Lash Championship Neuroscience: Cognitive Precision and Sensory Stability in The Art of Eyelash Extensions

[1] Horobets Diana
[1] Renting a studio in a salon (Amélie Aesthetics Vancouver). LLC owner, lash extension and eyelash lamination specialist, founder of the HLashes™ brand, Vancouver Washington

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ABSTRACT

The study presents a multilevel neurocognitive analysis of eyelash extension practice, treating it as a high-level psychomotor skill comparable in organizational and sensorimotor complexity to microsurgical manipulations and performance disciplines. The research introduces an original interdisciplinary framework integrating knowledge from cognitive neuroscience, the psychology of motor learning, materials science, and industry safety regulations. The author's hypothesis is formulated as the claim that progression to an expert trajectory is determined by the synergy of two complementary components: cognitive precision, formed through sequential stages of skill acquisition and supported by neural networks of sustained attention and executive control, and sensory stability, ensured by reducing external (hygienic and environmental) and internal (chemical effects of the formulations used) sources of sensory noise. To empirically close the theoretical model, an analysis of innovative techniques and materials was conducted using the H-Lashes case, including the Clean Reputation protocol, the H-Lashes Powder formulation, and the Dual Lash Balance method. The findings have applied significance for reconfiguring educational trajectories, designing new product solutions, and strengthening the professional status of specialists in the beauty industry.

Keywords: fine motor skills, neuroscience, motor learning, cognitive load, sustained attention, executive control, sensory stability, cysteamine, thioglycolic acid, eyelash extensions.

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1. Introduction

The eyelash extension industry is a rapidly evolving segment of the global beauty economy, characterized by sustained momentum and tangible cultural impact. According to specialized analytics, aggregate revenue of the global market in 2024 is estimated in the range of 1,6–1,94 billion USD [1]. It is expected to increase to 2,73–3,26 billion USD by 2032 at a compound annual growth rate of approximately 6,7–6,95% [1]. The demand structure is shaped by several interrelated drivers: a shift in consumer attitudes toward regular self-care, a preference for semi-permanent cosmetic solutions as a means of reducing everyday time costs, the media capitalization of social networks and the culture of celebrities, as well as rising disposable incomes [1, 2]. The leading position of North America, which accounts for more than one third of global revenue, indicates the maturity of the local market and the consolidation of high professional standards [3, 4].

Despite its economic significance, the professional activity of the eyelash extension specialist rarely becomes the subject of rigorous scientific inquiry. The proposed analysis reconceptualizes this practice, treating the work of an elite specialist as a high-precision psychomotor skill at an expert level. In terms of combined cognitive and motor demands, this activity is comparable to domains traditionally examined by cognitive neuroscience — microsurgery, performing arts (for example, instrumental musicianship), and professional esports [5, 6]. All these domains are characterized by exceptional fine motor control, refined visuomotor coordination, sustained attention, and developed mechanisms of executive control [9]. The attainment of top-tier qualification in eyelash extension, as in other expert practices, relies not on mechanical repetition but on deep processes of neuroplasticity — the structural and functional reorganization of brain networks that optimizes cognitive and motor operations [10].

The scientific gap lies in the near-complete absence of interdisciplinary work integrating the tacit knowledge of elite eyelash extension specialists with the theoretical constructs of cognitive neuroscience, motor learning theory, and sensory science. Existing publications either fragmentarily describe individual components (for example, material properties or market trends) or remain strictly practice-oriented and instructional, without uncovering the foundational neurocognitive mechanisms that determine high qualification.

The aim of the study is to conduct a comprehensive neurocognitive analysis of the art of eyelash extension, identifying cognitive precision and sensory stability as key determinants of expert performance, and to provide a scientific justification for the effectiveness of innovative methods using the H-Lashes case.

The scientific novelty of the work lies in the first application within the industry of a neuroscience analytical framework to the beauty sector. In the proposed perspective, the practitioner's techniques and the chemical formulas of products are treated not as autonomous elements but as interdependent variables within a complex cognitive-sensory system of technician—client.

The hypothesis is based on the assumption that achieving an elite level in eyelash extension is determined by the synergy of two interrelated factors: cognitive precision, formed through staged skill acquisition and supported by neural networks of sustained attention and executive control; and sensory stability, arising from the minimization of external (hygiene, environmental parameters) and internal (chemical impact of materials) sensory noise, which reduces cognitive load and frees resources for precision motor actions.

2. Materials and methods

Within the study, methodological triangulation was employed as an integrative strategy for obtaining and interpreting data, ensuring comprehensive coverage and mutual verification of results through the combination of three complementary approaches.

The first component — a systematic review of the scientific literature — included a targeted analysis of peer-reviewed publications from authoritative abstracting databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and PubMed. The search procedures were organized around a strictly delineated thesaurus of key expressions: neuroscience of fine motor skills, motor learning expertise, visuomotor coordination, sustained attention, sensory science, cysteamine keratin, and thioglycolic acid safety. This stage ensured the formation of the conceptual-theoretical framework of the study and set the criteria for subsequent analytical work.

The second component — a case-study analysis — entailed an in-depth examination of specific techniques and product solutions used as empirical illustrations: the composition of H-Lashes Powder, the Dual Lash Balance method, and the hygiene protocol Clean Reputation. This block made it possible to align the identified theoretical propositions with expert-level practices, revealing the mechanisms of their implementation and the boundaries of applicability under real-world conditions.

The third component — a content analysis of industry data — was aimed at examining market reports to reconstruct the economic context, as well as normative sources (ISO, CDC, NALA, CEN standards) that define the regulatory environment and safety parameters that structure professional activity and determine permissible technological regimes.

3. Results and Discussion

The process of professionalization of a lash technician is convincingly interpreted through the classic three-phase model of motor skill acquisition by Fitts and Posner [7]. This framework systematizes the transition from stepwise, controlled actions to intuitively precise and highly stable execution.

Cognitive stage. At the entry level, the learner effectively decomposes the task into discrete components. Isolating a natural lash, grasping an artificial one, dipping it in adhesive, and subsequent placement are performed as a sequence of separate, consciously regulated operations.

The stage is marked by elevated cognitive load, strong reliance on verbal instructions, and slow, error-prone performance [7]. Working memory is fully occupied with monitoring the order and correctness of basic movements.

With the accumulation of practice, single acts begin to merge into smooth, energetically economical motor chains. There is a compression of elementary operations into holistic motor programs. The demand for continuous conscious supervision weakens, and procedural memory comes to the fore. The performer begins to anticipate the next step, and movement trajectories acquire accuracy and rationality [7].

At the stage of automation, at the upper level of competence, basic motor tasks proceed virtually without conscious control. This state can be characterized as the formation of a neural map of the whole action [7]. Freed cognitive resources are redirected to suprasegmental functions: individualization of design, rapid resolution of complex situations (including work with anagen lashes and correction of interocular asymmetry), as well as management of interaction with the client. The Dual Lash Balance method serves as an illustrative example of a task available precisely at this level.

Progression through the stages of the Fitts–Posner model is associated with a profound reconfiguration of neural systems, reproducibly captured by neuroimaging methods, including fMRI and EEG. Observations of highly qualified performers from various domains—musicians, athletes, chess players—reveal similar trajectories of neuroplastic changes [11].

A strategic marker of expertise is increased neural economy: when solving a familiar task, an expert exhibits more compact and less intense activation than a novice. This indicates the formation of a selectively tuned, energy-sparing network capable of delivering the same functional output at lower resource costs. Key roles are played by the premotor cortex, the supplementary motor area (SMA), the parietal cortex, and the cerebellum—nodes that support action planning, coordination, and sensorimotor integration.

Prolonged, goal-directed training initiates both structural and functional remodeling: the volume of gray matter changes in leading motor and sensory regions, and functional connectivity—coordinated dynamics of activity between areas forming the expert network—intensifies [11]. It follows that the brain of a champion in eyelash extensions literally differs—in organization and in operation—from the brain of a novice practitioner.

Eyelash extension, which entails hundreds of highly precise, monotonously repeated movements over hours, illustrates a task of maintaining vigilant attention—the ability to sustain stable concentration under monotony when the cost of error is high [8].

For such conditions, the time-on-task effect is typical: as activity continues, response latency and error rate increase due to brief attentional lapses; applied to eyelash extensions, this directly affects the quality and safety of the procedure. Neuroimaging data highlight a right-hemisphere-dominant network sustaining vigilant attention, including prefrontal and parietal areas [8]. Critically, sustained attention not only maintains performance but also acts as a key moderator of neuroplasticity, amplifying the effect of motor learning [22].

We next consider, stage by stage, the Fitts and Posner model of skill acquisition for eyelash extensions.

Stage 1: Cognitive, characterized by:

Master’s behavior: Movements are slow, fragmentary, with frequent stops; maximal concentration on each elementary act is maintained.

Cognitive process: Conscious stepwise sequence: Isolate → Grasp → Dip → Place. Marked cognitive load due to continuous maintenance of the sequence and rules in working memory.

Stage 2: Integrative, characterized by:

Master’s behavior: Kinematics becomes smoother; error frequency decreases; proactivity emerges — anticipation of the next step.

Cognitive process: Formation of motor programs: smoothed sequences with online error correction. The load on cognitive resources decreases due to partial automatization of linkages.

Stage 3: Automation, characterized by:

Master’s behavior: Movements are fast, accurate, phenomenologically intuitive; attention is freed and redirected to strategy and aesthetic composition.

Cognitive process: Automated skill: focus on artistic and strategic decisions (e.g., Dual Lash Balance). Minimal cognitive load on basic operations due to stable motor schemas.

Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of cognitive and motor requirements in tasks characterized by high precision.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of cognitive and motor demands in high-precision tasks (compiled by the author on the basis of [7]).

Criterion	Eyelash extensions	Microsurgery	Jewelry making
Primary motor skill	Precision fine finger motor control, working with two instruments (tweezers)	Precision fine finger motor control, working with surgical instruments	Precision fine finger motor control, working with instruments (pliers, cutters)
Visuomotor coordination	Extremely high: eye-hand-instrument coordination in three-dimensional space at the micro level	Extremely high: eye-hand-instrument coordination, often using a microscope	High: eye-hand-instrument coordination for precise placement and processing of small components
Sustained attention	Requires prolonged (1.5–3 hours) concentration on a monotonous, repetitive task	Requires prolonged concentration during the procedure, but the task may be more dynamic	Requires prolonged concentration on a static object
Executive control	Design planning, real-time decision-making, adaptation to the client's anatomy	Planning of surgical stages, critical decision-making, response to unforeseen situations	Design planning, material selection, sequence of operations

The transition from the integrative to the autonomous phase is not merely an increase in motor productivity, but a qualitative reconfiguration of the cognitive architecture that makes genuine mastery possible. The Dual Lash Balance technique, which presupposes the synchronous evaluation of multiple parameters, is inaccessible to the novice: in the logic of cognitive load theory, their working memory is fully occupied with maintaining basic motor operations [7]. Only an expert who has automatized the mechanics possesses sufficient slack in cognitive resources for such a meta-level analysis. Consequently, Dual Lash Balance functions not merely as an advanced method, but as a behavioral indicator of entry into the highest stage of motor learning, directly linking applied technique with fundamental cognitive theory.

Strict hygiene and sterilization regulations, including Clean Reputation, should be interpreted not only as a condition of safety, but also as a means of cognitive optimization. International standards (ISO, CEN), national regulators, and professional associations (NALA, ALA) specify concrete requirements for sanitation, disinfection, and sterilization of instruments and work surfaces [16, 17].

Standardized procedures — handwashing, instrument sterilization, separation of clean and dirty zones, proper waste disposal — create a predictable, stable environment and thereby fundamentally reduce the practitioner’s cognitive load. They no longer need to make situational safety decisions during work or continuously scan the surroundings for risks: these computationally demanding operations are offloaded into an external, pre-specified, and automated routine.

This mechanism functions as externalized cognition: just as a pilot relies on a preflight checklist to avoid overloading working memory with dozens of parameters, the practitioner follows a hygiene protocol, freeing limited cognitive resources for the primary activity, which is creative and technically complex.

The precision of fine motor acts relies on a continuous, consistent influx of sensory signals — visual, tactile, and proprioceptive (the sense of the configuration and position of one's own body) [13]. Any contextual instability — a client forced to move due to discomfort, tearing caused by adhesive fumes, insufficient illumination — introduces parasitic noise into the feedback loop. The specialist's neural systems are forced to reallocate resources to suppress this noise, which predictably degrades accuracy and slows the execution of the central operation.

The Clean Reputation protocol (see Fig. 1), by creating safe and comfortable conditions for the client, directly stabilizes the sensory environment. A calm, nonirritated client becomes a predictable and motionless working surface, which increases the informativeness of feedback and gives the practitioner the opportunity to act more precisely and confidently. This logic aligns with CDC recommendations on creating clean, well-ventilated areas for medical procedures, where the minimization of distractors is regarded as a prerequisite for safety and efficiency [18]. Consequently, the dilemma between speed and hygiene is illusory: from a neurocognitive standpoint, a strict hygiene regime sets the conditions for achieving maximal performance and quality.

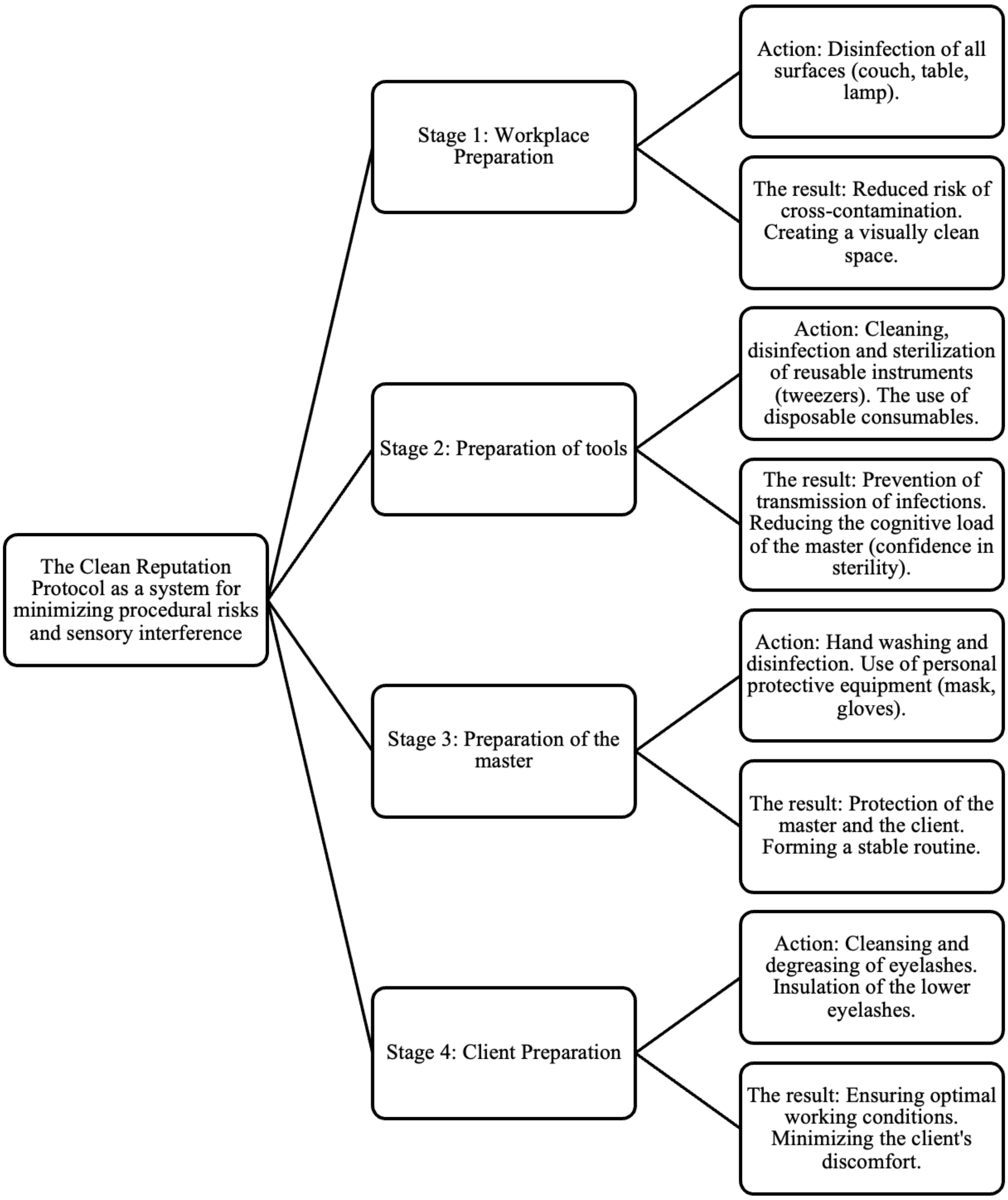

Fig.1. Pure Reputation Protocol as a system for minimizing procedural risks and sensory interference (compiled by the author on the basis of [19]).

The choice of reducing agent in eyelash lamination formulations directly determines the profile of the procedure's cognitive-sensory dynamics: the chemical kinetics of transformations in keratin is coupled with the client's behavioral stability and the technician's manageability of actions. Two dominant classes — thioglycolates and cysteamine — display distinct mechanistic and phenomenological trajectories of action.

Thioglycolic acid (TGA) and its salts are traditionally regarded as highly effective agents that rapidly initiate cleavage of keratin disulfide bridges (-S–S-) with subsequent plastic reconfiguration of eyelash fibers [21, 23]. Yet the same high reactive potential correlates with a pronounced sensory and dermatological burden: TGA is characterized by corrosivity and invasiveness, a pungent unpleasant odor, and a risk of irritation to skin and mucous membranes [25]. For this reason, the permissible concentrations and pH ranges of its use are strictly regulated, including at the level of opinions of the European Scientific Committee on Consumer Safety (SCCS) [15].

Cysteamine, in contrast, constitutes a more modern and gentle alternative. As a derivative of the amino acid cysteine — a natural structural fragment of keratin — it effects cleavage of disulfide bonds, most likely via disulfide exchange, with lower aggressiveness and a more temporally extended reaction profile [24], while remaining biologically congruent with the hair matrix [25]. Empirical data indicate substantially lower cytotoxicity and a reduced inflammatory response compared with TGA [14], as well as less oxidative damage to the cuticle [20, 22].

In this context, the H-Lashes Powder formulation, which uses cysteamine as the active ingredient, serves as an applied demonstration of these advantages. Shifting toward cysteamine removes the key generators of client sensory discomfort — chemical irritation (burning, erythema) and an intense unpleasant odor [14] — thereby increasing the subject's sensory resilience during the procedure. A client not overloaded by aversive stimuli moves, blinks, and exhibits anxiety less frequently, which means the technician obtains a more stable and predictable biological canvas for work.

A consequent outcome is the reduction of cognitive load on the technician. First, the need for constant monitoring of acute risks decreases: recognizing that the probability of chemical burns or a pronounced allergic reaction is lower, the specialist expends fewer attentional resources on background vigilance and focuses more on technical precision [25]. Second, the client's calmness together with the gentle kinetics of the formulation increase the predictability of outcomes; micro-decisions during setting are simplified, facilitating attainment of a more precise and aesthetically exact curvature.

Thus, the choice of the active chemical component extends far beyond technical tuning and becomes a strategic intervention in the cognitive-sensory feedback loop technician–client. A more biocompatible chemical profile, as in the case of H-Lashes Powder, restructures the entire interaction system toward stability, predictability, and a metrologically precise final result (see Table 2).

Table 2. Comparative characteristics of the safety and efficacy profiles of cysteamine and thioglycolic acid in lamination procedures (compiled by the author on the basis of [14]).

Parameter	Cysteamine	Thioglycolic acid (TGA)
Mechanism of action	Mild reduction of disulfide bonds, amino acid derivative	Aggressive reduction of disulfide bonds
Processing time	Longer (15–20 min), gradual action	Rapid (6–8 min), intensive action
Cytotoxicity (in vitro)	Low (cell viability 87.34%)	High (cell viability 5.76%)
Inflammatory response	Minimal	Significant
Risk of overdrying/damage	Low, more gentle effect	High, requires strict time control
Odor	Mild or absent	Strong, unpleasant
Regulatory status (EU)	Approved as a reducing agent	Use restricted by concentration and pH

Methodology Dual Lash Balance is not merely an extension technique, but an integral diagnostic-strategic protocol that demonstrates the operation of higher-order cognitive mechanisms of executive control. It radically surpasses the level of a simple motor act of fixing artificial fibers and includes the following cognitive components.

Planning: the specialist correlates a broad spectrum of parameters — the morphology of the ocular region, the growth vector of natural eyelashes, their strength condition, facial asymmetry, and the client's individual preferences — and, on the basis of multidimensional analysis, constructs an integrated model of the future design.

Working memory: during the procedure, the practitioner holds in the mental field the entire configuration of variables (length ranges, curvature radii, thicknesses, the logic of transitions, the micro-specifics of individual segments of the ciliary margin), which enables coordinated decision-making at the level of each individual eyelash.

Cognitive flexibility: when unforeseen factors arise — for example, local weakness of the hair shaft or an atypical growth direction in a specific zone — the specialist promptly modifies the initial plan while preserving the integrity of the intent.

The implementation of such a complex analytical architecture is possible only at the stage of autonomous skill mastery [7]. The basic motor patterns (isolation, grasping, placement) are brought to the level of automatism and practically do not require conscious monitoring, which frees resources of prefrontal systems — the neural substrate of executive functions — for strategic regulation. In contrast, a novice whose attention is absorbed by mechanics is unable to conduct such a ramified analysis in parallel. Here the dissociation of components of fine motor control described in studies becomes clearly apparent: the expert effortlessly maintains the temporal organization and sequence of movements, whereas conscious control is engaged in higher-order tasks [12]. Below in Figure 2 is a description of the cognitive decision-making model in the Dual Lash Balance methodology.

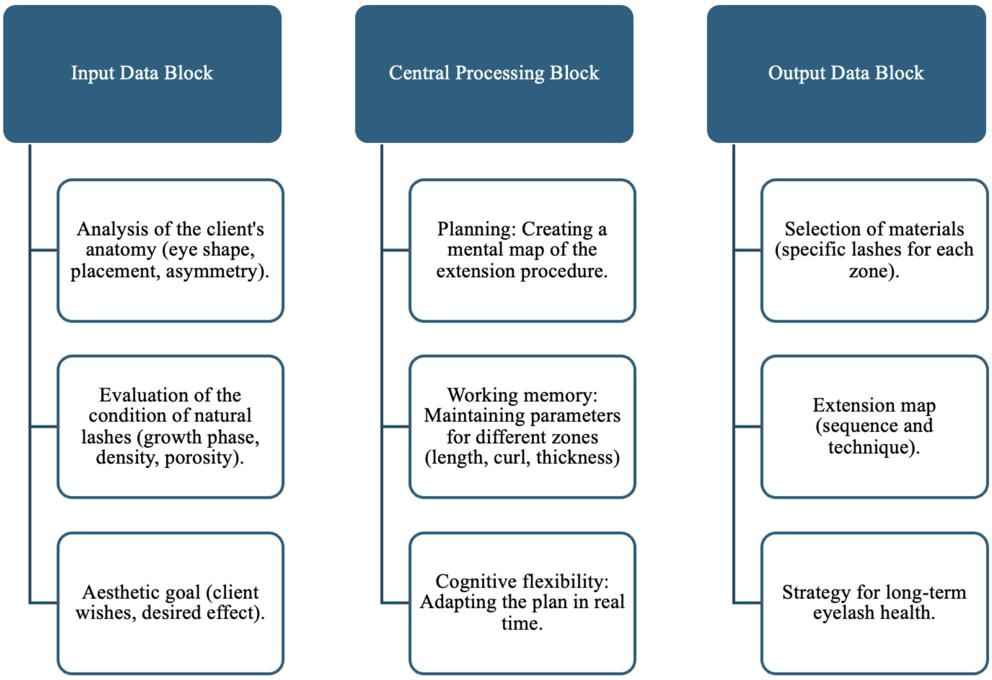

Fig. 2. Cognitive model of decision-making in the Dual Lash Balance method (compiled by the author on the basis of [7, 12]).

Therefore, Dual Lash Balance is legitimately interpreted as a metacognitive form of an acquired motor action: the practitioner not merely performs the operation, but reflexively governs their own execution within a strategic, goal-directed frame. This metacognitive level is the true criterion that separates a world-class practitioner from a merely technically competent specialist.

4. Conclusion

The conducted interdisciplinary analysis convincingly demonstrates: elite eyelash extension is not manual cosmetics but a high-level neurocognitive skill. The core hypothesis is confirmed: cognitive precision and sensory stability form an interconnected, system-forming duet that determines the level of expertise.

Cognitive precision is formed in accordance with the canons of motor learning theories: from the stage of pronounced top-down control to a state of near-complete automatization. The transition is accompanied by increased neural efficiency and signs of structural plasticity. The backbone is the networks of sustained attention and executive control, which provide the capacity to endure prolonged monotonous precision work while simultaneously solving complex strategic tasks.

Sensory stability serves as a necessary foundation for realizing this precision. It is achieved in two ways: by constructing a stable and safe external environment through stringent hygienic protocols that reduce the practitioner's cognitive load; by using modern materials, including cysteamine, which diminish internal sensory noise in the client (discomfort), thereby stabilizing the entire master—client system.

The study's findings have direct applied significance for the eyelash extension industry:

Education: Learning trajectories should be restructured with support from cognitive science. The initial module is aimed at achieving motor automatization through deliberate practice; advanced courses focus on developing strategic and metacognitive thinking, framing extension as a design-analytical discipline.

Product development: Innovative adhesives, formulations, and lashes should be evaluated not only by their physicochemical parameters, but also by their impact on the cognitive-sensory dynamics of the procedure. By increasing client comfort, a product indirectly enhances the practitioner's precision and productivity.

Professional development: The presented results form a scientific conceptual apparatus for articulating and validating experts' tacit competencies, strengthening professional status and the visibility of the complexity of their work.

To deepen the understanding of the neurocognitive foundations of mastery, the following steps are advisable:

Conduct longitudinal neuroimaging studies EEG/fMRI at different stages of training to directly track the dynamics of neuroplasticity.

Quantitatively test the relationship between adherence to specific hygienic protocols and the frequency of technical errors during the procedure.

Perform a comparative analysis of cognitive strategies and oculomotor patterns among specialists of different training levels using eye-tracking.

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