Summary

An important field of interpreting research, neurolinguistic approach emerged soon after the shift towards an interdisciplinary approach to research into interpreting. The mutually beneficial collaboration between neurolinguists and interpreters has been centred mainly on the issue of language representation in interpreters as bilingual subjects, namely on the role each of the two cerebral hemispheres plays depending on the task (automatic speech production, shadowing, translation of single words or phrases, simultaneous interpreting), choice of interpreting strategy (literal vs. meaning-based interpretation) or on the direction of interpreting (B to A vs. A to B language).

The thesis focuses on the research into hemispheric lateralization done at SSLMIT, University of Trieste, Italy – the place where, in the 80s, the neurolinguistic approach was first adopted. The Trieste School then remained its centre for approximately ten years.

The beginning chapters of this theoretical study present the fundamentals of neuranatomy, neurophysiology and neurolinguistics, necessary for understanding of the mental processes underlying simultaneous interpretation. Furthermore, relevant neuroimaging methods are introduced that either have already been used in or could be applied to interpreting research in the future.

The thesis also describes and attempts to evaluate the experiments carried out at the Trieste School. Despite the undeniable importance of their outcomes, the studies also seem to present several shortcomings regarding the methodology used (unhomogenous groups of subjects, inadequate choice of method of statistical analysis of the results). In some cases the outcomes of the studies and subsequent conclusions drawn by the scientists are even antagonistic.

The thesis compares the research conducted at Trieste to the experiments carried out by other scientists (Sylvie Lambert, Adele Green et al., Ingrid Kurz, Jorma Tommola et al., Charlotte Momaür, Vincent Ch.-Y. Chang). Each study represents the application of a different research method. The choice of neuroimaging method might have contributed to the fact that the aforementioned scientists, too, have come to substantially divergent results.

An individual chapter was dedicated to neurolinguistic models of the simultaneous interpreting process. It comprises both the models of SSLMIT scientists and the cognitive psychological ones that had served them as a research basis.

The thesis shows that experiment outcomes can be to a great extent influenced by a number of factors. Also, it is rather difficult to compare studies in which different methods were used. Thus, in the future, the demands regarding the use of rigorous scientific methods and cautious designing of the experimental paradigm will have to be increased and research in the field will have to be more consistent.