

Why is so English in Indonesian Cosmetics Advertisements?: Deciphering the Commodification of English

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Abstract

This article discusses language commodification in cosmetics advertisements. The vast growing of cosmetics business in Indonesian in the last decade has triggered the rampant of the new brands of cosmetics either products of local Indonesia or of foreign countries. The use of English is obviously visible in the cosmetics advertisements, making it opaque to be distinguished which brands are local and which are international. In this, we investigate the commodification of English in the advertisements of local brands. The method we use is qualitative, through observation and documentation. The selected data are in the form of lexes in the advertisements, gained through billboards, signages, and in-store displays in some malls in Jakarta. We select 7 advertisements of 6 brands. Using Peirce's triadic model of signs, we obtain that English is employed due to its multifaceted functions. We argue that once in a while Bahasa Indonesian replaces English, for its accentuation and clarity of the message is intended to make. This is because the advertisements are for Indonesian consumers. One salient finding is there is a tendency to use English in the names of brands, particularly to soar up the sense of quality and internationality, in terms of making the brands ready for competing with other international brands penetrating Indonesian markets on a vast scale.

Keywords: *commodification, English, Bahasa Indonesia, advertisements*

Introduction

English, needless to say, is known to be the most spoken and used by people around the world. English has been recognized to be the indicator of globalization (Lanza and Woldemariam, 2013) and has enriched the varieties of national and vernacular languages. However, the undeniable use of English in business and economy, in terms of how English adds or renders economic values of products are a bit unknown. The efforts to improve the values of things are named as commodification.

Commodification is related to the process of transforming goods and services from their use value into commodities that are oriented to their exchange value in the market (Appadurai 1989, Walsh in LaFollette, 2013). The term commodification is often associated with actions related to economic activity. Commodification is a form of transformation of a relationship, which was originally free from things that were traded, to become a relationship that is commercial in nature. commodification cannot be separated from

commodities which are two things that have a process and object relationship. Commodification continues to grow and touch the field of culture, one of which is language. Language which is a cultural belongings and ethnic identity turns into a commodity due to the marketization process of the language (Dewi, 2017).

The process of marketization of the language is evident in the use of language in advertisements. One of the attractions of advertisement is the message of the product. Product messages will be conveyed in a language that consumers can accept and understand. In Indonesian society, the language that has the biggest role in communication activities is Indonesian. Indonesian is the official and national language. With its position as the official and national language, Indonesian is taught in schools and is used as a means of communication in conveying information in all media in Indonesia. In fact, the messages conveyed in advertisements in Indonesia are not only in Indonesian but also in English. Indonesia's position in the expanding circle in spreading English (Kachru, 1997) does not make English used in limited communication. The global use of English in the world has resulted in English becoming a capital or commodity in advertising production so English along with Indonesian is widely used in advertising production in Indonesia. This study aims to observe the process of commodification of English and its relation to the process of commercialization. Commodity is no longer just an object, but also an image that is constructed on the object so that commodification is not only the use value of the object, but can also be carried out on the exchange value and sign value attached to an object.

Commodification in this case is a term related to the use of languages for sale. Cameron (2012: 9) even mentions that English is the most valuable commodity, the global norm, and the source of innovations in the global linguistic market. In this, similar to products, language is a commodity, Bordieu argues that language is symbolic representation of economic interests (Heller, 2010). Thus, languages are constructed and reconstructed to reach economical goals. Research on the commodification of languages, especially in relation to English are abundant in recent years, but most of the research tends to investigate in general areas, not focusing on certain types of products such as how English is commodified in Indonesian magazines (Dewi, 2017), how English is viewed as a commodity in the context of global linguistic market (Cameron, 2012); how English is commodified in the political economic context in South Korea (Kim, Choi, and Kim, 2017). Most aforementioned research report that English used in local commercials has values, like attention getter (Dewi, 2017; Manan et al., 2013); constructs internationality (Dewi, 2017; Kholifah, et al., 2021); modernity; quality (Bhatia, 2007; Krishnasamy, 2007; Kholifah, et al., 2021) and economic reason (Lee, 2019; Dewi, 2017).

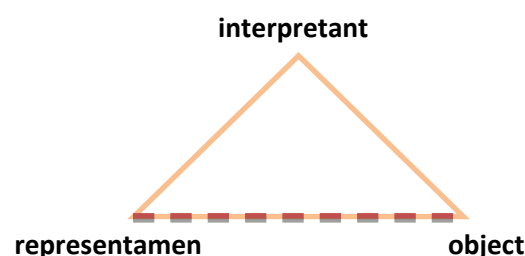
All previous research above become references in this research. What distinguishes it from the previous research is that it will examine how the commodification of English is carried out specifically in advertisements for Indonesian cosmetic products. Questions related to English as a commodity in this study arise as follows:

1. How English is commodified in cosmetics/skincare/clinic advertisements?
2. How English is distributed and functioned in the advertisements?

Method

This is a qualitative research, in which observation is conducted to gather data. This type of research is inductive to identify recurring patterns, concepts, and to describe them and later to interpret them (Nassaji, 2015). The sources of the data are billboards, signages, and in-store displays in some malls in Jakarta, taken in September to October 2022. The data collected are only 7 advertisements out of 45 of those of local brands with 6 brands. The entire data are part of larger data of our current research. The selection of the data is based on consideration that the data have the English and bahasa Indonesian texts in them. The Indonesian text is to help assist us determine the value of English text. This means, Bahasa is not included as the data, but as the context or the ground. This is inspired by Saussure's concept on how to decipher meanings (Chandler, 2002), through comparison. We choose lexes, excluding images, as the data. The data are then analyzed using Peirce's semiotic approach

Semiotics is the study of signs, or the study of meaning-making (Chandler, 2017). Signs conceive meanings and meanings are generated through signs. Signs can take any forms: icons, indexes, and symbols. Thus, these comprise linguistic texts and images, including colors and any forms involved in images. Everything can be a sign as long as it has a meaning. To reveal meanings, signs are not viewed as signs per se, but as related signs. Therefore, relationships among signs are pivotal to unravel the meanings implied, and to help assist us to find out the meanings is through comparison (Saussure in Chandler, 2002; Berger, 2004). Signs undergo named as semiosis, a process of making sense of signs, that include the signs (representamen), the object (referent) and the interpretant (the concept). Peirce named this model as triadic structure (borrowing Atkin's term, 2022) which is unlike Saussure's, Peirce focuses on how logic works on sign interpretation (Peirce in Chandler, 2002; Yakin and Totu, 2014). The process of meaning interpretation involves stages of semiosis. The first stage is firstness, working on the likely literal meaning, and the interpretant of the firstness becomes the second representamen in the secondness where human experience things, comparing two qualities of the signs, and the interpretant of the second stage becomes the third representamen, in the thirdness. This thirdness is the stage where seeing signs is not only seeing the qualities compared, but reminiscing the prior experience that comes up along with the cycling process. These recycle gradually and continuously and these are said to be infinite semiosis (Peirce in Chandler, 2022; Chappell, 1999).



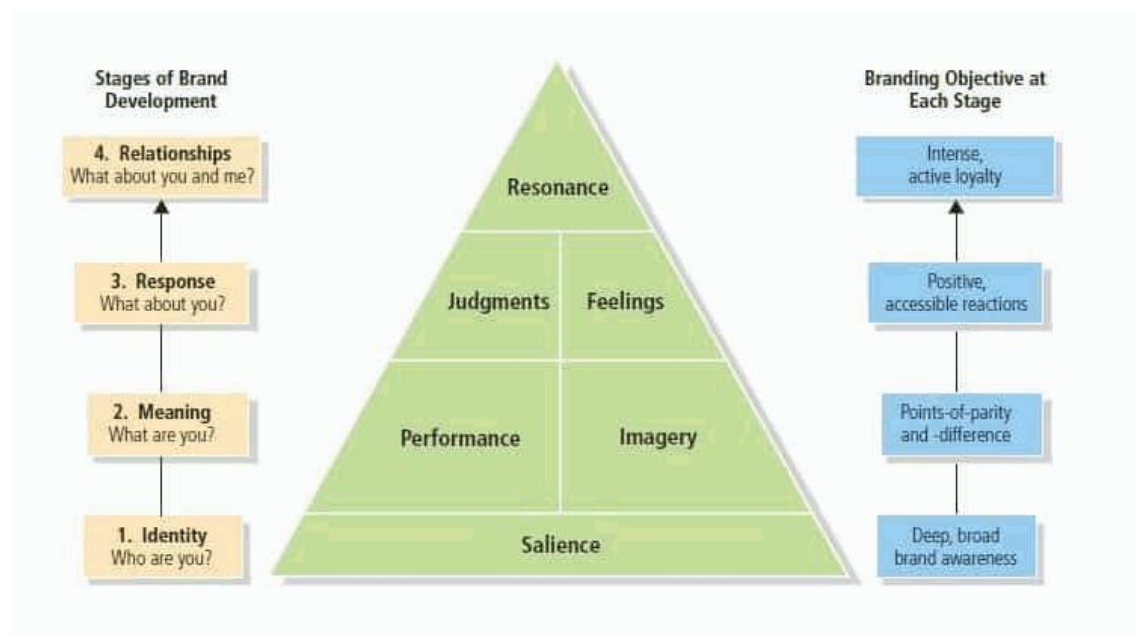
Picture 1. Peirce's triadic model

The interpretant or the concept depends on what the interpreter perceives. The concept and the sign and the object are dependent upon the ground or the context absorbed by the person. This is how logic works to understand the sign. Therefore, the broken line lying between the representamen and the object indicates there is no direct or natural

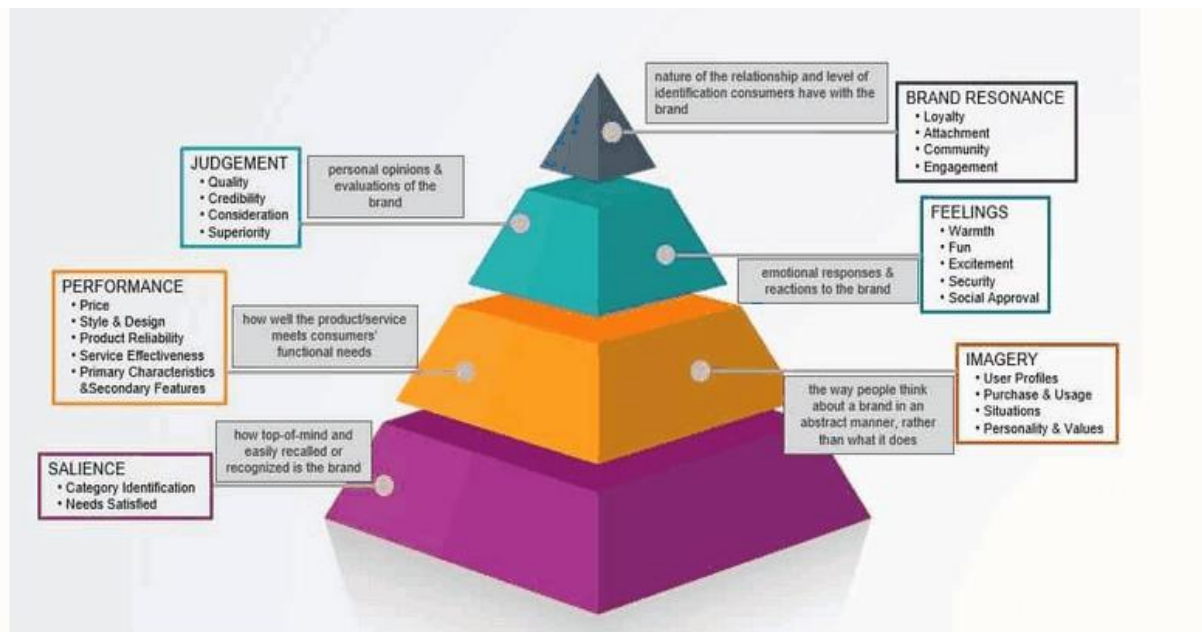
connection between them (Peirce in Chandler, 2002). This process is normally known as the interpretation of the text, in which the forming of association is taking place. Similarly, commodification of the language, in particular English, is similar to that of finding the association. What concepts or association are formed when English is used? Martin (2006) conducted the similar research on English in French advertising. Akin to other studies, English is much associated with globalization, internationality, elitism, and modernism. Therefore, to decode the concept in the advertisements, we involve the structure of print advertisements as the ground of our analysis.

The 7 (seven) elements of print advertisements comprise: (1) The Offer; (2) The Headline; (3) Image; (4) The Body; (5) Call To Action (Henceforth, CTA); (6) Contact Information And Store Logo; And, (7) Smart Ad Placement. The Offer is the focus of the ad and it offers immediate benefits for the potential buyers or reasons why to buy the products. The Headline is the largest part of the ad, and can be the core benefit, and the short preview. The Image is what to offer, including the pictures of the products or the brand ambassadors. The Body is the details, including the offer, the store, the product and other information, other than those mentioned. The Call to Action is what compels the potential buyers to buy the products or the instruction what to do. The next is the Contact Information and Store Logo contains either logo, address or contact numbers. The last is Smart Ad Placement. It is where the advertisement is placed (<https://www.crownconnect.com/7-elements-print-advertising/>).

Commodification is a process where values of product are enhanced. Thus, to make it stand out, advertisements should be able to showcase its identity and successfully recount what benefits the potential consumers can obtain (Mayangwangi, 2022; Miller, 2020). In this way, building a strong brand does not only necessarily makes an attractive and successful advertisement, but this also makes the consumers compelled to buy the products and builds loyalty. This process is what so-called branding (Mayangwangi, 2022; Miller, 2020). Branding is part of marketing strategy. Rather than using the term advertising or marketing, the term 'branding' is more appropriate to use.



Picture 2. Miller's Brand Resonance Pyramid (Miller, 2020)



Picture 3. Miller's Four Stages of Branding (Miller, 2020)

First stage is Brand Salience. The brand accentuates some important and relevant terms or images. This is meant to draw attention, to introduce who they are, and to make the consumers aware of them. Second stage is Performance and Imagery. This is where the brand foregrounds what they can do to fulfill the consumers' needs and what makes them different from others. Third stage is Judgment and Feelings. This stage is about quality, credibility and superiority the brand has to attain particular feelings of the consumers upon the brands. Fourth stage is Brand resonance. The meaning is what the name suggests. This is the stage where the consumers resonate with it. They have a connection. The consumers will always choose the brand over other brands to answer their needs.

Results

The following is an explanation of the 7 advertisements analyzed in this study.

Table 1. Distribution of Text of Data 1 to 4 in the 7 Elements of Advertisement

Elements in Print Ads	Carasun	Whitelab	Emina	Mineral Botanica
The offer		Perlindungan Maksimal!	'EMINA' 'Born to be loved' 'Beauty Bestie' Kulit cerah dan bersinar	Setiap pembelian 2 product Mineral Botanica Free eyebrow pencil Periode 1 – 30 September 2022 S&K berlaku
The headline	Nyaman hadapi matahari setiap hari Carasun Tropical skin expert	'Whitelab' Sunscreen Jagoan		'Mineral Botanica' 'More alive than freedom' GWP September 22
Image				

Elements in Print Ads	Carasun	Whitelab	Emina	Mineral Botanica
The body	'Non comedogenic' 'aman untuk kulit sensitive' 'ringan dan fresh hingga 8 jam' 'Solar smart" 'UV Protector' 'Apply texture cloudlike'	'Anti UVA' 'Anti UVB' 'Anti Blue Light' 'Kevin Sanjaya – Gold Medalist Thomas Cup 2020' #KulitButuhKomitmen	'Summer plum extract' 'Micellar water' 'Bright Stuff'	'Perfect Purifying' Gratis senilai Rp. 44,900
Call to Action				
Contact Information and Store Logo	'tersedia di Sociolla' 'Lippo mall Kemang'	Tersedia di Sociolla, Shopee, Tokopedia, Lazada		
Smart Ad Placement	Billboard Jl. RS. Fatmawati Raya Cipete Selatan, Kec. Cilandak, Kota Jakarta Selatan, Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta 12410	Billboard Jl. RS. Fatmawati Raya Cipete Selatan, Kec. Cilandak, Kota Jakarta Selatan, Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta 12410	Mall Plaza Indonesia No 28-30 Jalan M.H. Thamrin, Gondangdia, Menteng, Kota Jakarta Pusat	Mall Plaza Indonesia No 28-30 Jalan M.H. Thamrin, Gondangdia, Menteng, Kota Jakarta Pusat

Table 2. Distribution of Text of Data 5 to 7 in the 7 Elements of Advertisement

Elements in Print Ads	Mineral Botanica	Somethinc	Lizzie Parra
The offer	Solusi Masalah Jerawat Dalam 14 hari		
The headline	'Perfect Purifying'	'Somethinc' 'Niacinamide Sabi Brightening Serum' #1 Serum Pencerah	'by Lizzie Parra' 'Power Liner' 'Be more powerful'
Image			
The body		'Powered with SabiWhite'	'eyeliner semi-matte berwarna seru serta tidak mudah luntur' 'cobalt' 'copper' 'crimson' 'semi-matte finish' 'intense colors' 'smudge-proof'
Call to Action			
Contact Information and Store Logo			
Smart Ad Placement	Watsons Outlet/Offline Store Mall Kota Kasablanka Jl. Casablanca No.Kav. 88, RT.16/RW.5, Menteng Dalam, Tebet, Kota Jakarta Selatan	Watsons Outlet/Offline Store Mall Kota Kasablanka Jl. Casablanca No.Kav. 88, RT.16/RW.5, Menteng Dalam, Tebet, Kota Jakarta Selatan	Watsons Outlet/Offline Store Mall Kota Kasablanka Jl. Casablanca No.Kav. 88, RT.16/RW.5, Menteng Dalam, Tebet, Kota Jakarta Selatan

Discussion

English in Commodification

Commodification of English in the cosmetic/skincare brands and products as well as clinics helps to escalate the value of the brands. The use of English found in our local brands makes them more competitive and more attractive. Both local and international brands use English, make people hard to recognize which are local and which are not. The following is how the logic works on the improvement of the value a brand has.

English is prestigious, thus builds trust among consumers and adds more value to the brand

Most of local brands, in particular companies established after the year of 2000, use English. A few local brands use Bahasa Indonesia, especially Mustika Ratu and Sari Ayu Martha Tilaar, as they exist more than 4 decades ago, and the recent products, such as Emina, Make over, Lizzie Parra, Whitelab, Carasun, etc. are mostly in English or few are using other languages. English becomes the representamina, that are the forms the meanings take. These brands index to the products mentioned in the advertisements, and the interpretants constructed are these brands may sound international or companies ready for going international. These interpretants act as the second representamina, which contain high quality, which become the third representamen that showcase the meaning of trustworthy. This prestige is closely tied to the users of English are mostly highly educated people (Khazanah, et al. 2022; Lowenberg, 1991; Martin, 2006). This knowledge helps constructs the making sense of this representamen. Due to the prestige that English has, brands or products using English may likely to be more valuable and more competitive.

English indicates modernity as well as represents youth

In the first place, English names refer to modern products. For example: The bahasa Indonesia word for 'eyebrow pencil' is pensil alis, and the bahasa for 'skincare' is perawatan wajah, and for 'facial wash' is sabun wajah. Most bahasa Indonesia words index old-fashioned, obsolete products. Unlike the meanings in bahasa, the concepts in English have more diverse, newer, and contemporary products. This modernity what the products bring along are concomitant with youth, as young people, especially young girls are drawn to them. This intepretant of English, that is modernity, has something to do with notions that go along with this language are English is the language of the developed countries, it is used to name all technological innovations, it is taught in schools and universities around the globe, it is the indicator of globalization. 'English indeed sounds modern (Khazanah, et al., 2021; Khazanah, et al., 2022; Khazanah & Kusumaningputri, 2021; Lanza and Woldemariam, 2013; Lowenberg, 1991; Martin, 2006). Needless to say, English is modernity and modernity is English.

English is effective and efficient, thus sounds familiar

English found in most products of, either cosmetic/skincare brands or clinics, as representamina and the objects respectively, represents the concept of effectiveness and efficiency of the products. Skincare, for example, has its equivalents in Bahasa Indonesia as *perawatan wajah*; while the representamen 'cosmetics' has been adopted since long ago. The representamina like 'anti UVA', 'sunscreen', 'UV protector' may have their Bahasa

Indonesia equivalents, yet the Bahasa versions may likely adopt English or may have longer words as they comprise more letters or syllables. Hence, English provides us more effective and efficient words. Effective here means English is the origin which the innovation of cosmetic or skincare products come from, indicating that English perfectly describe the completed or specified meanings, compared with words in Bahasa. Efficient, in this, means that English words provide more concise and meaningful words, carrying informational value (Khazanah & Kusumaningputri, 2021:35, Martin, 2006). To name the products English representamen is not only beneficial in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency of the names, but also these lead to familiarity in the ears of the consumers, or these are easy to recognize. This is because the product names are used widespread and repeated or well-memorized.

English may sound safety-guaranteed

An example of this representamen indicating safety-guaranteed is presumably small in quantity. Yet, it does not mean absent, as we may think that when we replace the word 'whitening' with the Bahasa equivalent, that is pemutih, we assume pemutih as having a derogative meaning. It is because pemutih connotes a harmful substance. Lowenberg (1991:132) argued that Bahasa Indonesia may carry a particular connotation. The English word, thus, provides more neutral, and gives more positive vibe.

English is attractive

Apart from English is prestigious, effective and efficient, and sounds modern, English is also attractive (Ross in Khazanah and Kusumaningputri, 2021). This foreign language has drawn the attention of Indonesian people for long. The long term Indonesians are exposed to English has built a firm concept in our people's mind, that English has still been the most favorite the most spoken foreign language in Indonesia. With those interpretants English has, this language is always gaining attention of people coming across the English using advertisements.

English in Product Branding

English is found to be distributed in every part of the print advertisements, either in the offer, the headline, the image, the body, the Call to Action, and Contact Information and Store Logo. Even, in the headlines where the brands' names are the most salient element in the product, this foreign language is undeniably the language of the names of the brands, and those of most products. Only few brands, in particular old Indonesian brands, use bahasa Indonesia. English is used as branding, to build the overall image to attain the trust of the customers and to make them loyal customers (Subiakto in Mayangwangi, 2022). Through branding, customers know what to buy to make them what to become (Subiakto in Mayangwangi, 2022). Therefore, English is applied in the names of the brands and those of products, to build the imaging that they are qualified, they are likely to expand the business, or to provide a particular impression to the ads readers that this product seems to sound international.

In the format of billboard, this advertisement is located in Jl. RS. Fatmawati Raya Cipete Selatan, Kec. Cilandak, Kota Jakarta Selatan, Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta 12410. Obviously, this ad is made for Indonesians not for tourists. The use of the English name is obviously to project the quality it provides. That is like what may stand out from the use of

English and the slogan 'tropical skin expert' coming along with the name. Another salient element in the ad is Nyaman hadapi matahari setiap hari (easiest to apply sunscreen) indexing the needs of the consumers over skin protection. The use of Bahasa Indonesia is to target Indonesian consumers. The body of the ad is the performance the product provides. They are in English and bahasa Indonesia, comprising 'Non comedogenic'; 'aman untuk kulit sensitive'; 'ringan dan fresh hingga 8 jam'; 'Solar smart'; 'UV Protector'. English words are lavish, and effective, as well as efficient. Like other brands and its products, the use of English is reported to have those aforementioned qualities. Meanwhile, the bahasa Indonesia words are employed to furnish the clarity in intention, to emphasize the benefit or the highlighted information. Texture cloudlike in bahasa Indonesia is tekstur ringan diformulasi agar ringan seperti awan has longer structure of word compared to the structure of the English. Hence, the verb 'apply' may sound effective and may be untranslatable when juxtaposed to the word 'texture cloudlike'. This is as judgment, to make the brand stand out, distinctive from other products. 'Tersedia di Sociolla Lippo mall Kemang'.



Picture 1. Carasun



Picture 2. Emina

This in-store cosmetics ad found in Mall Plaza Indonesia No 28-30 Jalan M.H. Thamrin, Gondangdia, Menteng, Kota Jakarta Pusat. Emina is the brand's name. The slogans 'Born to be loved' and 'Beauty Bestie' seem to draw young girls' attention. Indonesian youths, especially the girls are known to have at least passive English. They are familiar with English and some may speak communicative English. Another headline found is Kulit cerah dan bersinar, of which its English translation is the flawless and glowing skin. Instead of using English, bahasa Indonesia is used to make the purpose standing out. The phrase kulit cerah dan bersinar is perceived as something powerful. This is due to most girls are prone to have this goal. The body such as 'Summer plum extract', 'Micellar water', and 'Bright Stuff' are only pinpointing some products this brand offers readers. The use of the language is meant to be effective and efficient.



Picture 3. Mineral Botanica

This in-store ad is located in Mall Plaza Indonesia No 28-30 Jalan M.H. Thamrin, Gondangdia, Menteng, Kota Jakarta Pusat. Mall Plaza is a quite big plaza where people, in particular local people and some foreigners are seen in the mall. Mineral Botanica is a local brand. The name is surely the salience. The other headlines, that is the catchphrase 'More alive than freedom' and 'GWP September 2' are the 1370performance which direct the way the consumer think in an abstract way. The rest in the elements of the ad, like the Offer (*Setiap pembelian 2 product Mineral Botanica Free eyebrow pencil Periode 1 – 30 September 2022, Gratis senilai Rp. 44,900, S&K berlaku = Buy two products Get one free eyebrow pencil, within 1-30 September 2022, A pencil as worth as IDR 44,900 for free, terms and conditions apply*). Lastly, the body element, like 'Perfect Purifying' is another performance this provides.



Picture 4. Somethinc

'Somethinc', 'Niacinamide Sabi Brightening Serum', and '#1 Serum Pencerah' become the center of the ad. Like other new Indonesian cosmetic/skincare brands, this rising star brand uses English. They are highlighted as the headline. The texts on the name of the substance and the function of the product are the prominent information. The body of the ad which is 'Powered with SabiWhite' is the performance. There is no more other parts are filled, so we assume that the product is quite known by the consumers. Located on Watsons Outlet/OfflineStore Mall Kota Kasablanka Jl. Casablanca Kav. 88, RT.16/RW.5, Menteng Dalam, Tebet, Kota Jakarta Selatan presumably a place for sufficiently know brands, this product the Indonesian new rising start cosmetic brand.



Picture 5. Lizzie Parra

What are salient in this ad are 'by Lizzie Parra', 'Power Liner', and 'Be more powerful'. The brand's name is the identification of the product, so that it is recognized and known. The specification of the name of the product and the tagline are meant to fulfill the market's needs. The body of the ad, like 'eyeliner semi-matte berwarna seru serta tidak mudah luntur', 'cobalt', 'copper', 'crimson', 'semi-matte finish', 'intense colors', and 'smudge-proof' are meant to provide performance and imagery. These have something to do with profiling and qualities or values the product has. The product as well as the tagline 'eyeliner semi-matte berwarna seru serta tidak mudah luntur' (tr. semi-matte eyeliner with best colors that stays on) convince the potential buyers qualities the product offers. This is to make what to gain from the product. The location of the ad is on Watsons Outlet/Offline StoreMall Kota Kasablanka Jl. Casablanca No.Kav. 88, RT.16/RW.5, Menteng Dalam, Tebet, Kota Jakarta Selatan. It is the center of the passers-by, mostly Indonesians.

Conclusion

From the analyses above, the commodification of English in the advertisements took place in an ongoing process of producing and reproducing meanings. Using Peirce's triadic model, English is reported to undergo these gradual process in building associations. First is English is prestigious, hence this prestige it has builds trust among consumers and adds more

values to the brand. Second is English contains modernity, and modernity refers to modern time and this relates to youth. Third is that English is effective and efficient to use. Thus, it is used more than any other languages are used. In this, English terms sound more familiar. Fourth is English may sound safer than its counterparts, Bahasa Indonesia, in the aforementioned example. Fifth is English is attractive. Consequently, more advertisements use English. Among the data, in particular new Indonesian brand names, use English, compared with names of old Indonesian brands.

English is used, distributed and functioned in diverse ways in advertisements. First, this most spoken language in the world dominates language use in Indonesian local brand advertisements, either used as the Offer, the Headline, the Body, the Contact Information and Store Logo, and Smart Ad Placement. The blank elements where English is not found are the Image and the CTA. This is because the Image is not part of our data, and because the CTA is not made use in the advertisements. In the stages of branding, English is entirely used in the Salience, in particular the names of the brands, and mostly used in the Performance and Imagery. The use of English is certainly for some meanings as previously mentioned. Its counterpart, Bahasa Indonesia, is applied to highlight selected messages. This is, we argue, to create clearer / non ambiguous messages, especially in showing off the capability of the products to fulfill the consumers' needs.

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