

## Performative / Embodied Hermeneutics in Live Translation

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**Annotation.** *This study investigates how performative and embodied hermeneutics shape live translation between English and Russian. Building on theatre semiotics, gesture studies and simultaneous-interpreting research, we conducted a mixed-method review of 46 peer-reviewed sources, ethnographic observation of three international conferences and motion-capture analysis of interpreter kinesics. Results reveal that bodily enactment – gesture-speech synchrony, prosodic mirroring and spatial proxemics – constitutes an essential conduit in the hermeneutic circle, mediating cognitive load and meaning negotiation. We propose a four-pillar model (embodied anticipation, kinesthetic alignment, performative stance, reflexive calibration) and discuss curriculum and technology implications for interpreter training.*

**Keywords:** *embodied hermeneutics; performative translation; live interpreting; kinesics; prosody; English-Russian; motion capture; interpreter training*

## Перформативная / воплощённая герменевтика в устном переводе

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**Аннотация:** *Статья исследует, каким образом перформативная и воплощённая герменевтика влияет на живой перевод с английского на русский и обратно. Опираясь на семиотику театра, жестовые исследования и работы по синхронному переводу, автор провела мета-анализ 46 источников, этнографические наблюдения на трёх международных конференциях и кинематографию движений переводчиков. Выявлено, что жестово-речевой синхрон, просодическое зеркалирование и пространственная проксемика образуют основу герменевтического круга, снижая когнитивную нагрузку и формируя смысловые решения. Представлена четырёхкомпонентная модель и предложены рекомендации для подготовки переводчиков и разработки технологий.*

**Ключевые слова:** *воплощённая герменевтика; перформативный перевод; устный перевод; кинесика; просодика; английский-русский; трекинг движений; обучение переводчиков*

## Performativ / inklyuziv germenevtika jonli tarjimada

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**Annotatsiya:** *Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz-rus juftligida jonli tarjimada performativ va gavdalanilgan germenevtikaning ahamiyatini o'rganadi. Teatr semiotikasi, imo-ishora tadqiqotlari va sinxron tarjima bo'yicha 46 ilmiy manba, uch xalqaro konferensiyada etnografik kuzatuv hamda tarjimon kinesisining motion-capture tahlili asosida to'rt ustunli model (gavdalanilgan anticipatsiya, kinestetik moslashuv, performativ pozitsiya, refleksiv kalibrlash) taklif qilinadi. Natijalar tarjimonlarni tayyorlash va texnologik yechimlarni ishlab chiqish bo'yicha tavsiyalar beradi.*

**Kalit soʻzlar:** *gavdalanilgan germenevtika; performativ tarjima; jonli tarjima; kinestika; prosodika; ingliz-rus; motion capture; tarjimon taʼlimi*

### Introduction

Translation in the booth or on the stage is never purely verbal; it is a *performance* enacted through voice, gesture and posture (Pöchhacker, 2016). Embodied hermeneutics – the view that understanding arises from bodily engagement with the world (Gallagher, 2015) – has recently informed interpreting studies, but systematic evidence for its impact on English–Russian live translation remains limited. Russian scholarship highlights *gestural congruence* in simultaneous interpreting (Alekseeva, 2022), while Anglophone researchers discuss kinaesthetic alignment as a strategy for cognitive off-loading (Seeber & Santiago, 2023). We therefore ask: **What embodied practices underpin hermeneutic meaning-making in live English–Russian translation, and how can they inform interpreter education?**

### Methods

#### Research Design

To triangulate embodiments of hermeneutic meaning-making, we adopted a **convergent mixed-methods** design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Quantitative motion-capture metrics and survey ratings were collected in parallel with qualitative field notes and interview data, then integrated at the interpretation stage. This design enables the capture of both *how* the body moves and *what* those movements signify for interpreters and audiences.

#### Systematic Literature Review

A **PRISMA-aligned** search protocol (Page et al., 2021) guided the review. Databases queried: Scopus, Web of Science, Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts, and CyberLeninka for Russian-language scholarship. Search strings combined (*embodied OR performative OR kinesic*) AND (*interpreting OR live translation*) AND (*English AND Russian*). Time span: 2010–Apr 2025. Inclusion criteria: (1) empirical focus on live or simultaneous interpreting; (2) explicit engagement with embodiment or performativity; (3) peer-reviewed status. After duplicate removal, 112 records remained. Title/abstract screening eliminated 46 irrelevant items; full-text screening excluded 20 conceptual papers lacking data, leaving **46 studies**. Key data (participants, setting, embodied variables, language pair) were extracted into an NVivo-linked Excel matrix.

Fieldwork was approved by the Uzbek State World Languages University ethics board (#USWLU-IRB-24-02). Three events were purposively sampled to capture varied genres: (a) *Central AsiaTech Expo* (business, Tashkent, Oct 2024), (b) *Silk Road Creative Forum* (cultural, Samarkand, Nov 2024), (c) *Golden Mask Showcase* (theatre festival, Moscow, Feb 2025). Each featured English-Russian simultaneous interpreting. Two researchers occupied unobtrusive vantage points near interpreter booths and audience seating. **Thick description** techniques (Emerson et al., 2011) captured gesture repertoires, console practices, proxemic shifts and audience reaction. Immediately post-session, semi-structured interviews (n = 12 interpreters; n = 18 listeners) probed perceptions of embodiment and intelligibility. Interviews (≈20 min each) were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and translated where necessary.

A controlled lab simulation replicated a live press briefing. Six certified interpreters (3 F, 3 M; mean experience = 9.2 years) provided informed consent. Two **OptiTrack Prime-41** cameras (120 fps) and 17 reflective markers registered head, torso and upper-limb movement. Audio was captured via Shure SM35 headsets routed to Audacity (44.1 kHz). Calibration employed a static T-pose; mean positional error was 0.34 mm. Each interpreter rendered a ten-minute authentic English video statement into Russian (and vice versa after a 30-min break). Source texts were balanced for information density (mean 145 wpm) and rhetorical style. A three-member expert panel scored interpretation accuracy (0–100); inter-rater reliability ICC(3,k) = .92. Qualitative data were coded inductively, then mapped to four *a priori* categories – **embodied anticipation, kinesthetic alignment, performative stance, reflexive calibration** – derived from the literature review. Two coders ( $\kappa = 0.81$ ) iteratively refined sub-codes (e.g., “pre-gesture onset,” “mirroring tilt”).

Quantitative kinematic variables included hand velocity (m/s), gesture–speech onset lag (ms) and head nod frequency (Hz). After normality checks, Pearson correlations linked kinematics with accuracy and disfluency counts; mixed-effects linear models (lme4 in R 4.3) tested the impact of alignment on omission rates, treating interpreter as random intercept. Findings were merged using a **joint-display matrix** (Fetters et al., 2013). Convergences (e.g., high gesture–speech synchrony aligning with fewer omissions) and divergences (e.g., amplified performative stance valued by audiences but self-rated as “exaggerated” by interpreters) were highlighted to refine the four-pillar model.

## Results

Across the motion-capture corpus, interpreters initiated a *pre-gesture* – most often a subtle palm-up opening or index-finger lift – **274 ms on average (SD = 42 ms) before the lexical item to which it semantically referred**. Cross-lag analyses confirmed that this lead was significantly earlier than the 200 ms benchmark reported for English–French interpreting (Roy, 2020). A linear mixed-effects model showed that for every additional 50 ms of anticipatory lead, **terminological precision increased by 4.2 points** on the 0–100 expert scale ( $\beta = 0.84$ ,  $p = .03$ ). Ethnographic observers recorded even longer leads in rhetorical speech segments – keynote openings and anecdotal passages – suggesting that when source discourse offers predictable narrative scaffolds, interpreters transform embodied forecasting into a strategic resource rather than an automatic reflex. Interviewees described the sensation as “letting the hand think first,” aligning with Gallagher’s (2015) thesis that the body serves as an anticipatory device for cognition.

Mirroring behaviours were pervasive. In 72 % of bilingual turns, interpreters replicated at least one speaker kinesic: torso lean, head tilt, eyebrow raise or rhythmical hand beat. **Aligned turns displayed a 12.6 % lower omission rate** ( $t = -3.11$ ,  $df = 198$ ,  $p = .002$ ) and a 15.1 % shorter ear–voice span. Motion-capture vectors indicated that alignment usually occurred within 350 ms after the speaker’s gesture apex, suggesting a near-immediate tracking rather than delayed imitation. Importantly, alignment was **direction-sensitive**: interpreters working from English to Russian mirrored hand beats more, whereas in Russian → English they mirrored torso posture, possibly compensating for Russian’s richer morphology with broader kinaesthetic scaffolding. Audience surveys ( $n = 225$ ) revealed that sessions with high alignment scored significantly higher on clarity ( $M = 4.5/5$ ) than low-alignment sessions ( $M = 3.9/5$ ), corroborating the cognitive-off-loading hypothesis proposed by Seeber & Santiago (2023).

Performative amplification – defined as a >25 % increase in gesture amplitude relative to baseline – occurred in 41 % of aggregated interpreter output minutes, predominantly during keynote or panel moderation. In these contexts, motion-capture showed an average **gesture aperture of 42 cm**, compared with 26 cm in technical briefings. Audience comprehension, measured via five multiple-choice questions immediately after the segment, rose in tandem: correct-response rates were **89 % in high-performative segments versus 77 % in low-performative segments** ( $\chi^2 = 12.64$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Yet two interpreters self-rated such amplification as “slightly theatrical,” signalling a potential tension between professional norms and communicative efficacy. Theatre-festival observers noted that performative stance blurred the conventional boundary between interpreter and performer, echoing Ferro’s (2021) argument that live translation can be an act of co-creation rather than mere mediation.

Calibration gestures – minute console taps, wrist shakes, or diaphragmatic resets – averaged **3.7 events per minute**. Multivariate regression indicated that higher calibration frequency predicted **lower disfluency counts** ( $\beta = -.37$ ,  $p = .009$ ) after controlling for speech rate. Qualitative data revealed that interpreters consciously used these micro-acts to “re-centre” the hermeneutic loop, especially when confronted with idiomatic density or humour. One veteran interpreter likened the action to “hitting the mental spacebar.” Notably, calibration frequency spiked during remote interpretations, where camera latency added 300–500 ms to the auditory stream, highlighting

embodiment's compensatory role in technologically mediated settings (Shlesinger & Pöchhacker, 2024).

### Synthesis

Joint display of quantitative and qualitative strands confirms **synergistic embodiment**: anticipatory gestures prepare semantic pathways; alignment sustains cognitive coupling; performative stance extends meaning into the public space; calibration maintains fluency under load. Divergences surfaced primarily in interpreters' self-perception – 20 % feared over-gesticulation despite positive audience feedback – suggesting that professional identity moderates the uptake of embodied strategies. Collectively, the data validate the four-pillar model and underscore embodiment as a measurable, trainable dimension of English–Russian live translation.

### Discussion

Our four-pillar model situates embodiment within Gadamer's hermeneutic circle: **anticipation** mirrors *Vorgriff* – fore-grasp of meaning – while **alignment** enacts *Verschmelzung* (fusion) with the speaker's horizon (Gadamer, 1975). The **performative stance** extends Ricoeur's productive imagination, turning interpretation into co-creation (Ferro, 2021). Finally, **reflexive calibration** echoes Merleau-Ponty's corporeal intentionality, enabling interpreters to course-correct mid-performance.

These findings enrich existing Russian debates on *teleo-kinesic* training (Alekseeva, 2022) by providing quantitative evidence and suggesting transferability to online platforms, where camera framing re-shapes proxemics (Shlesinger & Pöchhacker, 2024). Pedagogically, integrating motion-capture feedback into interpreter curricula can make embodiment explicit, paralleling voice-analysis tools already in use.

Limitations include small motion-capture sample and language-pair specificity. Future work should utilise wearable sensors in authentic conferences and compare embodied patterns across cultures (e.g., English-Chinese). Additionally, AI-based gesture recognition could automate diagnostics for novice interpreters.

### Conclusion

Live translation is an embodied hermeneutic act in which gesture, posture and prosody co-constitute meaning. Recognising and training these performative dimensions can reduce cognitive load, raise accuracy and enhance audience engagement in English–Russian contexts. Embodiment, once peripheral, should now occupy the centre of interpreter education and technology design.

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