: r: below 0.25 weak; r: 26-39 medium and r: 040 and above strong. Below 120 minutes is accepted as light viewing and over 120 minutes as heavy viewing.

Findings and Evaluations

Some frequency data are meaningful. For instance, students use television as the first information source. Internet comes next. However, they spend more time on Internet as a means of communication. Television comes next. Televisions are on for about 6 hours in the houses. Given the fact that the respondents are students, this number could be regarded as high. All these indicate that television occupies an important place in students' lives.

Table 1: Cultivation Test of the 1st Question

			Q1			Total
			Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	
Viewing	Light	Count	3	5	34	42
		% within Viewing	7,1%	11,9%	81,0%	100,0%
	Heavy	Count	7	5	112	124
		% within Viewing	5,6%	4,0%	90,3%	100,0%
Total		Count	10	10	146	166
		% within Viewing	6,0%	6,0%	88,0%	100,0%

$$\chi^2 : 3.658 \text{ sd: } 2 \quad p: 0.2 \quad r: 0.35$$

1. The testing of "Generally speaking, we live in a dangerous world" has not come out meaningful.

Table 2: Cultivation Test of the 2nd Question

			Q2			Total
			Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	
Viewing	Light	Count	8	10	24	42
		% within Viewing	19,0%	23,8%	57,1%	100,0%
	Heavy	Count	15	34	75	124
		% within Viewing	12,1%	27,4%	60,5%	100,0%
Total		Count	23	44	99	166
		% within Viewing	13,9%	26,5%	59,6%	100,0%

$$\chi^2 : 1.307 \text{ sd: } 2 \quad p: 0.5 \quad r: 0.10$$

2. The testing of "Generally speaking, people today are not reliable" has not come out meaningful.

Table 3: Cultivation Test of the 3rd Question

			Q3			Total
			Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	
Viewing	Light	Count	8	7	27	42
		% within Viewing	19,0%	16,7%	64,3%	100,0%
	Heavy	Count	13	33	76	122
		% within Viewing	10,7%	27,0%	62,3%	100,0%
Total		Count	21	40	103	164
		% within Viewing	12,8%	24,4%	62,8%	100,0%

$$\chi^2 : 3.119 \text{ sd: } 2 \quad p: 0.2 \quad r: 0.02$$

3. The testing of “Generally speaking, instead of being honest, people try to take advantage of you” has not come out meaningful.

Table 4: Cultivation Test of the 4th Question

			Q4			Total
			Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	
Viewing	Light	Count	5	5	32	42
		% within Viewing	11,9%	11,9%	76,2%	100,0%
	Heavy	Count	10	18	96	124
		% within Viewing	8,1%	14,5%	77,4%	100,0%
Total		Count	15	23	128	166
		% within Viewing	9,0%	13,9%	77,1%	100,0%

$$\chi^2 : 0.617 \text{ sd: } 2 \quad p : 0.7 \quad r : 0.05$$

4. The testing of “Generally speaking, instead of helping out, people care about themselves” has not come out meaningful.

Table 5: Cultivation Test of the 5th Question

			Q5			Total
			Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	
Viewing	Light	Count	11	8	23	42
		% within Viewing	26,2%	19,0%	54,8%	100,0%
	Heavy	Count	10	28	86	124
		% within Viewing	8,1%	22,6%	69,4%	100,0%
Total		Count	21	36	109	166
		% within Viewing	12,7%	21,7%	65,7%	100,0%

$$\chi^2 : 9.346 \text{ sd: } 2 \quad p : 0.009 \quad r : 0.34$$

5. The test of the question “Generally speaking, walking alone at night is dangerous” has come out meaningful. There is a 14.4% of difference between the percentages of heavy viewers agreeing to the statement and light viewers agreeing to the statement (Table 5). This shows the cultivational role of television.

Table 6: Cultivation Test of the 6th Question

			Q6			Total
			Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	
Viewing	Light	Count	6	8	28	42
		% within Viewing	14,3%	19,0%	66,7%	100,0%
	Heavy	Count	18	29	77	124
		% within Viewing	14,5%	23,4%	62,1%	100,0%
Total		Count	24	37	105	166
		% within Viewing	14,5%	22,3%	63,3%	100,0%

$$\chi^2 : 0.370 \text{ sd: } 2 \quad p : 0.8 \quad r : -0.07$$

6. The testing of “Generally speaking, most people do not feel safe” has not come out meaningful.

Table 7: Cultivation Test of the 7th Question

			Q7			Total
			Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	
Viewing	Light	Count	4	17	21	42
		% within Viewing	9,5%	40,5%	50,0%	100,0%
	Heavy	Count	22	23	78	123
		% within Viewing	17,9%	18,7%	63,4%	100,0%
Total		Count	26	40	99	165
		% within Viewing	15,8%	24,2%	60,0%	100,0%

$$\chi^2 : 8.453 \text{ sd: } 2 \quad p : 0.02 \quad r : 0.14$$

7. The test of the question “Generally speaking, people can face with an attack at any time” has come out meaningful, too. The 13.4% difference between the percentages of heavy viewers agreeing to the statement and light viewers agreeing to the statement is a proof of this (Table 7).

Table 8: Cultivation Test of the 8th Question

			Q8			Total
			Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	
Viewing	Light	Count	17	14	11	42
		% within Viewing	40,5%	33,3%	26,2%	100,0%
	Heavy	Count	64	32	28	124
		% within Viewing	51,6%	25,8%	22,6%	100,0%
Total		Count	81	46	39	166
		% within Viewing	48,8%	27,7%	23,5%	100,0%

$$\chi^2 : 1.613 \text{ sd: } 2 \quad p : 0.4 \quad r : -0.16$$

8. The testing of “Generally speaking, violence is more often seen among unknown people” has not come out meaningful.

Table 9: Cultivation Test of the 9th Question

			Q9			Total
			Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	
Viewing	Light	Count	12	10	20	42
		% within Viewing	28,6%	23,8%	47,6%	100,0%
	Heavy	Count	43	39	42	124
		% within Viewing	34,7%	31,5%	33,9%	100,0%
Total		Count	55	49	62	166
		% within Viewing	33,1%	29,5%	37,3%	100,0%

$$\chi^2 : 2.561 \text{ sd: } 2 \quad p : 0.3 \quad r : -0.19$$

9. The testing of “Generally speaking, people are mostly attacked by people they do not know” has not come out meaningful.

On closer inspection, it can be seen that two out of nine tests came out meaningful. In order to reveal the cultivational role of television not all the tests have to come out meaningful. In other words, the fact that those two tests have come out meaningful manifest the cultivational role of television in terms of Anadolu University Faculty of Science students. They think that walking alone at night is dangerous and they can be attacked at any moment. This is a consequence of television viewing and they watch television a lot.

Conclusion and Evaluation

This research has confirmed the cultivational role and hegemonic function of television. Television identifies the social reality conceptualization and world perceptions of heavy viewers. This asserts the role of television in achieving hegemony. Television takes social reality, transforms it into media reality and resends it to the society. In this process, human reality is identified through television reality /27/. Thus, television influences people’s consciousness and identifies the society. This, in a negative sense, is

a power not to be undermined. This power, of course, belongs to the ones who exert it. In other words, it is the power of television owners and the class they belong to. Subordinate groups are rendered desperate against this power with their own consent. This is hegemony.

Television is not a so-called guarantor of democracy, it is the inhibitor. In that sense, the society becomes the slave to the ideology produced by television as a result of the hegemonic achievement. The society is passive, unguarded against media. Organized media institutions are more powerful than even the most critical people. This study expresses that. The research has scientifically revealed the hegemonic function of television. What science has to do now is to find out how to reduce this influence of television. Television influences the cultural structure. Cultivational role of television is also a cultural influence. Unfortunately, technology has a negative effect on the liberation of society. Television is still a new technology. It seems that it will not get old. And, it will not be wrong to postulate that internet has a similar function.

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