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Teaching Translation: Between "Naïve" and "Scientific" Minds*

1. Introduction

When teachers of languages or translation trainers start speaking to their students, are they sure they understand each other, moreover, do they use similar words with the same meaning? Spontaneous observations and teachers' complaints very often display a great degree of divergence and even contradiction between their presuppositions. The starting point of this divergence lies in the primary notions concerning language, language differences and translation. What students really think *about* language is mostly quite the opposite to what the teacher expects them to think (Kashkin 2009). This sphere of human knowledge, or rather belief, has been greatly disregarded up to the latest decades, but, in fact, it plays the most significant role in raising language awareness or in developing "scientifically based" language learning and translation strategies.

Beliefs about translation are part of the total system of beliefs about cognition and language, differences between languages and cultures, language use and learning. Research on beliefs, or metacognition, or everyday knowledge about language (naïve metalinguistics, folk linguistics, Sprachbewußtheit, spontaneous linguistics, language awareness, everyday philosophy, personal theories/constructs of language, language ideologies, attitudes or conceptions, personal strategies of language learning, etc.) has been very active in the latest three decades (Flavell 1979; van Lier 1988; Niedzielski – Preston 2000; Dufva 1994; Kashkin 2007; 2009; Golev 2007; to quote just a few). Metacognitive discourse is aimed not so much at cognizing the outer world, but at cognition itself and embraces controlling, monitoring and discussing this kind of activity ("thinking about thinking" or "talking about translation") is based upon some sort of previously acquired knowledge and presuppositions, scientifically based or naïve, but in any case individually appropriated in the form of personal constructs, beliefs, myths or stereotypes.

Beliefs influence activities involving language, and this influence might sometimes be destructive to the process of communication or learning. In fact, this was the reason why learners' beliefs came to be of primary interest to researchers, while less attention was given to general beliefs about language, the "public image" of language or "everyday language philosophy". Not so

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much was said or written concerning beliefs about translating from one language to another, although this sphere might display both naïve epistemology (everyday conceptions of similarities and differences between languages) and naïve linguistic technology (how to translate or what is a "good translation" in popular view), to say nothing of training translators/interpreters which is also a significant part of language education systems worldwide, and a sphere where the transition from a non-professional to a professional conception of language and translation can be observed.

There is no language activity and no learning without some sort of self-monitoring: «a primitive capacity for the metalinguistic kicks in at the inaugural stages of language acquisition» (Cappelen – Lepore 2007, vii). Metalinguistic activity is aimed at self-control of language use and improving personal language learning, and implies monitoring these domains, reflecting upon them and making deductions about them. Learners draw conclusions about linguistic and cultural differences, demand what should be taught to them and how: «Expert learners also reflect on the learning process» (St. Clair 2010). A specific area of metalinguistic thought is represented by beliefs/knowledge about translation.

There are two categories of students for whom beliefs about translation are relevant: students of translation departments and students using translation as a subsidiary tool in learning, often criticized as outdated (Liao 2006; Ashouri – Fotovatnia 2010). The latter include mainly LSP students, although in Russia some of them take a special course in "Translation for Special Purposes" (TSP, roughly equal to an extension or major, officially named "translation in the sphere of professional communication"). The latter presupposes a more professional and theoretical attitude to translation, thus making these students a third category or a subcategory of the first one. There is also the general public (including students' parents, customers of translation agencies, and consumers of translation products) who share a naïve view upon language, language differences/similarities, learning and translation. The present paper is an attempt to show how the author's previous studies (Kashkin 2007; 2009) might be extended into the sphere of translation pedagogy.

For a student of translation everyday beliefs about language contrasts are to a great degree the starting point, and a scientifically based, "professional" view is the «zone of proximal development» (Vygotsky 2006). The *dialogue* of the interacting parties (teacher/student) will remain half-broken without learning what the students think about language, language differences and translation, and, in return, without some sort of linguistic *enlightenment*.

There is another very important sphere where naïve and professional theories of translation come into conflict. It is a common mistake of translation novices to expect their customers to be aware of the real nature of languages and translation. It leads to multiple instances of

misunderstanding or sometimes even underpayment and provokes lots of unprofessional criticism of translation in media and, in return, complaints in translation blogs (see list of translators' blogs further).

2. Background

The nature of beliefs and their status in the human episteme has not yet been sufficiently disclosed. The correlation between official science and other variants of human cognition has also been disputed. Naïve beliefs are fortunately no longer considered as «mistakes» or «misinterpretation», or «inaccurate scientific constructs» (Baker 1989), or «stankos» (Niedzielski - Preston 2000, viiviii). Moreover, misunderstandings and misinterpretations in naïve users' conceptions are sometimes paralleled to «naïveté and myths» in some language theories (Harris 1980, 4–7). The beliefs held by "lay people" are now assumed not only to co-exist in the modern world alongside with "scientific" or publicly accepted knowledge, but also to precede historically what is nowadays regarded as "scientific views" - folk conceptions are a source for scientific theories, cf. also: Dennett (1993, 121f.). The history of language sciences shows that people have always made prescientific observations about language, especially when they met with a different culture. But what marks the borderline between everyday and scientific knowledge? Do lay people use scientificallybased or naïve views about language nowadays? In spite of their opposition in essence, both types of linguistic cognition display common epistemological invariables, or constants (reification, monocentrism vs. polycentrism, etc.). Thus, the ZPD can be found both ontogenetically, and phylogenetically, both in the meta-linguistic development of an individual and in the meta-linguistic development of the humankind (Kashkin 2011). Everyday knowledge and scientific concepts coexist and inter-act in the mind of an individual, as well as in the public view upon language. According to Vygotsky, in developing everyday notions we ascend from things to conceptualization, while with scientific concepts we descend from concepts to things (Vygotsky 2006, 920). The relationship between naïve and scientific conceptions of language or translation is greatly different from an opposition, it is rather a continuum between the two poles, featuring historic variation and development, both personal and social. Conceptualizations and metaphors used by the ancient science of language are very often similar to those developed "naturally" by a naïve user. Some earlier "misleading" beliefs later got rejected by newer scientific paradigms in the history of linguistics or by education and enlightenment in the development of an individual. The same is true about metaphors of translation (Shatalov 2009).

The main starting points of naïve linguistics today are usually the practical issues of learning and translating. Some researchers designate everyday activities as the principal, whereas scientific

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activities as the subsidiary subject, giving more value to «man-the-scientist», to «personal theories» or «personal constructs» (Kelly 1963; Wong 2002, 473f.). Are we far from admitting that, like Web 1.0 became Web 2.0 in the new communication era, Science 1.0 (created by the elite for the community) has a tendency to develop into Science 2.0 (created by the scientific community, maybe in relationship with lay users)?

Most researchers underline the following features of naïve beliefs or everyday notions: constructions of reality, they are social and individual, dynamic, contextual and paradoxical, as was very neatly stated in (Barcelos 2007, 114f.). Their contradictory nature was also stressed by the psychologists dealing with everyday consciousness (Ulybina 2001, 111).

In studying naïve metalinguistics, Western scholars preferred experimental research centered upon language learning, while in Russia primary interest lay upon culture-related concepts and metaphoric expressions involving language and its units, primarily, in literary fiction and folklore. Both lines of research, in fact, revealed similar ways in which language was conceptualized in the human mind (be it naïve or scientific).

In Arutyunova's voluminous collection *Language about Language* (2000) the authors analyzed such concepts as *word*, *language*, *speech*, *meaning*, *sense*, *to speak*, *voice* as parts of the metalanguage of "natural linguistics". The analysis, done both from synchronous and historic perspectives, reflected the ways in which Russian language was conceptualized in folk culture and speech. It was a typical mainstream theoretical research (and a brilliant one), drawing upon examples from folk songs or the Bible, Leo Tolstoy or Joseph Brodsky. Not a hint at experimental studies was made.

Some years later another collection *Everyday Metalinguistic Conscience: Ontological and epistemological aspects* (Golev 2007) introduced several novelties into Russian metalinguistics. First of all, the collection followed the first conference dedicated exclusively to naïve linguistics and discussed the major theoretical issues relevant to these studies. Secondly, many of the authors had a psycholinguistic or linguo-pedagogical background which brought the real-world data into consideration. Applied linguistics and experimental data were reflected in chapters referring to first and second language acquisition: Golev (2007) on orthographic prevalence in everyday linguistics of the native Russian language; Debrenne (2006) on personal theories of grammatic equivalence and translation in the Russian learners of French; Polinichenko (2008) on the metaphoric treatment of *language* as a container in folk linguistics, etc., naïve users semantics in regional dialects, and many other chapters of more volumes which followed.

The author of the present paper had both a theoretical (language contrasts) and a practical background (teaching EFL and ESP) when several years of observation and impromptu interviews

were systematized thanks to his lecture course in *Unofficial Linguistics* and a joint research at the Finnish University of Jyväskylä (Dufva – Lähteenmäki – Kashkin 2000). As for metacognitive aspects of translation, translator/interpreter training, or using translation as a tool in EFL teaching, this sphere remains mostly a challenge for translation theorists or practitioners, only the general approach and some historical aspects have been treated more or less profoundly (Kashkin 2011; Shatalov 2009).

3. Materials and methods

"Thinking about language" is rarely fully verbalized. Unlike "official" linguistics, naïve users prefer to keep silence and just act according to their beliefs. Metalinguistic knowledge is generally deduced from personal learning strategies and actions, through patterns of linguistic choice they tend to use. Folk linguistics is also "scattered" in separate metalinguistic utterances found in everyday discourse or generated in experimental environments (questionnaire responses, interviews, internet blogs and so on). In some cases narrativized personal language careers or written interviews (How I studied English, How I decided to become a translator, etc.) make personal constructs more or less explicit and analyzable with contextual, interpretative discourse analysis techniques. This is done in several research works on "student narratives", "language learning careers", "histories" or "trajectories" by van Lier (1988); Benson (2008); and others (Kalaja – Menezes – Barcelos 2008). Very often these narratives (as well as oral interviews) would include primary attribution and cause/effect analysis of linguistic actions made by students themselves when explaining their own progress, difficulties, success/failure, wonder, etc. In studying translation beliefs, "mistranslations" become a source equal to "mistakes", or "deviations" - to use less offensive terminology introduced by Debrenne (2006). Another valuable source of studying beliefs about translation is critical reviews written by students at various stages of training. The degree of professional awareness in such reviews is different, but there is always an imagined touchstone of "ideal translation" or "good translation" which is present behind their critical remarks and retrievable with discourse analysis techniques.

The research discussed in the present paper was based upon observation, teachers' and students' complaints about their progress or "mistakes", interviews and questionnaires, and later, on discourse about language and learning derived from students' essays (written interviews), internet blogs and live journals¹. Students' essays were written in their first and fourth years of training, thus

¹ Abbreviations (types of sources):

F – fiction and proverbs

M – meta-translation texts (commentary, prefaces, etc.)

Q – questionnaires and interviews

giving way to possible longitudinal deductions later. Another very important source was found in internet blog and live journal entries (discussing mainly translation difficulties or quality, or dedicated to translators' complaints about their customers and the general public). Both sources were turned into a corpus of discursive blocks for further contextual and interpretative analysis of beliefs about translation. The present paper quotes mainly from these two sources, occasionally addressing other genres of meta-translation discourse:

- student everyday discourse about languages and cultures, difficulties of learning and translating;
- teacher everyday discourse, including talking about their students;
- "folk linguistics" in media publications about translation;
- "linguistic advertising" (presentation of language courses and translating agencies to target groups of the general public);
- "folk linguistics" and the "public image" of translation in literary fiction, folklore and movies;
- forewords to translated work, or prefaces, commentaries and other meta-texts.

Both oral and written interviews were conducted with a double purpose. The purpose, declared outwardly to the interviewees, consisted mainly in discussing their achievements and difficulties of language learning. The inner purpose, known generally only to the interviewer (and researcher), was to clarify the interviewee's attitude to language learning, his/her beliefs, personal theories and techniques of studying languages, etc. With written interviews, to satisfy both the ethical and the sincerity criteria, the students were asked not to sign their narratives.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Reification metaphors in naïve theories of language and translation

Observation results, questionnaire responses and self-reports of language learners revealed two domains of naïve metalinguistics: intra-cultural and cross-cultural beliefs or mythologemes (Kashkin 2007). Later each of these spheres within everyday language philosophy was subdivided into cognitive (ontological) beliefs, or proto-theories, and procedural ones, strategies or proto-

B – blogs and live journals

A – linguistic advertising

N – written interviews, or self-narratives:

N1 – first-year translation students

N4 – fourth-year translation students

technologies. Cognitive beliefs are often expressed in metaphorical conceptualizations of language units and processes (*word*, *language*, *speech*, *speaking*, *translation*, etc.). Proto-technologies are typical actions guided by the cognitive beliefs, and very often considered "erroneous" from the point of view of "official" linguistics. Disparity between expected and actual results from actions guided by naïve linguistic beliefs might serve as a basis for revision of beliefs towards a more "scientific" view (ZPD), developed by a translation student.

The basic cognitive intra-cultural mythologeme is reification of words: words or other language units are conceptualized and treated like material things. The phenomenon was named *chosisme* and applied to human abstract notions in general, be it linguistics or physics by Bachelard (1983). Other ontological beliefs are a logical consequence of the basic myth: belief in natural connection of word and thing; belief in mechanical predetermination of words to be used in an utterance by the context and the situation "in nature"; belief in "fractal" structure of word semantics when meanings are treated like minor countable "things" within a bigger "thing", a word (Kashkin 2007).

Metaphors as primary mechanism of cognition (comparison of "new" to "old"), play a fundamental role in creating language beliefs and are further displayed in narratives or other types of discourse (Kramsch 2003). Words are things, "grains of sand", or "construction bricks", the text is a wall of bricks, language is conceived as a big bag full of bricks, i.e. exclusively as lexicon. Words and messages are compared to transported material goods, known as "conduit metaphor" (Lakoff –Johnson 1980). A word, like a material object, can be *given* or *taken*, or disposed by the human body in some other manner: *«before you give me your word»*; *«He* [...] *choked down the word»*; *«I'd never breathe a word»* (F¹). Cf. the quint-essence of naïve linguistics in an open questionnaire response retrieved about ten years ago: *«Words are contained in lungs together with air, while breathing they often fly out spontaneously. They can be visually observed in various dictionaries»* (Q, ESP student). Human words can be *heavy* or *light*, *dirty* or *clean*, they may be *made of stone*, one could *hide behind a wall of words* (B) etc. The word is also a physical container of smaller "grains", its semantics is additive: *«meanings packed into one word»* (F).

The most popular metaphors of translation were also connected with physical properties, such as sound or outward appearance, opposing *opacity/light*, *harshness/harmony* in the place of *bad/good*: (some translations are) *like playing the "Moonlight Sonata" on a tin can* (M); an orchestra of outlandish instruments interpreting a classical symphony (M); clear translation (M); beautiful translation (Q); awkward translation (Q), etc.

The basic principles of naïve linguistic philosophy represent language learners' beliefs as a system of notions and strategies based upon the reification metaphor. The metaphor applied to

words of language, as shown by several researchers, is a reflection of a more general principle of human cognition, or *epistemological constant* (Schommer – Walker 1995; Mori 1999). Similar tendencies can be found in cognitive domains of mathematics, physics, history, etc. (Lave 1988; Schraw 2001). Concepts are interpreted as "mental objects", and knowledge is presented as a sum of discrete countable elements, as portions or 'bricks': «simple, certain, handed down by authority» (Schommer – Walker 1995, 424). Knowledge is "accumulated", like a collection of things, hence the desire to acquire knowledge in portions, in "construction bricks". It can be treated as a specific instance of domain confusion and reification of theoretical objects (Yngve 1996; Sypniewski 2007, 400-1). Language is similarly represented in the naïve mind as a collection of words and separate meanings. Recent studies have also turned their criticism at official linguistics which has always abstracted and reified «observable aspects of communicative behavior» and used these reifications as material units (Jones 2007, 64), thus confusing physical and logical domains.

Language as a whole is limited to lexicon in the naïve view, «Language is a sack full of words» (Polinichenko 2008), and personal language learning technology is, therefore, memorization of words, similar to the ancient metaphor of a wax tablet (Kashkin 2011). Foreign languages are collections of «strange names» for «usual things» (Q). Beginners in translation studies also display their personal procedural constructs using linear, or word-for-word translation technique, believing in the ideal of *«the most correct translation»* (Did I translate it correctly? What is the correct translation? etc.).

Beliefs related to the sphere of language contrasts develop the reification principle. The semantics of native words looks less complicated, "easier": there are more meanings in foreign words but one or two definite meanings in the words of my native language (Q). Naïve semiology assumes native words to be more "natural", whereas foreign words look or sound strange. Naïve contrastive linguistics produces its own axiology: the native language is usually most "beautiful", "correct", "clear" (Q), etc.

4.2. Naïve technologies of translation and learning: word-for-word

Belief guides activity, and the reification metaphor leads to "storage" memorization techniques in language learning: «in a couple of months you will learn about 10,000 words, equal to that dictionary of yours you have always wanted to learn by heart» (A), as well as to naïve word-forword translation: «Before I translate the text, I have to translate the words» (Q, ESP student). If language is a storage of "bricks" (its reified units), translation from one language to another is changing bricks "of one color" for bricks "of another color". The algebra of translation is turned into simplistic arithmetic, like in the following example (Kashkin 2009): Happy! S prazdnikom!

«Have a good holiday!» (on a plastic bag). The author of this mistranslation surely knew the phrase *Happy New Year*, equal to *S prazdnikom Novogo Goda!* The naïve mind calculated the result for every holiday by the following arithmetic action with the words: *S prazdnikom Novogo Goda!* – *Novogo Goda = S prazdnikom!* (which is quite OK in Russian), consequently, *Happy New Year – New Year = Happy!* (which looks ridiculous in English). Several professional translators from different cultures complained about businessmen who refused to pay the fee because "there were less/more words" (Q), they had counted the words in the source and in the target texts.

Customers and outsiders usually think that translation is not a specialized professional field, and can be done by everyone by using a dictionary or translating into one's native language when the dictionary is not necessary: Many of my friends, to my regret, think that if you know a language you can translate very easily <...> It is very difficult to explain to them what are the difficulties of translation (N4); I would also recommend against paying for a professional translation. In addition to being ridiculously expensive, there's just no reason for it, particularly when one is translating into one's native language and has a decent knowledge of the original language (B). For a naïve customer translation is equal to knowing the language, and, consequently, knowing the words: A common misconception about the translator is that he or she is a living dictionary (B); I was very naïve to think that a translator/interpreter must know many foreign words to be successful in their career (N4); Here, everyone think they don't need a translator, since all in <that country> are bilingual or trilingual (B).

Many translators and some students feel certain alienation from the rest of the society: la traduzione non è un hobby che fa tendenza, è un lavoro, un lavoro del quale il traduttore dovrebbe vivere <...> A quel punto, non ero più l'attrazione principale della serata, ero proprio E.T.! (B). Naïve users of language might believe that it is not necessary to have special training in order to become a translator/interpreter. It is sufficient to know, or just think that you know, a foreign language (N4). Folk translators sometimes can show success in some translation task, and forward this as a support of their denial of special training. At the same time, the Internet did open multiple possibilities for Translation 2.0, one of them being "crowd-sourcing": Is it cheap labor or a glimpse of what's to come? <...> One of the appeals <...> is the speed of translation <...> nearly 100% of the French (social network) content was translated overnight <...> since this is a site for the people, why not tailor it according to their needs? For quality assurance, (the network) employs language experts (B).

Training translators/interpreters is a domain of language learning where naïve prototheoretical knowledge is developed into some sort of "scientifically based" technology. Translation techniques have always vacillated between the two opposites: *verbum e verbo* vs. *sensum de sensu*. The first is reflected in the naïve conceptions of word-by-word translation, search for the "unique correct translation", in the public image of translation as a simple substitution of words, in the first awkward approaches to machine translation, etc. The second is considered to be more "scientific".

Self-narratives of translators-to-be reflect their transition through the zone of proximal development. The 1st year students are rarely reflexive, they display their attitude to their future professional activity in a more or less affectionate way: the translator's job is prestigious, it is in high demand, it helps connect people, you can meet many interesting people in many countries (N1). The public image of an interpreter/translator usually pictures a representative of this profession as a highly paid individual, pretty girl or woman, who is able to communicate in the higher layers of society and who travels a lot abroad: I had always thought (before the University) that I was studying English just for my pleasure, to be able to travel a lot in the future (N4); when I was about to become a student at the University I believed that the job of a translator/interpreter meant first of all high salaries, prestigious positions and a possibility to travel the world (N4). The stereotype is formed and supported by the closest reference group (friends, relatives and parents): Once, my teacher in primary school, Tatiana, told my mother that her daughter, after graduating from the University foreign languages department, left for Spain and got married there. My mother was fascinated by the idea of sending me to conquer the world, and thus I was told to enter the translation department, although, personally, I had always been dreaming of becoming a doctor (N4). It is very typical of post-communist Russia, formerly a closed society, where travel abroad or contacting foreigners was some sort of "forbidden fruit": I became a translator/interpreter because *I have always wanted to communicate with foreigners* (N4).

Self-narratives of students in their pre-graduation year reflect an ability to contrast the naïve and the professional view: Before I became a student of the translation department I had believed that translators/interpreters are people who simply know the language very well <...> Now it does not look that simple (N4); In my final high school years I had a totally different conception of translation. It seemed to me that it would be quite enough to substitute the words with their Russian equivalents (N4); I heard that translators are not very highly paid. And all of us used to dream of a miraculous life! (N4); I was sort of romantic in picturing my future job of a translator/interpreter; possible travels, business trips, new encounters and constant self-development <...> I am less interested in written translation than in interpreting (N4).

The students, some of whom have already worked for some time in translation, are aware of the reality: A translator has a specific view upon language <...> It is very difficult to be a translator, it is not easy, it is a tedious and scrupulous job (N4). It is very difficult to communicate with people outside the profession: At the moment, I am tired of explaining to my friends that it is

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impossible for every naïve user to translate accurately (N4); My father sometimes asks me to translate spontaneously some text related to physics or something like that, and asks in surprise: «But isn't it English, why is it so difficult for you?!» (N4).

5. Conclusion

The silent beliefs are a kind of Wittgensteinian "tacit knowledge" (Polanyi 1983; Johannessen 1996, 294f.). Although never put into some coherent order by the holders of these beliefs, they represent a versatile but hidden system of naïve views. This system deserves the name of "everyday language philosophy". Naïve theories of language, even if they remain unexpressed, serve as the basis for naïve learning and translation technologies, personal learning and translation strategies and techniques.

Vygotsky (2006, 845, 920) continuously stressed the idea that both naïve and scientific concepts co-exist and inter-act in the individual mind. The simultaneous mixture of naïve language mythology and socially accepted scientific knowledge is the dialectic reality where personal language skills and linguistic knowledge are developed. It is often very different from what teachers usually presume their students should think. Even in training professional linguists and translators the starting point is mainly in the naïve domain, thanks to the conceptual influence by the non-linguistic parents, or friends, or the "public image" of language and translation. Raising metalinguistic and mutual conceptual awareness of both teachers and students is one of the current challenges of language education.

Similar to general beliefs about language and learning, the analysis revealed two sets of beliefs related, correspondingly, to knowledge or to action: naïve theories and naïve strategies of translation. Ontological beliefs (what is translation) are directly related to general ontological beliefs about language and communication and derived from them. Technological beliefs (how to translate) are related to personal strategies of learning, teaching, and using language. The basic metaphoric representation of translation in everyday metacognition is word-for-word translation, analogous to the basic reification metaphor of language ("words are like material things"). Beliefs about translation in younger students' are similar to beliefs about translation in public opinion (public image of translation and translators). Further research (Likert-type questionnaires and longitudinal study within the zone of proximal development) would reveal the dynamics of beliefs in developing personal strategies of translation for students of translation departments. The dynamics of the public image of translation (in mass media or in customers) is also very important and strongly required by the translators community. The challenge of the naïve but inquisitive mind may be added to the challenges translation studies and pedagogy face (Malmkjær 2010). The

answer to this challenge might be a dialogically-based professional philosophy of translation which every language student and a translation novice needs.

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List of internet resources (1	translators'	blogs)
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http://www.aboutranslation.blogspot.com/

http://www.blogarama.com/

http://blogs.yandex.ru/

http://blogsearch.google.com/

http://www.blogsearchengine.com/

http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/translation/articles/translation-myths.html

http://lawnorder.blogspot.com/

http://www.ljplus.ru/

http://www.spanish-translation-help.com/spanish-myths.html

http://traduttrice2.splinder.com/

http://www.translationandinterpretationblog.com/

http://translationjournal.net/