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LANGUAGE STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE NIVEA COSMETIC ADVERTISEMENTS FOR WOMEN ON YOUTUBE: A CRITICAL AND CULTURAL LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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I. INTRODUCTION & RATIONALE

Rationale:

- The rapid growth of digital media has transformed advertising into a powerful form of social discourse that influences consumer perceptions and purchasing behaviors (Cook, 2001)
- Cosmetic advertisements employ persuasive linguistic strategies while simultaneously constructing and reinforcing socially accepted beauty standards for women (Bai, 2018; Mendrofa, 2020)
- Critical Discourse Analysis provides a useful framework for uncovering the ideologies, power relations, and gendered assumptions embedded in beauty advertising (Baykal, 2016)

Research Gap:

While cosmetic advertising is widely studied through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), prior literature remains largely monolingual or examines disparate brands. Few studies investigate how the same global brand (NIVEA) strategically localizes its persuasive discourse across Western and East Asian cultural markets.

Study Aim:

Conduct a comparative, cross-cultural analysis of paired English and Vietnamese NIVEA video advertisements to determine how linguistic choices construct and reflect culturally embedded beauty standards and gender ideologies.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical features are commonly used in NIVEA cosmetics advertisements in English and Vietnamese?

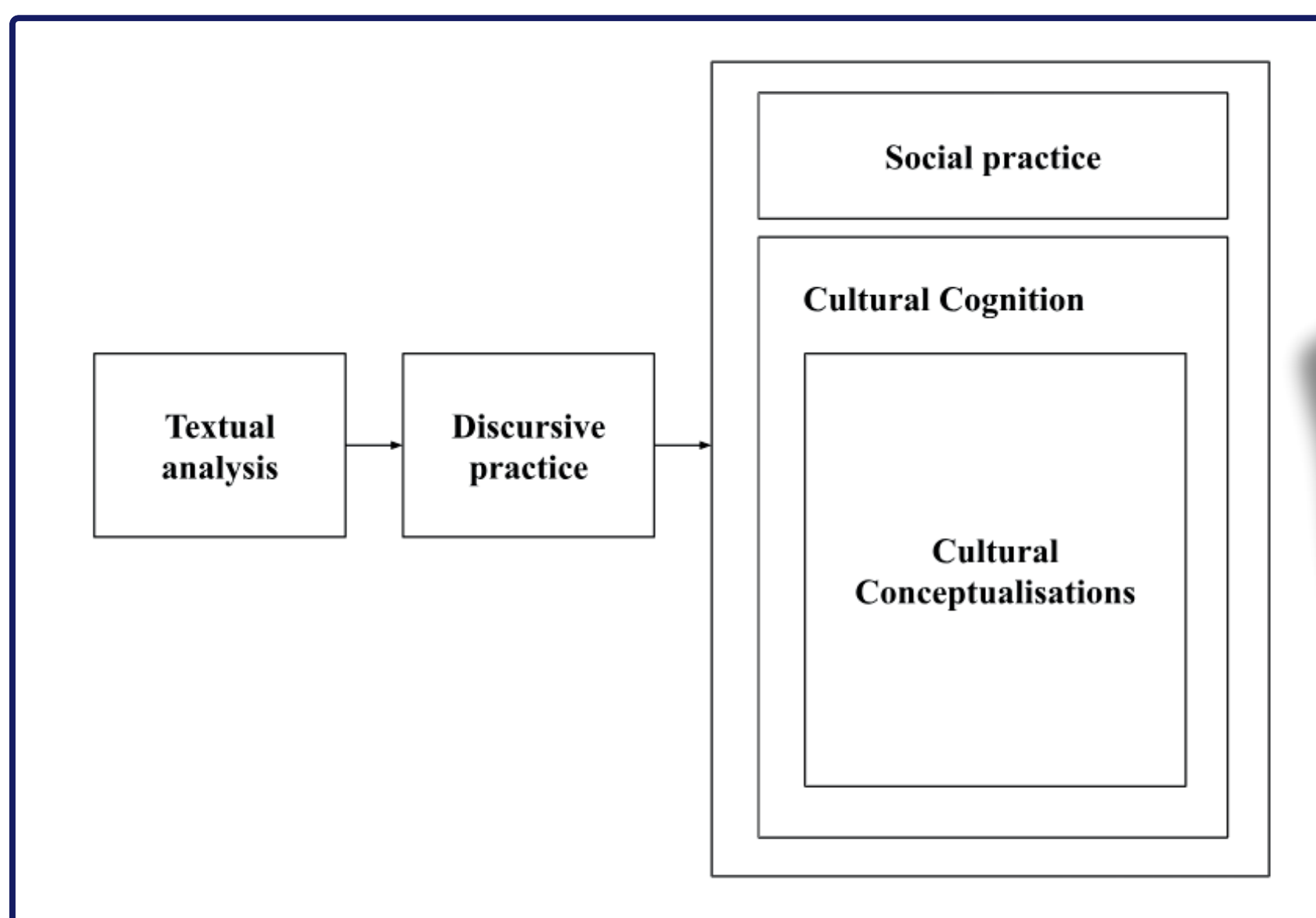
RQ2: How do these language strategies differ across English and Vietnamese?

RQ3: How do these linguistic choices construct and reflect culturally embedded conceptualisations of femininity and beauty?

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Fairclough's three dimensional model of CDA + Sharifian's Cultural Linguistics

- Fairclough → Critical Discourse Analysis to identify power mechanisms
- Sharifian → Cultural Linguistics to explore how culture shapes meaning



IV. METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Mixed qualitative comparative & quantitative frequency analysis

Data Corpus: 10 paired English - Vietnamese NIVEA YouTube ads for women (2017 - 2025; coded E1 - E10 & V1 - V10)

Data Collection & Coding: Manual transcription with 2-round cross-checking for coding reliability

Analytical Procedures:

Step 1: Identification and frequency tally of lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical devices

Step 2: Categorisation and cross-linguistic comparison of persuasive language strategies

Step 3: Critical and cultural linguistic interpretation of beauty ideologies and female representations

V. KEY FINDINGS

1. Linguistic features comparison

- Lexical:** English favors evaluative/sensory adjectives (29.41%); Vietnamese prioritizes action verbs (31.25%) and quantifiers (gấp 100 lần, 72h)
- Syntactic:** English utilizes varied declaratives/clauses; Vietnamese heavily uses dense long noun phrases (50.98%) to compress info
- Rhetorical:** English deploys diverse hyperbole, questions & metaphors; Vietnamese relies heavily on keyword/brand repetition (54.17%)

2. Core language strategies

English Ads:

- Science-Emotion Blending:** Fuses dermatological terms with affective rewards
- Synthetic Personalization:** Direct address ("you/your") to build intimacy and reduce stigma
- Self-Enhancement:** Postfeminist empowerment narrative ("confidence starts within")

Vietnamese Ads:

- Functional-Action Focus:** Problem-solving orientation ("thấm nhanh", "cải thiện sạm")
- Numeric Quantification:** Concrete proofs of time & efficacy ("gấp 40 lần", "sau 5 ngày")
- Brand Reinforcement:** Rhythmic, recurrent taglines ("Yêu da - chọn NIVEA!")

3. Cultural & Gender ideologies

Metaphor (Radiance as Beauty): English equates glow with inner vitality/energy; Vietnamese views it as surface clarity/smoothness.

Category (Ideal Brightness): English promotes general clean/healthy skin; Vietnamese reinforces the East Asian "fair skin = prestigious & attractive" standard.

Schema (Femininity Model):

- English (Individualism):** Beauty as a personal right & self-care act
- Vietnamese (Collectivism):** Beauty as a social duty to maintain neatness and avoid flaws in public view

VI. IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

For Advertisers & Marketers:

- Brand localization must move beyond literal translation to align with local cultural schemas and cognitive expectations.
- Marketers should adopt socially responsible advertising by moderating hyperbolic, pseudo-scientific claims and avoiding the reinforcement of restrictive beauty stereotypes (such as mandatory skin lightening).

For Consumers: Cultivates critical media literacy, helping audiences recognize that commercial scientific terminology often functions as symbolic persuasion rather than verified clinical evidence

For Future Research: Expand the corpus across multiple digital platforms (TikTok, Instagram, TVCs) and incorporate Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) to assess visual and acoustic semiotic resources

VII. KEY REFERENCES

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