

## Chapter 3

# OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

**Karmen Pižorn**

## PARTICIPANTS

Prof. J. Charles Alderson, at the time a freelance consultant working on leave of absence as British Council Adviser to the Hungarian Examinations Reform Project, Professor of Linguistics and English Language Education at Lancaster University, assisted by Ms Jayanti V. Banerjee, a freelance consultant from the University of Lancaster, led the Baseline Study which was conducted by two representatives from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia<sup>1</sup>, representatives from The British Council in Slovenia and Hungary, a representative from the National Institute of Education, 11 mentors of foreign language assistants and two language assistants.

The decision to involve mostly insiders in designing and implementing the Baseline Study derived from the fact that people involved would know the project better, and could help to improve it. For this reason a letter of invitation was sent to experienced mentors and those who applied were then given a rough idea as to what the project would be about and what it would involve. However, as most of the insiders had never been involved in a research study and had no experience in conducting a baseline study, the decision was made to invite experts in this field to advise the Baseline Study Team.<sup>2</sup>

## AIMS OF THE BASELINE STUDY

The aims of the Baseline Study were as follows:

- to investigate the status quo of the use of foreign language assistants in Slovenia
- to identify areas of good practice
- to identify areas for improvement
- to clarify objectives and provide a rationale for a possible future cultural studies project or other projects.

## MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Originally the Baseline Study Team had to clarify what their main objectives were and therefore brainstormed to identify the questions, which needed to be answered. The following 39 research questions were identified:

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

<sup>2</sup> Information in this chapter is based on workshop reports written by Prof. Alderson and Ms Banerjee.

1. *Mentor training. Should it happen?*
2. *How to resolve conflict between mentor training and LA<sup>3</sup>?*
3. *How many classes is a LA supposed to teach?*
4. *Appropriate cultural contextualisation. Nature of educational culture and country culture*
5. *What should the nature of the induction course be?*
6. *Extra curricular activity: what should it be and who decides?*
7. *Involvement in school newspaper, sports days, culture days, etc*
8. *How much do schools plan the use of LAs?*
9. *What makes a good mentor? Should there be a job description?*
10. *Attitude of school as a whole to the LA*
11. *What problems are there from the LAs perspective?*
12. *What problems are there from the mentors' perspective?*
13. *What expectations are there of the students achievements?*
14. *Frequency of students coming into class*
15. *What is the influence of the LA on the students and the teachers?*
16. *What are the complementary roles of LAs and mentors? How much time do they spend together?*
17. *Should work done with LAs be assessed? If so, how?*
18. *Should LAs be specifically used in a "mixed ability" way?*
19. *What skills should be developed in students? Cultural? Linguistic?*
20. *How long should LAs stay?*
21. *How does the LA contribute to student motivation?*
22. *How much team teaching should there be? On what does this depend?*
23. *Are LAs organised as a team? Could they visit schools, which do not have LAs?*
24. *How well informed are the headteachers? How can they be more involved?*
25. *Is the role of the LA a teacher or a native speaker?*
26. *How much planning is there between the LA and the mentor?*
27. *How aware are LAs of what is expected of them? Who decides what this is?*
28. *How much work is involved in having an LA?*
29. *Relationship of mentor to other language teachers? Is this problematic?*
30. *What gets in the way of co-operation between language teachers?*
31. *How familiar are parents with the programme? Is there any contact between parents and LAs?*
32. *How much should future policy be determined by data collection?*
33. *What materials are used? Topics covered? (Textbook, authentic materials, video, etc)*
34. *How much is students own culture dealt with?*
35. *How much is curiosity about other cultures developed?*
36. *Is it better to have ANY assistant whatever the quality rather than NO assistant at all?*
37. *How to get the LAs to go to smaller places? Targeting (e.g. skiing, spa, water sports)*
38. *Should schools continue to get assistants year after year?*
39. *How many lessons are taught by LAs?*

After further discussion the aforementioned questions were condensed into the following six main research questions:

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<sup>3</sup> LA stands for *language assistant*.

1. *What is the benefit of having a language assistant?*
2. *Which extra-curricular activities is the language assistant involved in?*
3. *What are the roles of language assistants and mentors?*
4. *What actually goes on in the classroom?*
5. *What are the advantages and disadvantages from the perspectives of headteachers, mentors, students and language assistants?*
6. *How do language assistants fit into the life of the school in general, and how do they fulfil the expectations of the Ministry and the National Institute of Education, The British Council, the Goethe Institute and the French Institute?*

## **TIMETABLE OF EVENTS**

The following timetable shows the key events in the preparation, planning and conducting of the Baseline Study and the writing of the final report.

1. **14<sup>th</sup> February 2000**, the Ministry and The British Council decide to carry out a baseline study in this area and agree mutual responsibilities
2. **18<sup>th</sup> February 2000**, Danila Beloglavec, The British Council ELT Projects Manager identifies and consults Prof. J. Charles Alderson from Lancaster University, UK on the feasibility of the project
3. **10<sup>th</sup> March 2000**, Karmen Pižorn, mentor, is identified as Co-ordinator of the Baseline Study Team
4. **21<sup>st</sup> March 2000**, annual meeting of the mentors organised by the Ministry and led by Karmen Pižorn, and Mark Andrews, British Council Adviser in Hungary for Methodology of Cultural Studies at which potential team members are identified
5. **15<sup>th</sup> March 2000 to 10<sup>th</sup> April 2000**, Prof. J. Charles Alderson, is commissioned by the British Council to carry out workshops on conducting baseline studies and provide consultancy support throughout the project. Correspondence via E-mail between all parties concerned takes place to provide a clear overview of the Language Assistant Scheme in Slovenia and expected project outcomes
6. **9<sup>th</sup> April 2000**, Prof. Alderson, Mark Andrews, Danila Beloglavec and Karmen Pižorn meet to discuss the proposed workshop details and outcomes
7. **10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> April 2000**, The First Workshop, Explaining How to Conduct a Baseline Study and the Designing of Research Instruments, organised by the Ministry and The British Council and led by Prof. Alderson
8. **20<sup>th</sup> April 2000**, deadline for finalising and piloting the instruments
9. **4<sup>th</sup> May 2000**, deadline for the Ministry to distribute the instruments to the Baseline Study Team
10. **8 May 2000**, Ms Jayanti V. Banerjee, Freelance Consultant from Lancaster University, is commissioned by the British Council to provide training and consultancy in data analysis
11. **9<sup>th</sup> May to 20<sup>th</sup> June 2000**, Data collection
12. **3<sup>rd</sup> July 2000**, Ms Jayanti V. Banerjee attends a briefing meeting with Steve Green, the British Council Director, Danila Beloglavec and Karmen Pižorn
13. **4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> July 2000**, The Second Workshop, Data Analysis, organised by the Ministry and The British Council and led by Ms Jayanti V. Banerjee
14. **12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> September 2000**, The Final Workshop, Data Interpretation and Drafting of the Baseline Study Report, organised by the Ministry and The British Council and led by Prof. Alderson with the participation of Mark Andrews and Edit Nagy, The British Council Hungary

15. **28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September 2000**, *Preliminary Presentation of the Study*, by Karmen Pižorn, to the new language assistants and their mentors at the Induction Course
16. **6<sup>th</sup> November 2000**, deadline for finishing written chapters of the Report in English
17. **4<sup>th</sup> December 2000**, deadline for the edited report to be sent to Prof. Alderson
18. **31<sup>st</sup> January 2001**, deadline for receiving authors' approval of changes to the text
19. **19<sup>th</sup> March 2001**, final draft of the Report to the publishers
20. **17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> April 2001**, IATEFL Conference, Brighton, UK, *Presentation of the Baseline Study* by Karmen Pižorn and Nataša Žemva, mentor.

## **THE FIRST WORKSHOP: EXPLAINING HOW TO CONDUCT A BASELINE STUDY AND THE DESIGNING OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

### **Aims and Outcomes of the Workshop**

The aims of the workshop were as follows:

- to train participants over three working days in design and conduct of baseline studies
- to provide opportunities for sharing ideas, raising awareness and developing ownership of the Baseline Study and of a possible future cultural studies project
- to encourage teamwork and networking
- to develop expertise in empirical studies applicable to other foreign language projects
- to discuss possible future needs with respect to data analysis and report writing.

This was a very intensive workshop, with a great deal to accomplish. However, the workshop achieved its main aims, and the participants had:

- a clear idea of what a baseline study is and the kind of work it involves
- agreed priority areas of investigation and depth of research required
- agreed major data collection procedures
- agreed a time-scale for the actual data collection, data analysis and report writing
- set the date for the next training in data analysis
- shared out areas of responsibility amongst the group
- produced personal action plans
- time permitting, had a first attempt at drafting the most important instruments of data collection.

### **Account of the Workshop**

The first workshop was conducted by Prof. J. Charles Alderson from Lancaster University and the participants were representatives from the Ministry, the National Institute of Education and The British Council, mentors from secondary and primary schools, and two English speaking language assistants. The mentors had never been involved in a similar project and saw this as an opportunity for professional and personal growth.

The participants were: Zdravka Godunc and Bronka Straus (the Ministry), Vineta Eržen (the National Institute of Education), Danila Beloglavec and Mark Andrews (The British Council), Branka Dobovšek-Dekleva, Milena Forštner, Vidojka Harej, Julija Heinrich-Harrington, Jožica Nuč, Karmen Pižorn, Lučka Pristavec, Irena Škulj and Nataša Žemva (mentors), Lois Beaver and George Yeoman (language assistants).

## **Day one**

The participants were given an overview of the various purposes of baseline studies, the likely audiences of reports of baseline studies, and their differing needs, the resources required by such studies, and their likely content and methodology. The team was presented with two examples of baseline studies, i.e. from Hungary and Romania.

After a brief discussion of the deadlines by which a report was needed on the results of the Slovenian baseline study, individuals noted what they thought the main aims, content and method of the proposed study should be and then brainstormed in pairs. The results were pulled together, discussed in plenary and the most important areas of content were eventually identified and recorded.

The following research questions were identified:

1. *What is the benefit of having a language assistant?*
2. *What extra-curricular activities is the language assistant involved in?*
3. *What are the roles of language assistants and mentors?*
4. *What actually goes on in the classroom?*
5. *What are the problems from the perspectives of headteachers, mentors, students and language assistants?*
6. *How do language assistants fit into the life of the school in general, and the expectations of the Ministry and the National Institute of Education, The British Council, the Goethe Institute and the French Institute?*

Participants then identified the data, which already existed, and could be made use of, and what new data was needed. Having identified the need for new data, possible methods by which it might be gathered and the sources of information were then discussed.

Four groups were formed, with the brief of drafting data collection instruments to cover the content areas identified, from a particular group of informants. The four groups were:

- language assistants
- headteachers
- language teachers
- students.

The content of the instruments was then discussed in groups, drafted and word-processed.

## **Day two**

The various instruments were distributed, presented, discussed and critiqued in a plenary session. According to informants various instruments were designed:

- headteachers: structured interview
- observed teachers: classroom observation schedule, structured post-lesson interview
- other language teachers: questionnaire
- language assistants: classroom observation schedule, structured post-lesson interview, questionnaire
- students: classroom observation schedule, structured post-lesson group interview.

The groups then reconvened and revised the instruments in the light of the plenary discussion, and began the process of producing Slovenian versions of the instruments.

Later the original groups were dissolved and three new groups were created, according to the type of instrument - questionnaire, structured interview, observation schedule - and an

even spread was ensured of participation in each group from members of the original groups. The task of the new groups was to take the original instruments, harmonise them and redraft them. Thus, for example, the observation schedules for students, language assistants and teachers were fused into one observation instrument, and the various proposals for different questionnaires and structured interviews were brought together into common formats.

### **Day three**

In plenary, the Baseline Study Team discussed desiderata for, and practicalities of, sampling of schools, seeking to ensure geographical spread, a balance of different types of schools and foreign languages taught. A schedule of who would observe in which schools was drawn up, and procedures were agreed for the collection of the associated questionnaire and interview data. Bronka Straus from the Ministry and the Baseline Study Co-ordinator Karmen Pižorn would co-ordinate the schedule. It was recommended that data collection be complete by the end of May for most schools. Although data collection could conceivably continue until mid June in primary schools, teachers were likely to be very busy through June with the *Matura* examinations.

The implications of a schedule of data collection that began on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2000 and ended on 31st May 2000 were discussed and intermediate deadlines were agreed for the finalisation of the instruments in English and Slovenian, small-scale piloting, the production of guidelines for the Baseline Study Team, especially of the observation schedule but also of the interviews and questionnaires, and the formatting of the instruments to ensure adequacy of responses and of data coding and analysis. Individuals were identified to be responsible for the finalisation of a given instrument and that person would also co-ordinate the subsequent interpretation of results. The schedule was tight, but participants were confident that they could meet the deadlines, which meant essentially that the preparatory work was to be complete by the beginning of the Easter and 1<sup>st</sup> May holidays. Photocopying and distribution of instruments would be done by the Ministry by 4<sup>th</sup> May 2000.

We<sup>4</sup> then discussed the need for, and schedules of, data analysis and reporting. Although there was a feeling among some participants that external evaluators could be hired to analyse the data, after discussion and explanation of what was actually involved in analysing the planned data, it was agreed that it would be preferable for the team members to do this themselves. This was because:

- many of the instruments contained open-ended questions, and were not amenable to pure statistical analysis
- the coding of responses to open-ended instruments could only be done by those who had designed the instruments and knew what data would be meaningful and relevant
- the sample sizes were sufficiently small for sophisticated computer analysis not to be necessary
- interpreting, coding and then summarising the responses has to go hand in hand with drafting the report on the results: data interpretation and report writing must proceed in parallel; team members must be responsible for the final reports of the baseline study
- analysing the results of the instruments would lead to insights into the inevitable problems in the design of the instruments, since there was no time to pilot these in any systematic way; this would enhance participants' burgeoning skills in instrument design

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<sup>4</sup> From now on in this chapter 'we' refers to the Baseline Study Team.

- by learning how to analyse the data, team members would acquire valuable skills that could be used elsewhere.

It was agreed that participants would need help in at least beginning the process of coding and interpreting their data, that this could only happen in the first week of July due to other commitments, and that Prof. Alderson agreed to identify a suitable consultant to assist in this process.

Participants were reminded of already existing data that also needed to be analysed and reported. The Baseline Study Co-ordinator and the Ministry agreed to cover this and related policy issues during the summer with a view to reporting results at the September drafting meeting.

In conclusion, not only were teams formed and a sense of ownership created, but the actual instruments were also produced in virtually final form.

### **Action Plan**

- the data collection schedules must be kept to, and agreed procedures for administration of instruments will need monitoring and co-ordinating
- data analysis must be conducted by the team, although the presence of outsiders is not excluded
- the list of the main research questions, drawn up on Monday, April 10th must be referred to during the data analysis and reporting, to ensure that important areas are not neglected
- draft reports of the results of the analysis must be ready by the September workshop, and if they are ready in advance of that date, they should be sent to Lancaster for Prof. Alderson to read
- the identified existing data must also be analysed and reports written
- the existing policies of the Ministry, with respect to the recruitment of language assistants, their placement, and the identification and training of suitably qualified mentors need to be identified and reported on
- commitment of the Ministry to support the Co-ordinator of the Baseline Study Scheme was essential, and it was recommended that this support would continue until the end of December 2000 to ensure adequate reporting and dissemination of results
- the lack of formal involvement of the National Institute of Education in this Baseline Study was a reason for concern, since it had implications about the provision of adequate in-service support for language assistants and teachers alike
- the Baseline Study necessarily focused on describing the status quo of the Language Assistant Scheme; when analysing the data and above all when writing up the report, it should be remembered that this study was also intended to clarify the objectives of, and provide a rationale for, a future cultural studies project.

## **INSTRUMENTS OF THE BASELINE STUDY**

Under this heading the instruments designed in the first workshop and used to collect data for the Baseline Study will be described.

### **Classroom Observation Schedule, Focusing on Teacher/Language Assistant**

The Baseline Study Team decided to observe classroom situations with a language assistant, in order to record what actually happened in the classroom, focusing on the content and methodology of the observed lesson. The observation was performed by a member of the Baseline Study Team and a language teacher from the host school. On all occasions the people observing were teachers of the language being used in the classroom.

Before the observation the teacher and language assistant were asked about the plans for the lesson, i.e. topic, goals, materials, methods, etc. Then while the lesson was in progress the observer noted down the division of work, activities performed and materials used by the teacher and/or language assistant (see *Appendix 1*).

### **Classroom Observation Schedule, Focusing on Students**

This instrument was designed to record the classroom atmosphere, the students' motivation and their initiative as well as the observers' impression of the class. The interaction in the classroom was measured using a sociogram, which meant that the observers had to draw arrows on a chart to represent who was involved in the lesson. It is important to mention that the interaction between the students themselves was not measured (see *Appendix 2*).

### **Post-Lesson Interview Schedule for Groups of Students**

This interview took place directly after the observed lesson with three students from the class, in a different room to ensure that they would feel comfortable about expressing their views. The intention was to include the opinions of the students, as they are one of the major stakeholders in the Language Assistant Scheme.

The students were interviewed by a member of the Baseline Study Team using a set of pre-designed questions. The interview was performed in Slovenian.

They were asked about the observed lesson as well as lessons with the language assistant in general and language assistants' participation in school life (see *Appendix 3*).

### **Post-Lesson Interview Schedule for Teachers**

It was decided to interview the observed teachers to get a complete picture of the lesson. The interview took place after the observed lesson and in private to allow the teacher's responses to be freer. They were interviewed by a member of the Baseline Study Team in Slovenian. There was a set of pre-designed questions, which asked for their opinions of the observed lesson, about working with the language assistant and about the scheme in general (see *Appendix 4*).

### **Post-Lesson Interview Schedule for Language Assistants**

Language assistants were interviewed after the observed lesson to get their views on it. They were also asked about their performance in the observed class, in general, and their participation in school life. The interview was conducted in private, in the language of the assistant, by a member of the Baseline Study Team (see *Appendix 5*).

### **Interview Schedule for Headteachers**

The interview with headteachers collected their opinions on the scheme. They were interviewed by a member of the Baseline Study Team in Slovenian

There was a set of pre-designed questions which asked them why they had applied for a language assistant, and whether their expectations had been fulfilled. We also wanted to know who was responsible for the administrative work. We asked for their opinions on the role of the mentor and the performance of the assistant (see *Appendix 6*).

### **Questionnaire for Other Language Teachers**

The instrument was meant to gather the opinions of other language teachers, who were not observed but still worked together with a language assistant, on the Language Assistant Scheme. However, we only sent out questionnaires to a sample of teachers as we realised that otherwise there would be too much data to analyse in the time available (see *Appendix 7*).

### **Questionnaire for Language Assistants**

The purpose was to investigate how language assistants perceived the scheme as well as to gather information on their experiences. The questionnaire was compiled in the different languages of the assistants (see *Appendix 8*).

### **Other Instruments Used in the Baseline Study**

Other instruments used in the Baseline Study were as follows:

- evaluation forms from previous induction courses for mentors
- official documentation (see *Appendices 11, 12*).

## **THE NATURE OF THE SAMPLE**

34 language classes were observed, of which four were German, four French, two were Italian and the remaining 24 were English classes. (It should be noted that one assistant was observed twice at two different schools). These language classes took place in 31 schools, across Slovenia. Eight were in schools in Ljubljana, five in Maribor, four in Celje, two in Nova Gorica. In the following places only one school was observed: Radovljica, Kranj, Novo mesto, Ptuj, Ljutomer, Koper, Ravne na Koroškem, Brežice, Sežana, Piran, Lucija and Kočevje.

Of the classes observed, five took place in primary schools, eight in vocational schools, 17 in grammar schools and four in mixed grammar and vocational schools.

After the observed class 34 interviews were held with groups of students, 33 interviews were conducted with language assistants and 30 with the teachers who had been present during the observed lesson.

In addition, all 31 headteachers were interviewed, and approximately two questionnaires were distributed to other language teachers in the same school as the class observed. This resulted in 65 questionnaires analysed.

Questionnaires were distributed to 29 of the observed language assistants, of which 26 were returned. As the questionnaire was not translated into French, no replies were received from the four French language assistants, but the four German assistants and the two Italian language assistants were included in the sample.

## **THE SECOND WORKSHOP: DATA ANALYSIS**

### **Aims and Outcomes of the Workshop**

The workshop aimed to help the Baseline Study Team achieve the following:

- reflect on the data collection process (discuss the problems that might have occurred during the data collection process)
- prepare the data for analysis (sort and count each instrument, check that data was complete and assign each instrument with a unique identification code)
- code the data (write the codes for each question)
- summarise the data (group the data and calculate the frequencies for each question)
- begin interpreting the data (initial impressions of the data/what the data is 'saying').

As a result of this workshop, the team had a very clear idea of the procedures involved in processing questionnaire and interview data. They completed the analyses as planned and by the end of the workshop had already begun interpreting the data.

### **Account of the Workshop**

The second workshop was conducted by Ms Jayanti V. Banerjee from Lancaster University and the participants were representatives from the Ministry, The National Institute of Education and mentors from secondary and primary schools.

The participants were: Zdravka Godunc and Bronka Straus (the Ministry), Vineta Eržen (the National Institute of Education), Branka Dobovšek-Dekleva, Milena Forštner, Vidojka Harej, Julija Heinrich-Harrington, Tanja Nemeč, Jožica Nuč, Karmen Pižorn, Lučka Pristavec, and Nataša Žemva (mentors) and Tanja Županek.

#### **Day one**

Each member of the team was encouraged to keep a diary of their on-going thoughts and impressions during the workshops, as it was important that nothing be lost or forgotten which could be of use later.

The team was given an overview by our consultant Ms Jayanti V. Banerjee of what was involved in data analysis, the stages and thought processes involved. This was followed by a review of the data collection process in which the team discussed their experiences of doing the data collection, the difficulties they had faced and the solutions they had chosen. The team realised that because five of the eight instruments to be analysed had been designed to capture different perspectives on a single event (a classroom observation), it was important that the instruments had unique but linked identification numbers. This would allow them to be analysed separately and still allow all the instruments pertaining to any particular classroom observation to be reconstituted if need be. Each team member, therefore, coded her own instruments according to a standard system. These codes allowed for the instruments to be linked back both to the data collector and to each other.

Once these unique codes had been recorded on each instrument, we conducted a ‘stock check’ of the data available for analysis.

The discrepancies in numbers (particularly the shortfall in post-lesson interviews with the observed teacher and the post-lesson interview with the language assistants) were discussed and the explanations were noted. Each instrument was then numbered (beginning at 01).

At this point the team discussed the difference between closed and open-ended questions and the approach to coding each type of question. We decided on common codes for information that had been gathered across all instruments e.g. codes for the type of school. We also discussed how to deal with questions that had not been answered.

Before breaking into small groups to begin coding the instruments, the team had to decide how best to group the instruments. They agreed that it would be best to group together the instruments where the same questions had been asked of different informants. This would help team members to ensure that the codes for these overlapping questions were comparable across the instruments. Therefore, the instruments were grouped as follows:

1. Classroom Observation Schedule  
Student Observation Schedule
2. Post-Lesson Interview with Observed Teachers  
Post-Lesson Interview with Language Assistants  
Post-Lesson Interview with Students
3. Interview with Headteachers  
Questionnaire for Other Language Teachers  
Questionnaire for Language Assistants

The data from the closed questions in the *Questionnaire for Other Language Teachers* was analysed using Excel.

### **Day two**

The team discussed the coding decisions taken up until that point, and the insights gained about the instrument designs. We then outlined the goals for each instrument which were as follows:

- establish all the codes for each question
- use the left-hand margin to write the relevant codes for each question directly onto the questionnaire/observation sheet/interview (this was to allow any member of the team, regardless of their involvement in the coding, to calculate the frequencies)
- sort the instrument according to type of school: primary, grammar, vocational and mixed grammar and vocational.
- design the tables with results for each question
- calculate the frequencies and complete the tables.

The team then resumed coding.

A second brief meeting was held in which the consultant explained how the data from the instruments might be grouped and frequencies calculated. We were also shown how the

results to each question might be presented in tables.

### **Day three**

We completed the coding and analyses. The percentage of frequencies for all completed analyses were calculated.

### **Day four**

One half of the team completed the remaining analyses while the other half made photocopies of all completed analyses for each team member. We convened to discuss what the team had learnt from the data analysis process including further instruction on the design of the instruments and the data collection process. We also discussed our impressions of the data and of its limitations.

Everyone was given a copy of all the analyses and the data interpretation stage of the process was introduced. Looking back at the original aims and questions of the Baseline Study, the team elected to interpret the data pertaining to three informant groups (the teachers, the language assistants and the students). This exercise was intended to help them select appropriate data from the instruments to answer the questions asked during the workshop in April.

In the final plenary session, we discussed the initial interpretations, paying particular attention to the importance of using data from other instruments to confirm/adjust the conclusions suggested by the data from any single instrument.

In conclusion, in addition to learning a great deal about data processing and analysis, the team members were extremely supportive of each other during the marathon work sessions and formed even closer bonds during this workshop. While the team remained concerned about their readiness to produce a written report, they were more confident of their ability to handle the data. This placed the team in an excellent position for the meeting scheduled for September 2000.

### **Action Plan**

- in order to continue the work begun on the last day of the workshop and to retain our familiarity with the data, the team members would need to return to it regularly over the next six to eight weeks
- based on the results of the data analysis, each team member was advised to construct a profile of a 'typical' teacher, student or language assistant.

The team should also note particularly unusual or unexpected results and any further analysis that might be required.

## **THE FINAL WORKSHOP: DATA INTERPRETATION AND DRAFTING OF THE BASELINE STUDY REPORT**

### **Aims and Outcomes of the Workshop**

The aims and outcomes of the workshop were as follows:

- interpretation of the data

- report drafting
- the organisation of the written Report of the Baseline Study
- action plans and deadlines: who does what by when
- plans for dissemination
- identifying the major points for the Induction Course for the new language assistants
- assessing the impact of the Baseline Study itself.

The outcomes stated below were fully or partially achieved:

- draft written report
- answers to the questions drawn up in April
- data interpreted and evaluated
- the structure of the report decided
- action plan and deadlines for action
- major points identified for meeting with Education Development Unit on the following Tuesday
- feedback identified for observed teachers, and how to deliver it
- major issues identified for Language Assistant Induction Course at the end of September
- implications for training and future/further projects identified
- feedback to participants on the process they had undergone, and its value.

### **Account of the Workshop**

The final workshop was conducted by Prof. J. Charles Alderson from Lancaster University and the participants were representatives from the Ministry, the National Institute of Education and The British Council, mentors from secondary and primary schools, and one English speaking language assistant.

The participants were: Zdravka Godunc and Bronka Straus (the Ministry), Vineta Eržen (the National Institute of Education), Danila Beloglavec, Mark Andrews and Edit Nagy (The British Council), Branka Dobovšek-Dekleva, Milena Forštner, Vidojka Harej, Julija Heinrich-Harrington, Tanja Nemec, Jožica Nuč, Karmen Pižorn, Lučka Pristavec, and Nataša Žemva (mentors), and Lois Beaver (language assistant).

#### **Day one**

We referred back to the previous workshops to establish who had been responsible for what. According to this, groups were formed for each instrument and we drew up a list of the reasons why we had asked each question, included each topic in the instrument, and what the expected answers had been.

It was noted that additional data would need to be included in due course: existing data such as evaluations of previous Language Assistant Induction Courses, statistical data and documents such as language assistant contracts and recruitment advertisements from the Ministry.

The team was informed how the raw data in the tables produced in July could be recalculated into more user-friendly formats, depending on the expectations formulated earlier in order to reveal patterns, if they existed. The groups returned to their expectations, compared them with the raw results of the data collection, and drafted an account of the

results. It was emphasised that these draft reports would form the basis of each chapter of the final report.

### **Day two**

Each group presented its rationale for each item on its instrument and the predicted results, and the plenum commented on the nature of the rationales and the likelihood of getting relevant results. Suggestions were made for the modification of rationales and expectations.

Each group first revised its list of expectations in the light of the plenary discussion, and then presented for discussion the results of their initial analyses of the data, compared with their expectations.

### **Day three**

We completed the plenary discussion of the data, and then each group revised its report, to do all suggested cross-checking across other instruments, and calculated any cross-tabulations, to check the data where suggested, and to produce any required new tables.

### **Day four**

The groups continued to work on their reports of the results of the data, which were read by the consultant, Prof. J. Charles Alderson who suggested changes. We also considered the main findings and their implications and what major recommendations we would make, and these were then presented in plenary, recorded and discussed. Groups also decided which, if any, of the original research questions had been answered, if only partly, by the Study, and which remained outstanding. Finally, Mark Andrews led a brainstorming discussion in which he asked participants to consider the value of the data gathered, and the Baseline Study as a whole, for the proposed Cultural Studies Project.

The team members continued to write up their reports, and added their summaries of the main findings, their interpretation of these, and their recommendations.

### **Day five**

In a plenary session we discussed the draft recommendations and future plans.

Outstanding analyses included verbal summaries of the class descriptions from the Observation Schedule, adding descriptions of what the sociograms told us, and finding good quotations in the open-ended responses to illustrate findings. (Verbal summaries of class descriptions were written two weeks after the workshop by two members of the Baseline Study Team.)

The team members were allocated chapters and the editing team was decided upon.

### **Action Plan**

- further thought needed to be given to the distribution of the Report inside and outside Slovenia
- presentations at conferences need to be prepared:
  - the Induction Course for Language Assistants, September 2000
  - the Conference of German teachers, November 2000
  - The European Year of Languages 2001

- the IATEFL Conference in Brighton, April 2001.

In conclusion, we agreed that all the expected outcomes of the workshop had been achieved or partially achieved, or that participants were well on the way towards achieving them. An evaluation form was distributed by the consultant and completed by participants. The results were overwhelmingly positive.

## **PARTICIPANTS' IMPRESSIONS**

At the end of the final workshop, Prof. Alderson asked the Baseline Study Team to comment on their experiences relating to the Baseline Study. The team was supposed to comment on the benefits, positive and negative features of the whole process and then to give any further comments.

***The major benefits to me of participating in this whole process have been:***

*Observing teachers in classroom.*

*I have learnt a lot about the whole process of the baseline study – in the beginning I had not imagined how complicated all this could be. It requires a lot of work on the part of everybody, a lot of co-operation. I got a more detailed insight into the Scheme of assistants, which will also help me in my further work with the assistant. I am a mentor, too.*

*To learn about baseline studies and putting together reports. To see the Scheme from the other side, i.e. mentors but also by reading the data for opinions of stakeholders.*

*I have a clear picture of the Language Assistant Scheme, its problems and good points. Therefore I feel more confident as a mentor to a language assistant. More detailed knowledge about this project, looking at the problem from another perspective, being aware of many more important facts/details than before.*

*Learning how to interpret data, designing different instruments, managing to finish/complete the pre-set tasks, better understanding of research work.*

*Sharing knowledge and experience, learning about many different aspects of teaching/learning process, gaining knowledge from an expert (Charles and Jay and Mark); gaining co-operative skills.*

*Seeing how a baseline study is carried out and how to develop group responsibility.*

*To be in a research process, to share enthusiasm, to be more confident when speaking about projects.*

*To have an inside knowledge of the procedures and work involved in organising and carrying out a baseline study for future work.*

*Observing teachers and language assistants in classrooms, and thus trying to improve my work with my assistant, getting more confident to participate in similar studies in the future.*

*I was able to confront/compare my own experience and ideas of what team-teaching is with the practice in other schools. It gave me an insight into the situation of language assistants and mentors. I found out (and compared) the other people's (teachers, mentors, language assistants) problems and ideas. I am familiar now with useful suggestions.*

***The positive features of this whole process have been:***

*Better understanding of the nature of educational research, the different aspects of designing the instruments.*

*Teamwork and excellent cooperation among all participants. In my opinion everybody did the best he could to contribute to the final result. Very good personal relations among the participants, I got to know a number of people I can cooperate with in the future.*

*Learning lots of new things. Working with people who are interested in the Language Assistant Scheme. Getting the findings. Feeling that the hard work was worth it and has produced something, which eventually will be worthwhile (not that it isn't already!).*

*Group work, sharing ideas, systematically organised work, expert support, support from colleagues, a lot of issues have arisen for me to think about.*

*A better picture about the situation in Slovenia (language assistant-mentor-Ministry-schools) and useful recommendations for the future.*

*Group work, co-operation with experts, and dedication to the scheme on the part of most of the participants.*

*Learning to write and exchanging views, critical thinking, problem solving, team work, creativity and enthusiasm.*

*Moving beyond the anecdotal and going into language education issues in more depth, the development of a group, which feels responsible for what it produces.*

*To have an experienced and reliable leader, working in a very positive atmosphere, being constantly challenged by new, at first sight impossible tasks, and realising at the end that they were carried out.*

*An improved awareness of the need (advantages) of what well-organised and facilitated teamwork can produce. This runs counter to most Slovenes who prefer working alone or in pairs. Greater commitment on the part of team members to the project as a whole and to project work in general and, in particular, to the kind and method of work The British Council wishes to engage in Slovenia (i.e. not one-off seminars).*

*Working together with other teachers and sharing the experience, getting more experience in research work.*

*We learnt what should be changed, improved, done about this scheme.*

***The negative features of the whole process have been:***

*Being constricted by time limits.*

*A long working day, up to 10 or 11pm, which was sometimes quite tiring. I missed a bit more time for relaxation (swimming etc). I was a bit unhappy I could not participate throughout all days of this process due to other obligations.*

*The time restrictions, not really knowing whether what I'm doing is what is expected and needed due to lack of experience in this field.*

*Too much work for such a period of time.*

*None.*

*Lack of time, some of the participants' lack of dedication.*

*Shortage of time and unlucky May and June term for doing the classroom observation, undefined formal role of the group of the teachers.*

*The constant problem of how to juggle family, school and project responsibilities. The importance of dealing with this more openly and in good time.*

*Not all people being present all the time. Although Jay's participation was really precious, it would have been better perhaps if the coding had been made under the guidance of Charles (continuity of the process).*

*I don't see negative features in the process itself. An obvious drawback was the short amount of time available to draft instruments so some issues got left out. Also the process required other skills the team had no training in, e.g. classroom observation skills, and interpretation of what goes on in classrooms in terms of further training that might need addressing. Another drawback was the fact that most people on the team were teachers who are excellent at interpreting the classroom situation but might not have the wider picture or be aware of the wider educational issues that need addressing – i.e. don't or might not address them as a result.*

*Being constricted by the time limits.*

*It's time consuming.*

***Other comments:***

*I would like the work to continue so we end up with some materials to be given to language assistants and mentor teachers.*

*I don't have any other comments but a suggestion to make: I think this team should go on a day trip when the report is done in order to enjoy also in a more relaxed atmosphere.*

*I am very pleased that I was invited to join this project as I feel that I have learnt a lot and I would like to be involved in future studies.*

*Thanks to everybody involved.*

*Our recommendations should be observed in the future.*

*Thank you very much for all your help and support. I'm also very grateful to be treated as an equal member of the Baseline Study Team.*

*Very valuable event in view of the present situation of the country (Slovenia) and in view of future expectations (Europe-wide), beneficial for both students and teachers, raising cultural awareness is an essential part of educating a world citizen.*

*A very rewarding experience and proof that teachers can be involved in activities, which take them out of their classroom, gain a broader picture and go back into their classrooms to make things better.*

*I think I've learnt quite a lot from this Baseline Study. What seemed almost impossible to me at the beginning proves now to be possible and I have a clearer notion how to begin working on a problem.*

## **OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT**

In order to write the report, the Baseline Study Team divided into smaller units, which were responsible for individual chapters. The report contains ten chapters, of which the first three serve as an introduction to the report. The next six chapters are concerned with the analysis and presentation of the data obtained from the research; of these, Chapter 4 focuses on classroom observation performed during the research whereas, the remaining five chapters, each give the view of one of the stakeholders (teachers, students, language assistants, mentors and headteachers) on the Language Assistant Scheme. The final chapter gives conclusions regarding the running of the Language Assistant Scheme and makes recommendations for its future development.