

THE LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS SCHEME IN SLOVENIA

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DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHEME

The Language Assistant Scheme is managed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia¹. Operational management is provided by the Department of International Co-operation.

Other organisations and individuals are involved in the Scheme in varying ways. Each can be considered a stakeholder: defined as being involved or having an influence in the overall Scheme.

At national and international level:

- **The British Council**, the United Kingdom's international organisation for educational and cultural relations and its division **The Central Bureau for International Education and Training**
- **Le Bureau de Coopération Linguistique et Educative de l'Institut Français Charles Nodier** which is part of the French Embassy in Ljubljana
- the **Open Society Institute Slovenia**, a partner institution in the years 1995-2000
- the **National Institute of Education**, the formal in-service teacher training institution in Slovenia.

At school level:

- the **host school**, a primary or secondary school to which a language assistant has been appointed by the Ministry; a school that signs the contract with the Ministry concerning the employment of the language assistant and which is therefore completely responsible (employment, residency) for the language assistant
- the **partner school**, a primary or secondary school to which the language assistant is also allocated by the Ministry to be shared with the host school for an agreed number of hours per week
- the **headteacher**, of the host school
- the **mentor**, a language teacher from the host school responsible for the smooth integration of the language assistant into the school environment
- **other language teachers and teachers** working with a language assistant without being their mentor
- the **language assistant**, a person with a university degree, not necessarily in languages, with a strong desire to have some teaching experience abroad
- **students**, those working with a language assistant
- **parents**, of the students within the school having a language assistant.

¹ From now on in this chapter The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia will be referred to as the Ministry.

The Rationale for the Scheme

The idea of a language assistant scheme in Slovenia originated in 1994 from a visit of the then Slovenian Minister of Education to the United Kingdom organised by The British Council.

The Minister was informed of the work of the Central Bureau and the various Language Assistant Schemes in operation in different countries. These schemes are run on a mutual rather than reciprocal basis: sending and receiving countries do not seek to balance the flow of assistants between countries. The schemes involving the UK are decentralised to school and Local Education Authority and not controlled by a central Ministry or organisation. Outward assistants from the UK are organised primarily by universities, as it is their undergraduates who are the majority of language assistants.

The concept of '*Language Assistants*' started before the Second World War. There are two main functions:

- to give a language learner an opportunity to spend an academic year in the country of the language they are studying
- to give school students an opportunity to discuss and work with a native speaker of the language to complement their teaching provided by non-native language teachers.

The majority of UK language assistants are undergraduate students of modern languages who spend the third year of their four-year degree course as a language assistant in the country of their studied language. They are attached to schools and work alongside English language teachers. However, they are not expected to develop teaching skills. They only stay one academic year. A minority of assistants are university graduates who wish to gain their first teaching experience abroad.

Many UK schools receive language assistants from Germany, France, Spain, etc. The language assistants may be under or post-graduates and are mainly using the scheme as a means to enhance their English language competency.

Extending the concept to Slovenia

Following democratisation in Central Europe at the beginning of the nineteen nineties, British language assistants became interested in working in countries such as Hungary and the Czech Republic and so the idea of having language assistants in a young democratic country such as Slovenia became an interesting possibility. (See the table on the English Language Assistants recruited through The Central Bureau for Central and Eastern Europe from 1994 onwards, *Appendix 14.*)

Given the new European dimension in education and the importance of foreign languages for Slovenia as a young and small European country, the Ministry saw the role of the assistants within the overall framework of its plan to improve education in Slovenia at all levels of instruction.

The Language Assistant Scheme was also seen as an opportunity for all the regions of Slovenia to motivate students for further language learning through direct contact with a native speaker.

The Ministry sees the role of the language assistant as twofold:

- to help Slovenian foreign language teachers (designing lessons together, creating tests together, helping to correct them, having fresh ideas about teaching materials); in addition, more experienced assistants could offer seminars, individual consultancy, and professional debates, they can even help on a project level, developing modules for other subjects being taught in a foreign language
- to motivate students (offering conversation, seminars, helping with written work, developing listening and reading skills, working in extra-curricular activities such as school newspapers, sketches, plays, additional conversation, pen-friends, etc.).

A language assistant can be made use of in the classroom in different ways:

- in a team teaching situation: a teacher and a language assistant work together, both of them taking an active role
- in split classes, the language assistant works with a group of students in a separate room while the teacher works with the rest of the class
- solo teaching, a language assistant works on their own without a teacher in the classroom.

The Running of the Scheme

The Scheme was set up as a Ministry scheme, with the language assistants employed and paid by the Ministry. The Ministry also contributed towards the assistants' accommodation costs.

Selection of host schools and administrative procedure

The Ministry publishes a call for applications in '*Šolski razgledi*' (an educational journal which is available at every primary and secondary school in Slovenia). Any primary or secondary school, which is interested in having a language assistant and which guarantees to find accommodation as well as to carry out the administrative procedure concerning employment and residency of the language assistant, can apply. The number of schools applying for a language assistant is growing rapidly. For the school year 2000/2001, more than 120 applications were received by the Ministry.

At the same time, the Ministry's partner institutions collect applications from future possible language assistants. A few applicants also contact the Ministry directly.

The Ministry decides upon criteria and priorities for selecting schools and appoints language assistants and tries to get a maximum balanced geographical spread of language assistants throughout Slovenia, but is constantly facing difficulties on how to get language assistants to smaller, rural towns.

Once the Ministry appoints a language assistant to a school, the school signs a contract on co-financing the employment of the language assistant (see *Appendix 11*). From then on, it is the school that becomes entirely responsible for the language assistant: the school gets in contact with him/her, draws up an employment contract, applies for a work permit and finds suitable accommodation (see *Appendix 12*; instructions for arranging employment and residency for foreign language assistants for the academic year 2000/2001).

Selection of assistants

The role of the Ministry's partner institutions is to assist with recruitment and selection of university graduates. This involves advertising in the countries of origin, pre-selection, short listing of potential candidates, provision of briefing notes and other appropriate documentation for assistants.

From the Ministry's perspective the ideal language assistant should above all have a strong desire to have some teaching experience abroad. They should enjoy working with students in order to better motivate them to learn foreign languages, be open to learn about life in other countries and be willing to share their own culture and experiences. They should have a wide range of interests, be communicative, flexible and creative.

Where possible assistants are allocated to schools primarily on the basis of their own preferences. As the number of applicants for Slovenia is relatively small in comparison to the local demand for assistants and the administrative procedures very long, the Ministry wishes to reduce as much as possible the number of withdrawals.

On arrival, which is at the beginning of the school year, each new language assistant attends an induction course organised by the Ministry with the participation of partner institutions. Its main purpose is to give new language assistants some basic information about the Slovenian education system, some idea of the curriculum, the teaching methods and a basic knowledge of the Slovenian language (see *Appendix 13*; timetables of induction course).

HISTORY OF THE SCHEME

Chronological Overview

In July 1994, The British Council received a formal request from the Ministry to assist with the setting up of a programme as from 1 October 1994 with ten British language assistants. The Scheme was to include primary as well as secondary schools. In the first year of the programme 60% of language assistants were placed in primary schools for reasons given in the subsequent parts of this chapter.

In 1995 the Scheme was extended to two *visiting teachers* from the United States, recruited by the Open Society Institute in Ljubljana. The Open Society Institute recruited qualified EFL teachers, topped up their salaries, provided an additional lodging allowance to the one given by the Ministry and covered the cost of international travel, which was not the case with the British assistants.

That same year two French language assistants were also recruited via the French Institute in Ljubljana (at the time Bureau de Co-operation Linguistique et Educative). The rationale behind this decision was to encourage and motivate students to take French as the second foreign language, as interest in French had been declining rapidly over the years. The French assistants were recently qualified teachers of French as a foreign language recruited in colleges of education at the end of their studies.

In 1998/99 the scheme was further expanded to include assistants for German on the request and initiative of the National Institute of Education. The Adviser for German employed with the Institute saw the assistants as a means of raising interest in German, which had been declining in all the regions except those bordering Austria. Most assistants for German were recruited from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, via individual contacts.

Assistants for Italian were introduced in the same year, also via personal contacts.

Table 2.1 Origin of Language assistants in Slovenia from 1994 to 2001

<i>Language assistants for English</i>							
<i>Country</i>	<i>94/95</i>	<i>95/96</i>	<i>96/97</i>	<i>97/98</i>	<i>98/99</i>	<i>99/00</i>	<i>00/01</i>
<i>UK</i>	10	10	10	9	15	21	14
<i>Ireland</i>	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
<i>USA</i>	-	2	5	7	7	8	8
<i>Mexico</i>	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
<i>Canada</i>	-	-	-	-	2	3	1
<i>Australia</i>	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
<i>SubTotal</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Language assistants for French</i>							
<i>France</i>	-	2	7	9	8	9	10
<i>Language assistants for German</i>							
<i>Germany</i>	-	-	-	-	2	4	4
<i>Switzerland</i>	-	-	-	-	4	1	1
<i>Austria</i>	-	-	-	-	1	2	3
<i>Sub total</i>	-	-	-	-	7	7	8
<i>Language assistants for Italian</i>							
<i>Italy</i>					1	2	1
<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>45</i>

It should be noted, that during these years the Language Assistant Scheme covered 6 % of all primary schools and 41% of all secondary schools.

Specific Aspects and Issues Concerning the Scheme as Seen by the Ministry and The British Council

Language assistants

As already mentioned, the British Language Assistant Scheme of The Central Bureau primarily sends abroad undergraduate students of modern languages who are attached to schools but are not expected to develop teaching skills. The Ministry in their first formal request to start the Scheme asked for '*committed graduates of the English language*'.

Initially, the Scheme was seen by the Minister as, primarily providing native speakers for the future young learner classes (age 9 to 11). These were to be gradually introduced in schools over the next ten years as a result of the new curricular changes aiming at bringing the age of English language instruction from the age of 11 to 9.

In view of the above, much effort was made on the part of The British Council to clarify the nature and professional attributes of the assistants in the first year of the Scheme. While some might have just completed their university studies and even occasionally be recently qualified teachers, they almost never had a background in English Language Teaching. The Central Bureau could provide graduate students but not trained teachers of English as a Foreign Language, as this was not their brief. It was further pointed out that a degree in English from a British University usually means English Literature only and not also Language, which is different from the Slovenian system whereby students of Slovenian study both Language and Literature.

The British Council also recommended that the young learners programme should employ a fully qualified primary school teacher rather than an assistant. This view was also endorsed by the National Institute of Education.

In subsequent years a higher proportion of language assistants were placed in secondary schools than in primary ones. There were also a few cases of language assistants placed in English departments of colleges of higher education and universities. The move towards secondary schools shifted the focus of their work more onto the provision of assistance with the preparation of the then new external secondary school examination, the *Matura*, the raising of cultural awareness in students and the development of intercultural competence. These would be specifically addressed in the new secondary school curriculum for English in preparation in that period.

Assistants were therefore expected to function only as a language resource, not as a teacher, teacher trainer, co-ordinator or specialist. Unfortunately, this information was not disseminated within the Ministry to all officials responsible for the Scheme and subsequently to schools. The Ministry's first invitation to tender, to schools in the educational journal '*Šolski razgledi*', in fact erroneously advertised the assistants as teachers of English as a Foreign Language. This basic but fundamental misunderstanding caused considerable problems in meeting the expectations of teachers and assistants in the first years.

This problem was less pertinent with the American or French assistants at that time because they were qualified teachers for English or French.

In 1998, to compensate for the lack of teaching experience of some assistants, it was agreed that, to the largest extent possible, language assistants who had degrees in modern languages would be given priority at selection, as they at least would have more experience in what learning a foreign language involves.

Good language assistants who had gained teaching experience while in Slovenia were encouraged to stay on for two or more years. Another reason for this was to avoid the long and time consuming administrative procedure concerning employment and residency in Slovenia.

Throughout the years administrative procedures were a major issue due to the ever-changing legislation governing residency and work permits for foreigners living in the Republic of Slovenia. In some cases, the complexity and extensive nature of Slovenia's entry requirements deterred assistants from going through the process.

VISAS - the biggest problem of all. We lose at least one candidate a year and receive lots of angry calls from assistants frustrated with the visa process. The Embassy in London are not always particularly helpful and often give different stories about visa requirements than the Ministry in Ljubljana. Most years the assistants go to lots of time and trouble and expense visiting London many times, only to be told to get a tourist visa and go through the administrative procedure again in Slovenia and leave the country for a day. Although many assistants find this fairly effortless once they have settled down in their post, it does seem incredibly daunting and confusing at the outset.

The Central Bureau, November 2000

Furthermore, assistants needed to know they definitively had a job much earlier as withdrawals would follow.

It should be appreciated that the assistant-candidate has to apply for and, in fact, commit himself / herself to the position in the November or December prior to the start of the post and is then interviewed in March the following spring. I was informed that my dossier had been passed onto Slovenia in April, but heard nothing more until August. I finally received news of my placement one week before leaving the UK for Slovenia.

British assistant, May 1996

Assistants also needed to know much earlier the name of the school they were being allocated to. They were often reallocated to different schools and geographical areas than originally told, having often gathered materials in the UK targeted at the original school. This was in part due to last minute withdrawals, which resulted in a reshuffle of the remaining assistants.

As one of the Ministry's objectives is to ensure a balanced regional spread of assistants, some assistants were also placed in rural areas. This meant that they often felt lonely and isolated which resulted in further withdrawals.

In order to secure a stronger commitment of future assistants and make Slovenia the country of their first choice, the Ministry became much more directly involved with the

Central Bureau in the selection procedure. Since 1997, a representative of the Ministry has regularly sat on the selection panel in London and interviewed short-listed candidates. This has led to a better presentation of the programme to candidates from the Slovenian side.

As the Scheme expanded over the years due to increased interest in assistants on the part of Slovenian schools, the Central Bureau could not recruit a sufficient number of British assistants interested in working in Slovenia.

In the specific case of Slovenia, it is seen very much as 'former Yugoslavia' and despite its relatively Western outlook and beautiful alpine scenery, candidates are deterred because of the recent trouble in the Balkans. Following a brief straw poll amongst 'young and vibrant' office members here in the Central Bureau, the consensus was that Slovenia was seen very much as an Eastern European country and therefore not 'fashionable' and people didn't know enough about the country to be able to identify with it and therefore spend one to two years there. However, with the imminent accession into the EU likely, I am sure that this would create further interest in the future.

The Central Bureau, 2000

The recent general trend of low recruitment figures of graduate students from the U.K., which also affected Slovenia, is expected to continue in the future. This is primarily due to the fact that more and more British graduates are now finishing their studies with debt and therefore cannot afford one or two years abroad, on low incomes, before starting to pay off their debts. There is probably also an increased awareness and interest in travel and work in Asia, Latin America and Africa, compared to Central Europe.

More countries are now running language assistant schemes. This introduces an element of competition between countries to attract potential new assistants. Quality standards are compared: for example the bureaucratic nature of visas and work permits, the ease of housing etc.

As a result, the Ministry has also had to recruit assistants directly and not through foreign institutions, also for English. Most assistants for English recruited individually were from countries such as Canada, Australia and the U.S.A. Some of them were already living in Slovenia for various reasons. This trend was further increased in 2000/01 due to the withdrawal of the Open Society's (SOROS) engagement in Slovenia and a drastic shortfall of British assistants recruited by the Central Bureau in London in the same year.

The individual recruitment of assistants made the recruitment process administratively more time-consuming for the Ministry. It also calls for recruitment skills on the part of its staff and the establishment of more institutionalised links for all the languages in question, with Spanish as an additional option in the future.

Mentors

At the beginning of the chapter it was mentioned that each language assistant was allocated a mentor. The term *mentor* is a direct translation from Slovenian and can be misleading as it has two additional meanings. *Mentor* is one of the titles awarded to teachers who participate in any in-service teacher training course and who are awarded sufficient points to obtain a promotion to one of the three possible titles (*mentor, adviser, counsellor*),

leading to a salary increase. A *mentor* is also the one who oversees novice teachers in their first year of school practice.

In the case of mentors to assistants, this has led to the situation where quite a few would not otherwise have the title of *mentor*, meaning that the vast majority had no training in the skills and attitudes required to foster development in others (language assistants and other teachers working with them), which is what mentoring de facto is. Nor was their title reflected in their remuneration scales and their work with the assistants was never officially recognised to the point where it would lead to the award of a number of points for promotion.

At the beginning of the Scheme schools were not really aware of what mentors and language assistants were actually supposed to be doing and there was much confusion over their role as is reflected in the following evaluation:

I have noticed the confusion in the role of the assistant in all three schools I teach at. These problems were overcome fairly early on in the first two schools through direct talks between myself, mentors and the headmaster of the host school. At the latter school my work takes on a team-teaching approach throughout the upper primary range and has been combined with various cross-cultural and cross-curricular projects, which have been very informative, successful and enjoyable. The most confusion has appeared at the third school. At this school my work involves teaching lessons straight out of the textbook to classes seven and eight. I have spoken to teachers about allowing me to teach alternative exercises that the pupils might see as a breath of fresh air from their studies with regular teachers, but this was rejected on the grounds that this would divert away from the syllabus. Whilst I do not find it a problem to teach from the book, I think it is a waste of a resource to be doing a job that the Slovenian teachers of English could do themselves without an assistant.

British Assistant, 1996

This general lack of awareness of the need to train mentors on all sides resulted in the fact that mentors also did not have a clear understanding of their role vis-à-vis the other teachers using the language assistant in the school. This was made even more difficult due to the absence of official recognition and generally under-developed school-based in-service teacher training. Mentors found themselves in a difficult position relating ideas to the other English teachers over whom they often felt they had no influence.

Much of what went on in class was left to trial and error and teachers were left to discover more or less on their own what worked and what did not work with their language assistants.

There was much discussion over what team teaching actually means in practice and how much assistants actually teach on their own.

While the National Institute of Education initially took an active part in setting up the Scheme, at that time it was still a department within the Ministry but became independent in 1996, it never really took on the responsibility for monitoring the situation in the classroom or providing counselling, nor did it provide any teacher training needed in this

area. However, their language advisers did actively participate in the delivering of induction courses for assistants.

In the second half of 1998, in order to overcome the above shortcomings, a co-ordinator of mentors with a more pronounced teacher training role was engaged by the Ministry from within the group of mentors. The co-ordinator was trained over the next couple of years in various areas (teacher training, mentoring and cultural studies issues) with the support of The British Council and the Ministry. Her role was to assist in the planning and also to lead sessions for assistants at the induction course or for mentors at regular mid-year meetings.

In addition to problems concerning the professional aspects of the Scheme, mentors were often left on their own by their school to help the assistants through the complicated administrative formalities on arrival, which could take a long time to sort out.

Since the Ministry also contributed towards the assistants' accommodation costs, this in some cases meant, if the lodging allowance was also taken into account, that the assistants were better paid than their Slovenian colleagues, including their mentor.

It can therefore be concluded that the Scheme often operated on the goodwill of enthusiastic and very dedicated teachers.

Partner institutions

In the first years of the Scheme each international partner institution (The British Council, the French Institute and the Open Society Institute) provided their assistants with some professional advice and moral support and put extra effort into developing inter-assistant relations by regularly organising social events to prevent isolation.

The British Council office in Ljubljana was able to use its resident EFL Project Coordinator/Trainer. This post was specifically funded to assist in the development of the English component of the *Matura* examination. The post came to an end in 1997 with the introduction of the *Matura*. The British Council's joint Resource Centre took over pastoral care and advice. It became a meeting point from which the English language assistants each received a box of core teaching resources and books to take back to their school. 'The book box scheme' was however later discontinued due to financial constraints and the Resource Centre's role in formally supporting the British assistants became less pronounced as the years went by and came to an end in 1999/2000.

The Open Society Institute Slovenia, besides providing additional financial assistance for travel and accommodation, took care of the American assistants by organising additional social events.

As a result, the general trend in the last two years has been that the Ministry has had to increasingly deal with issues arising out of this reduction in pastoral support on the part of partner institutions. This has been partially addressed by the Ministry through the creation of E-mail mailing lists for mentors and assistants.

In other countries the responsibility for pastoral care and support is normally with the school or host organisation rather than with a Ministry or one of the international educational agencies.

On-Going Evaluation Activities

The first meeting of the British language assistants was held in December 1997 at the Ministry, Department of International Co-operation. The aim of the meeting was to discuss their work at schools in the first term and other formal issues connected with their stay in Slovenia. The Head of the English Department within the National Institute of Education was invited as well. It became obvious that such meetings were needed for assistants and for the Ministry.

The first meeting of mentors followed in March 1998 where they discussed the Scheme.

Young and inexperienced assistant; some assistants being really weak in writing and spelling skills; quite a few assistants having difficulties in adapting to a completely new way of life in a foreign country which is an additional burden for mentors who had to help them a lot; assistants living in smaller and rural areas being shocked by its size; many assistants facing uncertainty about whether to assess students or not, and if they did, they had difficulties in awarding low grades which was followed by feelings of guilt.

Mentors' meeting, March 1998

Once having a language assistant, the school could hardly accept not having one any more; pupils/students obviously improved their language competence; it would be advisable for assistants to stay more than one year at one school; only experienced assistants should come; it was necessary to decide upon the rights and duties of language assistants and put them in a contract; mentors should be rewarded appropriately; the role of the National Institute of Education should be more active.

Mentors' meeting, March 1998

Two months later, in May 1998, the Ministry organized a meeting with headteachers (from schools having a language assistant) and representatives of other institutions involved in the administrative procedure for arranging employment and residency of assistants in Slovenia, i.e. the Ministry for Interior Affairs and the Institute of Employment.

The headteachers were given a document describing the whole administrative procedure with signatures by the responsible persons within the following institutions: Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Ministry for The Interior and Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Institute of Employment of the Republic of Slovenia. This was a huge step forward in the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport's efforts to solve problems concerning the administrative problem. The final decision at the meeting was that each party must stick to the rules stated in the document mentioned above.

Once the usefulness of such meetings was proved, the practice of annual meetings for assistants and mentors was strictly followed so there was a lot of information about the Scheme. Unfortunately, headteachers were left out, and there was no information from other language teachers working with foreign language assistants and from pupils/students and their parents. On the other hand, there was a growing awareness of the need for mentors to be specially trained and, according to their additional tasks, awarded within the

system. It also became clear that assistants as well as language teachers lacked additional and appropriate working materials. The question is how to plan teacher training programmes, how to reward mentors, how to know what kind of materials there should be at their disposal, how to know that the Scheme is beneficial enough to be continued, how to evaluate the *real* value of the Scheme. The ultimate rationale for the Baseline Study, which started in April 2000, was to answer these questions.

RATIONALE FOR THE BASELINE STUDY

In early 2000, six years after the beginning of the project, The British Council offered assistance to the Ministry to undertake a fact-finding Baseline Study on the entire Scheme as currently implemented in Slovenian primary and secondary schools.

The Baseline Study would be jointly funded by both institutions with The British Council providing on-going British expertise and training of the team.

It was agreed that such a study would indeed be very useful as many of the issues which had developed over the years in relation to the use of language assistants, their mentors and other teachers had never been researched in depth, only partially addressed and not dealt with systematically. There were often anecdotal accounts of what was really going on in the classroom. The main aim of the Baseline Study would therefore be to investigate the current status quo in terms of administration, classroom practice and overall impact of the Scheme in schools.

The Study would have four main functions:

- it would provide a common base of factual information describing the Scheme in one single document
- it would contextualise the Scheme within the overall framework of the Slovenian educational system and foreign language policy
- it would survey opinions, attitudes and expectations of the major stakeholders
- it would describe current teaching practice through classroom observation.

The Study would also be evaluative since it would identify areas of good practice and make recommendations for improvements.

In so doing it would clarify Project objectives and provide a rationale for future projects, justifying the innovations.

The Baseline Study would provide the basis for the evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of any future Project developments or any other sub-project developed within its framework. The absence of such an initial study had been the greatest weakness in the design of educational projects in general in the past.

The British Council was also interested in identifying areas of co-operation in this area, which would be more project-based and have more specific aims and outcomes against which the success of the co-operation could be evaluated. The Baseline Study would therefore provide a rationale for future joint projects with the Ministry in developing more appropriate ways of using language assistants.

The Baseline Study, which would be carried out by a group of mentors with the involvement of two language assistants, would also provide an opportunity to raise awareness and ownership of the entire Project within the school community. More specifically, it would encourage teamwork and networking within the mentor group and raise awareness of the need to develop the scheme further. It was hoped that it would also develop ownership for a possible future cultural studies project with the development of materials with a strong intercultural focus as its major outcome.

As the first Baseline Study to be carried out in Slovenia in the field of English Language Teaching, it would also develop expertise in empirical studies applicable to other English Language teaching projects and introduce the project management approach to collaborative ventures undertaken between the British Council and other Slovenian institutions involved in education.